

The Legacy of Command and Control Culture

“Bullying is the sexual harassment of 20 years ago; everybody knows about it, but nobody wants to admit it”.

Lewis Maltby

President of the US
National Work Rights Institute

*“Not everything that is faced
can be changed, but nothing
can be changed until it is
faced.”*

James Baldwin

Mental Health Commission of Canada Findings

- 10 and 25% of Canadian workplaces are “mentally injurious” to their employees
- cost for employers of \$51 billion
- over the last 5 years the increase in damages awarded for workplace mental health has gone up 700%.

What is Workplace Bullying?

- Acts or verbal comments that could 'mentally' hurt or isolate a person in the workplace
- Bullying can involve negative physical contact as well
- Repeated incidents or a pattern of behaviour that is intended to intimidate, offend, degrade or humiliate a particular person or group of people
- The assertion of power through aggression

Bill 14 Proposed OHS Definition of Bullying & Harassment

- Includes any inappropriate vexatious conduct or comment by a person towards a worker that the person knew or reasonably out to have known would cause that worker to be humiliated, offended or intimidated, but
- Excludes any reasonable action taken by an employer or supervisor relating to the management and direction of workers or the place of employment

Workplace Bullying and the Dynamic of Power

- Bullying is fundamentally about the manifestation and exercise of power.
- Workplace bullying where the perpetrator is in a position of power relative to the target can be considered as abuse of authority. In these cases the behaviour which the perpetrator is alleged to have engaged in must be an action or behaviour that serves no legitimate work related purpose.

Sources of Power

Positional Power

- power which comes with the role or position we occupy in an organization or in society

Personal Power

- power which comes from personal characteristics such as age, gender, size, voice, ethnicity, abilities and disabilities, seniority

Power of Knowledge

- power which comes from expertise, information, skills, experience

Economic Power

- power which comes from wealth, access to resources or buying power

Power by Association

- power which comes from our relationship to a person or group with influence

Societal Power

- power which comes from accepted social or cultural standards, values or norms

Why Does it Happen?

- manifestation and exercise of power (seniority, knowledge, position, association, personal, economic)
- competitiveness and the desire to dominate
- low self-esteem, insecure sense of self, jealousy
- anger, (internal conflict) values clash
- cultural norms “the way it is around here”.

Characteristics of the Perpetrator

- Insecure men (62%) and women with poor or non-existent social skills
- Often narcissistic with little capacity for empathy
- Find satisfaction in their ability to attack and diminish the capable people around them
- Have a conscious or subconscious need to control others
- May have a Jekyll and Hyde personality

Characteristics of the Perpetrator

- Most have a history of complaints, or conflicts with others.
- Do not appreciate or learn from the consequences of their behaviour.
- Avoid accepting responsibility for their behavior.
- Often enlists a “sidekick” or group for support to create a culture of fear.
- Behaviour can be overt (open,) or covert (hidden).

Why Bully?

- Target resists control, or refuses to be subservient
- Bully envies target's competence, intelligence or skills
- Bully envies target's social skills, popularity or positive attitude

Portrait of a Target

- majority are females (75% of targets)
- capable, dedicated staff member, well liked by co-workers
- cooperative and non-confrontational interpersonal style
- well educated, competent, high performers
- creative, self assured, intelligent and skilled
- majority have never been involved in prior complaints

Effects of Bullying on Target

- shock
- anger
- feelings of frustration and/or helplessness
- increased sense of vulnerability
- loss of confidence
- physical symptoms such as inability to sleep, loss of appetite
- psychosomatic symptoms such as stomach pains and headaches
- panic or anxiety, especially about going to work
- family tension and stress
- inability to concentrate
- low morale and productivity

The Power of Choice -
Bystanders

*“In the end, we will
remember not the words
of our enemies, but the
silence of our friends.”*

Martin Luther King Jr.

The Power of Forgiveness

“Forgiveness is a great act of spirit and courage.

I have discovered that every minute you devote to thinking about someone who has wronged you is a minute you have stolen from a much worthier pursuit: attracting those people who will help you.”

Robin Sharma

Bullying is Bad for Business

Effects of bullying on an organization:

- increased absenteeism
- increased turnover
- increased stress
- increased costs for counseling, EAP, recruitment, etc.
- increased risk for accidents / incidents
- decreased productivity and motivation
- decreased morale
- reduced corporate image and customer confidence
- diminished customer service

Proactive Strategies to Build Respect

- Get the “Respect” Conversation Started
- Adopt a respectful workplace culture which does not support or condone power based behaviours.
- Assess your organizational culture, in particular leadership practices
- Adopt a comprehensive Respectful Workplace policy, with a clearly worded sub-section on workplace violence and bullying.

Proactive Strategies

- Identify and deal with any systemic/ongoing bullying behaviours (individuals and teams)
- Provide education and awareness training (empower to respond, manifest power respectfully)
- Build in systems of behavioural accountability. Standardize, incorporate and apply them to create a culture of behavioural accountability.
- Create a conflict management system. Work strategically and proactively to “normalize” conflict at work.

Leading the Change

*“Example is not the main
thing in influencing others.
It is the only thing.”*

Albert Schweitzer