



WORKPLACE BULLYING- AN OVERVIEW

We typically don't choose the people that we work with and consequently may not like some of our peers or supervisors. Similarly, they may not like us, but, that's life. And regardless of whether or not we like each other it's expected that we work together and be respectful to one-another.

Certainly we may have conflict and differing opinions but our behavior and how we communicate in these situations should be civil and professional. But, if instead, an interaction between two people becomes negative, with repeated, persistent destructive behavior this is now **workplace bullying** and is not acceptable. Such behavior has serious damaging outcomes to the person being bullied (otherwise known as the victim) but also adverse repercussions to the general work environment.

What is Bullying?

Workplace bullying is a pattern of behavior (so it is typically **not a single negative act**, but a **series of repeated, continuous negative acts**). Bullying may be hard to recognize because the behaviours may be subtle and not be obvious for any other person apart from the victim. Such behaviours may include but are not limited to:

- Social isolation or exclusion
- Sabotaging work (e.g. withholding information, communicating mis-information, undermining)
- Malicious gossip, rumours
- Verbal aggression (e.g. shouting at someone either in private or in front of others)
- Personal attacks
- Intimidation
- Disrespect
- Excessive monitoring
- Establishing work expectations that are impossible to achieve
- Cyber-bullying which can occur through email, text messaging, social networking, and websites

Bullying **should not** be confused with differing opinions between two people or the exercise of managerial authority such as; offering constructive feedback, job responsibility decisions, reasonable workloads or deadlines, supervision, performance reviews and disciplinary actions. Exercising management authority should not be humiliating or intimidating.

What should Employers do?

1. Encourage respectful and professional working relationships.
2. Develop a Policy articulating that bullying is not acceptable nor tolerated in the workplace.
3. Educate all employees about the Policy and how to recognize bullying behaviour.
4. Provide information on resolving issues informally before they escalate.
5. Promote the reporting of incidents in a manner that is easy and provides for a level of confidentiality.
6. Training managers and supervisors to prevent bullying and comply with workplace Policy.
7. Investigate and address bullying incidents.