

The Successful SUPERVISOR

2009

November

Tips from  LifeSolutions

With increasing frequency, LifeSolutions receives calls from supervisors, HR consultants, and employees requesting support to resolve situations that can best be described as some variation of workplace bullying or intimidation. This is the third in a six-part series in which The Successful Supervisor will provide suggestions for recognizing and managing these behaviors in the workplace. The focus this month is on understanding the impact of bullying on: (a) on the employee experiencing it; (b) on co-workers and others who observe the situation; and (c) on the organization as a whole.

Material was adapted from the following sources: Namie, G., Namie, R. *The Bully at Work*. Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks, Inc., 2000, 2003. Material was also adapted from Sutton, Robert, *The No Asshole Rule--Building a Civilized Workplace and Surviving One That Isn't*. NY, Boston: Warner Business, 2007. We are interested in your feedback to the Successful Supervisor. E-mail your questions and comments to ask@lifesolutionsforyou.com.

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Impact of Bullying on the Targeted Employee

Drs. Gary and Ruth Namie, co-authors of *The Bully at Work*, state that the employee who is bullied (termed the 'targeted employee') can suffer wide-ranging effects which cannot be overlooked. Described as "hazardous to the health," these effects include, but are not limited to, the following:

- ◆ **Emotional/Psychological:** Anxiety, anger, depression, panic attacks, loss of concentration, and feelings of powerlessness and hopelessness. Moreover the employee's attempts to cope with the situation may be maladaptive (e.g., substance abuse, retaliation, and, in the extreme, even suicide).
- ◆ **Physical:** Stress, loss of sleep, exhaustion, headaches, gastrointestinal disorders, skin disorders, compromised immune system functioning (more colds, flu, and other illnesses), hypertension and heart-related problems such as palpitations.
- ◆ **Social:** Workplace isolation, feelings of abandonment and resentment, and, over time, wavering support from family and friends.
- ◆ **Economic/Financial/Productivity:** Depletion of paid time off (PTO) and other forms of leave and job loss. Findings indicate that 82% of bullied employees believe that the only way to stop the bullying is to leave either voluntarily or involuntarily.

"What about those who observe bullying? Are they affected as well?"

The answer is yes. Employees who witness other employees being bullied experience a ripple effect. They can exhibit reactions and symptoms similar to those of the targeted employee.

- ◆ Author Robert Sutton states that witnesses often report feeling highly stressed, insecure, fearful of becoming the next target, and distracted and distressed by a situation they feel ill equipped or unable to address.
- ◆ Work performance and concentration suffers and they, too, show an increase in absenteeism, turnover, and use of sick leave.
- ◆ Managers and supervisors find that they spend valuable time dealing with conflicts that arise in an environment where bullying occurs.

Time is spent calming down upset employees, mediating, and dealing with the inevitable morale problems.

"How is the organization as a whole impacted?"

An organization where bullying occurs loses any way you look at it. Some of the effects include:

- ◆ Retention problems, absenteeism
- ◆ Decreased engagement
- ◆ A climate of fear and mistrust
- ◆ A "CYA" attitude — where employees hide mistakes to the detriment of patient or customer needs. New ideas are not shared; discretionary time and effort are not given; and the avoidance of risk pre-empts creativity.
- ◆ Reputation and public image can be damaged — in summary, *everyone* loses when bullying occurs and is allowed to continue.

"Okay, I accept that this is a serious problem that needs to be addressed. How do I become a part of the solution?"

Tune in next month for the answer to this question. For more information on "what to do," or if you have questions or concerns of an immediate nature, please contact your HR consultant. Or call LifeSolutions at 1.800.647.3327.

Online Leadership Support



As leaders, what we do and say can have significant impact on those around us. *LifeSolutions* offers a series of self-guided online courses specifically developed to equip managers and supervisors with the appropriate tools to help make a positive impact in the workplace.

In keeping with the theme of this month's The Successful Supervisor, we offer the following Skill Builder courses:

Conflict Intervention

Defuse a potential morale-draining work environment through successful conflict intervention.

In this course you will learn:

- ◆ How to assess the climate of a conflict
- ◆ Methods to help set the stage for a positive outcome
- ◆ Techniques to broker a resolution and follow-up advice

Managing Disagreement

As an effective leader, we can set the stage for individuals to handle their differences over workplace issues and decisions.

In this course you will learn:

- ◆ The principles and styles
- ◆ How to apply the four-phase process
- ◆ Ways to refine your skills

Emotional Intelligence in the Workplace

Emotional intelligence is a set of skills that enables leaders to understand, anticipate, and deal with our automatic reactions in the workplace.

In this course you will learn:

- ◆ Intelligent thinking about emotions
- ◆ The keys to behaving wisely
- ◆ Techniques for fostering emotional intelligence in others

Follow the steps below to learn more and to get started:

- ◆ Access www.lifesolutionsforyou.com.
- ◆ Click on *WorkLife* login at the top right.
- ◆ Enter your company code. If you do not know your code, call 1.800.647.4487.
- ◆ Locate *Working Smarter* on left-side menu.
- ◆ Click on *Effective Manager*.
- ◆ Click on *Skill Builder*.
- ◆ Click on title that interests you and review the highlights of each course.
- ◆ You will be able to click on link at bottom (within the Skill Builder highlight) to get started.

If you have questions, please call **1.800.647.3327**
