

Respectful Workplace

The Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (CCOHS) offers this information related to workplace bullying:

Bullying is usually seen as acts or verbal comments that could "mentally" hurt or isolate a person in the workplace.

Sometimes bullying can involve negative physical contact as well.

Bullying usually involves repeated incidents or a pattern of behaviour that is intended to intimidate, offend, degrade or humiliate a particular person or group of people.

In many jurisdictions, employers have a general duty to protect employees from risks at work. This duty can mean both physical harm and mental health.

In general, there will be differences in opinion and sometimes conflicts at work. However, behaviour that is unreasonable and offends or harms any person should not be tolerated.

According to the Canadian Center for Occupational Health and Safety, Bullying and Harassment behaviours can look like the following:

- Spreading malicious rumours, gossip, or innuendo.
- Excluding or isolating someone socially.
- Intimidating a person.
- Yelling or using profanity.
- Physically abusing or threatening abuse.
- Belittling a person's opinions.
- Making jokes that are 'obviously offensive' by spoken word or e-mail.
- Undermining or deliberately impeding a person's work.
- Criticizing a person persistently or constantly.

Ensure you know your organizations policies and procedures regarding respectful workplace expectations including;

- Who to talk to if they believe they are being harassed or bullied.
- Specific procedures for reporting an incident when the alleged harasser or bully is a senior leader, supervisor or someone acting on behalf of the employer.
- That, if the organization chooses, the process allows for the use of a personal advocate. People experiencing mental health issues often don't have the stamina to engage in this process on their own.
- How to initiate a complaint, either formally or informally.
- How they will be protected.
- How vexatious or frivolous complaints with malicious intent will be addressed.
- What will be expected of them in an investigation.

Responding to disrespectful behaviours:

"When I see people rolling their eyes while I am presenting an idea, I perceive this as inconsiderate of my contribution."

"When I am the only one on the team not invited when people are going out for a coffee break, I experience this as isolating."

"When someone goes into my desk and takes my things, I experience this as disrespect."

Tips for Dealing with an Aggressor – Respect Group Training

Verbal Communication

Do's

- Remain calm in control of your emotions. This may have a calming effect on the aggressor.
- Focus your attention on the other person so they know you're interested in what they're saying.
- Encourage the person to talk and try to stay open-minded and objective.
- Acknowledge the person's feelings, by saying something like, "I can see you're upset."
- Be aware of the words you're choosing and how you're saying them.
- Speak slowly, quietly, and confidently.
- Listen carefully without interrupting or offering advice or criticism.

Don'ts

- Don't glare or stare. This can be seen as a challenge.
- Try not to allow the other person's anger to become your anger.
- Don't use official language, complex terminology, or jargon.
- Avoid communicating a lot of technical or complicated information when emotions are high.
- And never tell the person to relax or calm down

Non-Verbal Communication and Behaviour

Do's

- Use calm body language: keep a relaxed posture with your hands unclenched and a neutral, attentive expression.
- Position yourself so that the exit is not blocked.
- Position yourself at a right angle rather than directly in front of the other person.
- Give the person enough physical space. Generally, 1 to 2 m.
- Get on the other person's physical level rather than standing over them.

Don'ts

Don't take an aggressive or challenging pose, like:

- standing directly opposite someone
- putting your hands on your hips
- pointing your finger
- or waving or crossing your arms

Don't make sudden movements which can be seen as threatening.

And avoid physical violence or confrontation where possible. Walk away and get assistance from security or police.

Here are some tips for dealing with an Aggressor if You Feel Safe:

- Tell the aggressor that their behaviour is offensive, unwanted, and to stop.
- Document what happened to you. Remember to look for the incident report in the Handouts section of this program.
- Check organizational policies and procedures and know your rights.
- If the behaviour is repeated, report it to a trusted colleague, supervisor or HR, and if it contravenes the law, know you have the right to report it to the police, but do not discuss details with other uninvolved co-workers.
- Don't be afraid to ask for assistance and support from the organization.

And now Dealing with an Aggressor if You Feel Unsafe:

- Avoid being alone with the aggressor and make sure you're safe.
- Get support and assistance right away and report the incident to a trusted colleague, supervisor, or Human Resources.
- Document what happened to you. Look for an incident report in the Handouts section.
- Only talk to those who can support you and keep the information confidential. Speaking with uninvolved parties may add unwanted and unwelcomed dynamics that could further jeopardize the situation.
- Know your organization's policies and procedures and know your rights.

Responding to a Physical Attack

Do's

- Make a scene. Yell or scream as loudly as you can, even try shouting words like STOP, FIRE or HELP, and don't stop yelling
- Blow a whistle, activate your personal security alarm, push the building security alarm or, as a last resort, pull the fire alarm
- Give bystanders specific instructions to help you. Single someone out and send them for help: "You in the yellow shirt, call 911!"
- Run to the nearest safe place, a safe office or an open store.
- Call security or the police immediately after the incident.
- If the attack does not warrant calling the police, inform your supervisors or the authorities at your workplace.
- File an incident report. We've put one in the Handouts section to help you capture what happened.
- And, try to imagine yourself responding successfully to different types of attacks.

Don'ts

- If someone grabs your purse, briefcase or other belongings, don't resist. Throw the item several feet away from the thief and run in the opposite direction, yelling "help" or "fire".
- Don't chase someone trying to steal from or assault you. Ever.

Tips for Bystanders – Respect Group Training

When you see or hear of BAHD (Bullying, abuse, harassment or discrimination) in your workplace you're a bystander. By definition a bystander is a person, or group of people, who witness an incident of bullying, abuse, harassment, or discrimination. And let's be straight right off the bat: when it comes to BAHD, there's no such thing as an "innocent bystander." Every bystander has a choice to make: you can step up and step in to stop the hurtful behaviour, ignore what's happening, walk away, shut the door, or close your email, you can become a passive contributor to the workplace violence by watching and listening, or pretend you didn't see it and do nothing.

There are all kinds of reasons people don't step up and step in: they don't know how, they're scared they'll become the target or that that management won't support them, and occasionally, a bystander stays quiet to get the approval of the aggressor. But, when you choose to ignore what's happening you support the harmful behaviour which gives the aggressor even more power and increases the negative impact on everyone's mental health, quality of work, and work environment.

So let's look at some strategies you can use when you witness or are told that someone is being targeted.

Do's

- If you feel safe, directly intervene by telling the aggressor that their behaviour is unacceptable and by defending the victim
- Make sure the person being victimized is safe
- Support the victim by letting them know you're aware of the behaviour, that it's not acceptable, and that they're not alone
- Encourage the victim to ask for help, go with them to get help, or provide them with the information they need to get help
- Make it clear to your colleagues that you won't be involved in the behaviour
- Document specific details of what you saw, heard, or read: times, places, people involved, and things that were said. Remember, you'll find an incident report in the Handouts section to help organize your thoughts.
- Report the incident to your supervisor, HR, or if warranted, call police
- Beyond your supervisor or HR, keep the information confidential. Speaking with other uninvolved parties may add unwanted and unwelcomed dynamics that could further jeopardize the situation
- Be familiar with your organization's policies and procedures and know your rights as an employee
- And seek help and support for yourself if you feel you need it. Just keep in mind that you need to keep any details of other people's personal lives entirely confidential.

Don'ts

- Don't stand by and watch
- Don't encourage BAHD behaviour by harassing, teasing or spreading gossip about others, verbally, through email, or through social networking
- Don't acknowledge, reply, or forward messages or photos that could be hurtful or embarrassing to a colleague

Each of us has a moral, and, depending on the situation, legal responsibility to step up and step in to protect our colleagues from BAHD. It's on us to inform the aggressor that their behaviour has to stop or if we don't feel safe, to report it by following the proper policies and procedures outlined by your organization.

The bystander effect, or bystander apathy, is a social psychological phenomenon in which individuals are less likely to offer help to a victim when other people are present. The greater the number of bystanders, the less likely it is that one of them will help.