

Violence in the Workplace: Harassment and Bullying

Conflict Strategies

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Violence in the Workplace

- Definition: Workplace Violence, Harassment, Bullying
- Legislation; McMaster's Policies, OHSA
- Research Findings: How Widespread is It?
- Risk Factors
- Bullying: Profile and Consequences
- Think you're a Victim?
- Effective Communication, Resolving Conflict
- Assertiveness and Aggression
- Scenario
- Resources



Workplace Violence

Any act in which the person is abused, threatened, intimidated, or assaulted in the course of their employment. Not limited to:

Physical--hitting, shoving, pulling, kicking

Threatening Behaviour--physical, verbal or written:

Direct Threats: "I'm going to make you pay for what you did"

Conditional: "If you don't get off my back, you'll regret it"

Veiled: "Do you think anyone would care if someone beat up the boss?"



Harassment and Bullying

Harassment

" A course of vexatious comment or conduct that is known or ought reasonably to be known to be unwelcome"

Any behaviour aimed at causing fear, demeaning, embarrassment or humiliation (e.g. pranks, rumors, insults, profanity, condescending language)

Test: *would most people consider the action unacceptable?*



Application

• Applies to all members of the University defined as all administrative, research, teaching and non teaching employees of the University and to any person on University property

- Staff
- Faculty
- Contractors
- Students
- Visitors
- Volunteers



Legislation and Policies

Canadian and Ontario Human Rights Codes

- prohibited grounds of discrimination on the basis of age, ancestry, citizenship, colour, creed, ethnic origin, family status, handicap, marital status, place of origin, race, receipt of public assistance, record of offences, sex, sexual orientation

Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) Operational Policy # 15-02-02 (1989): Mental Stress

- traumatic not cumulative



Legislation and Policies

McMaster University's:

- **Anti Discrimination Policy**
- **Sexual Harassment Policy**
- **Working Alone Program** RMM# 304
- **Student Code of Conduct**

Occupational Health & Safety Act (OHS)

- **Section 27:** Employer's Responsibilities-Due Diligence
- **Section 28:** Workers' Responsibilities
- **Section 43:** Work Refusals
- **Bill 29:** Amendment to OHS (Harassment and Violence)-first reading and passed December 2007



Research: How Widespread is It?

ILO rated study rated Canada 4th in the world with respect to workplace violence, eclipsing the United States on the more subtle aggression, such as intimidation, bullying and harassment (workplace violence.ca)

Occupations:

- Health Care Worker, Corrections Officer, Social Service Worker, Teacher, Government Inspector, Retail, Bartender
- Working with public, handling money, valuables, prescription drugs, inspection/enforcement duties, providing care, service, advice or education, working with unstable-volatile persons, working where alcohol is served, working alone or in small numbers, working in community based settings, mobile workplace, intense organizational change

Times:

- Late evening, early morning, pay day, Christmas, tax return season, contract negotiations, report card due



Research, continued....

Inside the workplace (coworker, supervisor)

- 84% of people dismissed from jobs because they cannot get along with fellow coworkers*
- **Related to the function of the workplace (client, customer student)**
- **Indirect relationship with the workplace (former employee, spouse)**
- **Unrelated to the organization (public)**

*Managers spend 20-40% of time dealing with interpersonal conflict



Research, continued.....

Workplace Bullying is an Epidemic:

- almost 40% of American workers (54 million people) have been bullied at work; representing almost 50% of all adults

Bullying Strongly Affects Women:

- Women are targeted by bullies more frequently (57%) especially by other women (71% of cases)

Most Bullies are Bosses:

- 72% of bullies are bosses

Bullying is a Health Hazard:

- For 45% of bullied targets, stress affects their health. 33% suffer for more than one year

Employers Ignore Bullying:

- In 62% of cases, when made aware of bullying, employers worsen the problem or simply do nothing
- 77% of the victims leave the workplace

Workplace Bullying Institute, US Workplace Bullying Survey, Sept 2007



Profile of a Bully

- Insecurities
- Poor social skills
- Little empathy
- Obtain satisfaction by diminishing capable people around them
- Targets a subject to unjustified criticism; fault finding
- Humiliates especially in front of others
- Ignores, over rules, isolates, and excludes
- Creates fear, anger, depression, low morale



Consequences of Bullying

Victim

- Shock, anger, frustration/helplessness
- Increased sense of vulnerability
- Loss of confidence
- Physical symptoms (sleeplessness, appetite)
- Psychosomatic symptoms (headaches, stomach aches)
- Panic or anxiety
- Family tension and stress
- Inability to concentrate
- Low morale
- Poor productivity

Workplace

- Absenteeism
- Turnover
- Costs (EAP, sick leaves, WSIB, grievances)
- Accident/injuries
- Morale
- Customer Service
- Image, reputation
- Violent situation



Video

- Harassment: Keeping it Out of the Workplace



Think you're a Victim?

- **DO NOT RETALIATE.** You may end up looking like the perpetrator and will most certainly cause confusion for those responsible for evaluating and responding to the situation.



Think you're a Victim, continued...

- **FIRMLY** tell the person that his or her behaviour is not acceptable and ask them to stop. You can ask a supervisor or union member to be with you when you approach the person.
- **KEEP** a factual journal or diary of daily events. Record:
 - The date, time and what happened in as much detail as possible
 - The names of witnesses
 - The outcome of the event
- Remember, it is not just the character of the incidents, but the number, frequency, and especially the pattern that can reveal the bullying or harassment.



Think You're a Victim, continued...

- KEEP copies of any letters, memos, e-mails, faxes, etc., received from the person.
- REPORT the harassment to the person identified in your workplace policy, your supervisor, or a delegated manager. If your concerns are minimized, proceed to the next level of management.
- Remember: You are NOT to blame!



Effective Communication

- **Barriers to Listening:**
 1. external noise
 2. internal noise (our own thoughts take over)
 3. screen of values/feelings/perceptions and stereotypes (mentally start disagreeing with the person's values)
 4. our emotions—getting defensive
 5. timelines; schedules
 - 6.?



Effective Communication

- people make judgements on first impressions
- we are communicating all the time (tone, body language, dress)
- need to be very aware of the message we are delivering
- 85% of communication is non verbal—our body language speaks louder than words



Effective Communication: Body Language

- **Openness, Honesty and Directness**—demonstrated by open hands, uncrossed legs, and an open stance, direct eye contact, leaning forward
- **Defensiveness**—arms or legs crossed, fists clenched, sitting backward in the chair, body turned away from speaker
- **Secretiveness causing distrust**—no eye contact, averted body, sideways glances, arms or legs crossed, fidgeting, rubbing eyes
- **Judging/Evaluating**—titled head, looking over glasses, leading head in hand, pointing with a finger, chin stroking, raised eyebrows



Effective Communication: Body Language

- **Interest/keenness**- hands on hips, sitting/leaning forward, sitting on edge of chair, hands on knees, open stance, keen eye contact
- **Needing reassurance**-hastily averting eye contact, clenched hands, picking at nails or hair, sucking on a pen, slumped posture, covering mouth, fidgeting, interrupting
- **Self confidence**—direct, friendly, eye contact, hands clasped behind back, firm handshake, open stance, erect posture, assured movements
- **Anger/frustration**—kicking ground or imaginary objects, clenched hands or fists, tight short movements, trembling body or lips, finger pointing, and rapid short breathing



Conflict Strategies: What Are You Like?

Goal: Balance of personal goal(s) and relationship

1. **Turtle:** feels helpless; avoids conflict; withdraws
2. **Shark:** overpowers opponents; attacks; overwhelms
3. **Teddy Bear:** afraid of hurting; smoothing at all costs
4. **Fox:** seek a compromise—finding the middle ground
5. **Owl:** sees conflict as improving relationships-confronts to seek solutions



Assertiveness

- Self expressive
- Direct and firm
- Honest
- Self enhancing and relationship enhancing
- Respectful
- Content of the message (feelings, rights, facts, limits, requests)
- Non Verbal (voice, eye contact, distance, gestures, timing, listening)
- Specific to the situation
- Socially responsible
- Must be practiced.....



Diffusing Aggressive Behaviour

- Project calmness, move and speak slowly, quietly and confidently
- Listen with empathy. Talk less; listen more
- Focus on the speaker: show that you are interested in what they are saying
- Acknowledge the person's feelings
- Establish ground rules
- Use delay tactics which will help to calm the person down
- Be reassuring: point out choices. Break down into smaller, more manageable ones. Ask for solutions
- Accept criticism positively



Scenario

- Philip is constantly being put down and criticized by one of his coworkers. He has no idea why she does not like him, but clearly she does not. Sometimes the insults are overheard by his coworkers, and other times muttered so quietly that no one can hear....or they are spoken behind closed doors with no witnesses. Philip is having trouble sleeping and has seen his doctor for stress-related symptoms.
- What should Philip do?



Resources:

- Supervisor/Manager
- TMG Complaint Resolution Procedure
- Employee and Labour Relations
- Collective Agreements
- Security—ext 24281--emergency # 88
- Security-off campus (905-522-4135)
- Employee and Family Assistance Program [Human Solutions]
- (www.humansolutions.ca; 1-800-663-1142
- EOHSS---ext 24352
- FHSc Health and Safety---ext 23453/24956-----emergency # 5555
- Human Rights and Equity Services (HRES): ext. 27581
- Orange File For Faculty
- Campus Health Centre--- MUSC B101---- ext 27700
- Centre for Student Development---MUSC B107----ext 24711


