

# THE GRADUATING BULLY



*Feeling trapped? Empower yourself against the workplace bully by learning how to respond to the bully's attacks and threats!*

by Faith Wood

---

# *The Graduating Bully*



*by*

*Faith Wood*

---

*Quick Response Code*



Do you want to learn more about how to respond to a bully? If you have a camera phone, scan this code with your Free iPhone ‘Paperlinks’ app or Android apps: Google Goggles, Zxing or Kaywa.

Symbian users can use the barcode scanner provided and Maemo users can use ‘mbarcode’. Blackberry users will pick up the code automatically.

No camera phone? Go to [www.imind.ca!](http://www.imind.ca!)

The Graduating Bully

***Copyright 2011***

Double Your Faith Productions  
Airdrie, Alberta CANADA T4B1C9

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form, except for the inclusion of brief quotations in review and with written permission from the author/publisher.

# 1

## **The promotion**

*“Thirty-five years in this stinkin’ job and what do I have to show for it? Nothing! Not a damn thing!” Martin stormed from his boss’s office, his face scarlet and swollen with rage. This was the second time he’d been passed over for a promotion in three years and he was sick of it. Just because he’s fifty-five shouldn’t mean that someone younger should get the job he deserves!*

*As he slammed the door, three secretaries’ heads dropped, their eyes pinned to the work on their desks. Everyone was afraid of Martin because of his explosive rage, and the thought of being at the brunt of his anger was enough to make anyone want to crawl under the desk. Martin’s boss stood at the window of his*

## The Graduating Bully

*office, witness to the vile venom that spewed from his employee's mouth. He knew that if he fired Martin, there would be hell to pay — not only from the 'powers that be' in the company, but from Martin himself. He'd heard that Martin took his rage out on a couple of his subordinates, but he didn't know if the rumors were true. No one had complained, so he chalked it up to just that — rumors.*

So. What do you think? Unfortunately, Martin's behavior isn't uncommon — in fact, men and women in the workforce have to deal with behavior similar to Martin's every day. They endure insults, degradation and humiliation from colleagues, supervisors and managers with a degree of shame that's an undercurrent in every facet of their lives. But the sad thing is that they feel like they can't do anything about it. If they open their mouths, they risk losing their jobs — and, in today's economy, who can afford that? So, they suck it up and they don't say a word.

They live in fear. And misery.

If you read the first book in this series, *Taking the Bully by the Horns*, you know that bullying behavior often begins on the asphalt and dirt of the playground. Children are quick to realize

## The Graduating Bully

who is weak or strong, who is easy to manipulate and who won't rat on them by telling the teacher. They establish pecking orders by congregating at the far reaches of the schoolyard, pointing out those students who may be perfect targets for their verbal or physical assaults.

Believe it or not, at the tender age of five or six, a bully may be in the making. It's sad, isn't it?

By the time bullies reach the end of their high school careers, they're ready to move on. Oh, I don't mean simply move on to college . . . I mean they move on with their bullying. Don't be fooled into thinking that once bullies graduate that their bullying days are over. Oh, no . . . the fact is they're just getting started. And what I think is really interesting is that the 'style' of bullying gets more 'refined' or 'sophisticated' as the bully moves forward in life.

So, do bullies carry their behavior into college when they leave their parents' fold and give life a try all on their own? You betcha! Oddly enough, though, there hasn't been a lot of press about the college bully — a few studies have been done, but not to the extent of investigating younger or workplace bullies. It seems as if the bully enters a 'no-man's land' for about four

years, and then resurfaces when he or she scores the first real job. But, they're still there, working their 'magic' in different ways and, many times, bullying is recognized as hate crimes, sexual harassment and anti-gay incidents.<sup>1</sup> And, I'm sure you've heard of hazing — the behavior exhibited by fraternities and sororities on a regular basis. Well, that's bullying in its purest form.

Then you have sports team initiations and other types of 'social' bullying — i.e, Facebook, MySpace, etc. You probably already know that social networking provides a forum for bullies for not only kids in high school, but college students and adults, as well.

People bashing. What used to be taboo is now cool to do.

I'm not going to spend a lot of time on the college bully (maybe I should!), because the thrust of this book is about the workforce bully. That said, I think it's important for you to understand in your gut that bullying is prevalent *everywhere* in our society — it's insidious, pernicious and never-ending. It's been around for a long time and it's getting worse.

---

<sup>1</sup> [bullysolutions.com](http://bullysolutions.com), *College Bully* by John McDonald, April 13, 2010



## The Graduating Bully

Let's get back to Martin for a minute. There was a time in my life when I would have been astonished and mortified by Martin's behavior as he left his boss' office. Today? Not so much. I am still mortified, though. My years of working with individuals embroiled in conflict while at work opened my eyes quicker than a cobra's strike — everyday I see the handiwork of the workplace bully, and it isn't pretty.

You're probably asking yourself the question, "How can someone get away with behavior like that and not get fired?" Fair question. Maybe it's because his or her work performance is excellent when it comes down to the bottom line. Maybe it's because the bully brings in a boatload of money for the company. Maybe the bully's behavior incites a feeling of fear in people who are around him — or, her.

You get the point. But there's one more reason, and it's probably the most important — employees are, many times, afraid of losing their jobs if they report the bully's behavior. They believe that if it ever gets out that they reported it, the bullying against them will escalate and it will be worse than before. They think that they may graduate from 'witness' to 'victim'.

## The Graduating Bully

They're probably right.

There is one good thing, however, about Martin's situation. Maybe he's being passed over for promotion because of his bullying behavior . . .

It's kind of a double-edged sword, isn't it?

# 2

## *What is workplace bullying?*

Of course, you know bullying when you see it. But do you recognize it when it's happening to you? Do you see the repeated abusive conduct by your bosses and colleagues against you as bullying, or do you simply deem it as 'the way it is'? In 2010, two surveys were conducted in an effort to obtain stats on workplace bullying. In the second survey, workplace bullying was defined as repeated mistreatment, sabotage by others, abuse, threatening conduct, intimidation and humiliation.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> Workplace Bullying Institute, Results of the 2010 WBI US Workplace Bullying Survey, [workplacebullying.org](http://workplacebullying.org)

## The Graduating Bully

I'm thinking that if you're reading this book, you may be the victim of a workplace bully, or someone you care about is suffering at the hands of a workplace bully. I'm guessing that you're looking for answers about what to do — if I were in your shoes, I'd be doing exactly the same thing. So, let me ask you this question — does the definition of 'workplace bullying' that you just read sound like anything that's happening to you? I understand if it's tough to admit it — however, you have to know that because you are the target of someone's verbal or physical assaults, doesn't mean you have to be a victim. There are ways you can diffuse a volatile situation with just the right response — and, you'll walk away leaving your tormentor wondering what just happened. Interested? Keep reading . . .

Here are some of the key findings of one of the WBI surveys:

- 35% of workers have experienced bullying firsthand (37% in 2007)
- 62% of bullies are men; 58% of targets are women
- Women bullies target women in 80% of cases
- Bullying is 4X more prevalent than illegal harassment (2007)

## The Graduating Bully

- The majority (68%) of bullying is same-gender harassment

And that's not all! A whopping 35% of working Americans have been bullied at work — that 53.2 million working adults! To top it off, 15% have witnessed it.<sup>3</sup> However, the stats also indicate that 50% of the workforce have *not* experienced or witnessed bullying at work. Don't those stats really drive home the fact that workplace bullying is an undertow that can drag you down?

So let's start peeling back the layers of workplace bullying. I've always contended that girls can be more vicious than boys in many ways, especially when they are in middle school and high school. Unfortunately, it's pretty much the same when they leave the nest — but, there's one interesting twist — women target women most of the time and it's *not* considered illegal. It's considered 'same gender harassment', which is considered legal according to the anti-discrimination laws. *Really?* Although, when you think about it, it makes sense that women target their

---

<sup>3</sup> Workplace Bullying Institute, Results of the 2010 WBI US Workplace Bullying Survey, [workplacebullying.org](http://workplacebullying.org)

## The Graduating Bully

own gender — women targeting men doesn't track. It happens, but not as much.

If you have a daughter in that's middle school or high school, or if you can remember back that far (!), think about how girls go after girls. They yell and scream, call their targets names, tease, make fun of and, probably the most damaging in many ways, they spread rumors. Girls tend to be gossipy and when the grapevine is twisting down the halls of the school, who knows who will wind up snarled in its vines. Girls can be vicious — and, when they trot off to college and eventually find themselves in the trenches of life, the female bullying behavior isn't much different than it was in seventh or eighth grade. It's still vicious, cutting and damaging. And, as I mentioned before, victims of women bullies choose not to report the behavior to company superiors because they believe it will make matters worse or they will lose their jobs. At work, they live in fear on all fronts, and the element of 'sabotage' seems ever present.

---

*Meet Claire.* Claire is a client of mine and she's enmeshed in a bully situation at work. At least two or three times a week,

## The Graduating Bully

she's 'dressed down' by her supervisor and in front of other employees.

*"It's as if we're back in high school," she recently told me, as she recounted an incident she remembered from ninth grade.*

*"We were excused from Science about a minute late, so I had to rush to my locker to get my English book. There was a group of about five or six girls who had decided I was their favorite target and they were waiting for me, one of them slapped up against my locker door." I watched her face as she brought recessed memories into her mind's eye.*

*"Susan was the ringleader. She made sure she always had her 'posse' with her and she never went anywhere without at least two of them." My client's eyes narrowed and I recognized the look of revulsion as she continued her story.*

*"Susan stepped up to me so her face was right in front of mine.*

*'I heard you were talking to Jack at lunch,' she spat, her face filled with rage. I told her that he asked me a question about the Science assignment, but she didn't want to hear it. She shoved me into my locker and pinned my shoulders against its door." My*

## The Graduating Bully

client grew quiet for a minute as she relived that spring day in ninth grade.

*“She shoved me so hard that my shoulder slammed against the locker door at a weird angle. It dislocated and I felt the searing pain as she continued to rant about my talking to her boyfriend. The only reason she stopped was because a teacher was walking toward us in the hall.”*

We sat for a couple of seconds, the weight of the story sinking in. She’s right — the torment she endures at work is just the same as the torment she endured in high school. The good news is that Claire’s learning how to deal with her supervisor at work by learning the correct responses that diffuse conflict situations.

It’s interesting, isn’t it, that Claire (who is now thirty-five years old) still remembers that day at her locker, so many years ago? The sting of her classmate’s verbal darts is as fresh in her mind as if it happened at breakfast.

Female workplace bullies are sprouting up all around the country and according to a study conducted by the Employment Law Alliance, 40% of workplace bullies are women; and, women



## The Graduating Bully

target other women 70% of the time.<sup>4</sup> The study further found that women want to belittle, berate and intimidate the weaker women with whom they work. In addition, if you're a target of a bully at work, the quality of your work will suffer, and you may physically respond by increased episodes of headaches, loss of appetite, high blood pressure, insomnia, clinical depression or panic attacks. Geez — who can work with all of that going on?

So, why do women bully? Well, one of the reasons is because they enjoy feeling powerful and they like it when their targets don't stand up for themselves. Another reason is women are less confrontational when they're attacked — they tend to turn their backs on unacceptable behavior.

Over the last few decades, women began their rise through the ranks of business, bent on taking their rightful place at the boardroom table. They began asserting their intelligence and ability to think like their male counterparts and, as their ascent up the corporate climb resulted in success, women became a presence in corporate America. With that success, however, came

---

<sup>4</sup> [huffingtonpost.com](http://huffingtonpost.com), *10 Tips for Dealing with Bullies at Work*, Dr. Michelle Callahan, Psychologist, March 13, 2011.

## The Graduating Bully

the stress and pressure to perform excellently — with the newfound responsibilities came mountains of work and fewer people to perform the tasks. Translation: more stress. More anger. More bullying. Unfortunately, many women in business feel threatened by the success of others, and they want to stop you dead in your tracks before you have the opportunity to eclipse their success with your own.

If you suspect you're being bullied at work, how can you tell if it's 'true bullying' or just an out-of-control, difficult boss or coworker? Good question. Here are some of the 'tells' of the workplace female bully:

- bullying is repeated behavior, and it's not just your supervisor or coworker having a bad day.
- The bully behavior may include yelling, intimidating or humiliating behavior, such as criticism and insults, as well as sabotaging your success.
- Women are secretive in their abuse and it's much more subtle than a man's bullying abuse.
- Women know what buttons to push and they push them at just the right time.

## The Graduating Bully

What do you think? Do any of these sound like what's happening to you or someone you know?

O.K. — what about male bullies at work? The 'men'. I always chuckle a little when I have to confront the male bully personality, because bullying isn't very 'manly'. Male bullies are cowardly. They hide behind the skirts of their own poor performance or uncontrolled anger, and they blame the perfect target for their own ineptitude. Keep in mind that women don't always bully women, and men don't always bully men — it goes both ways. And, for you *guys* reading this book, you have just as much to deal with if you suspect or know that you're being bullied.

So, let's unveil the male bully.

Men are 'equal opportunity' bullies. They really don't have any preference for whom they bully, just as long as they have someone to torment. The male bully's behavior is less subtle than the female's bullying and, in some ways, it's easier to spot. But, before I get into the whys and wherefores of the male bully, here are some stats you may find interesting:

## The Graduating Bully

- 45% of Americans have not experienced or witnessed bullying, but 37% have been bullied; 12% have witnessed bullying.
- More men (60%) are bullies.
- 62% of employers ignore the problem.
- 40% of employees targeted by a bully never tell their employer.
- 45% of people targeted by a bully experience stress-related health problems including debilitating anxiety, panic attacks and clinical depression
- 39% of bully victims experience clinical depression<sup>5</sup>

Interesting, huh? OK. What about men? How do male bullies at work show their ‘machismo’ when they hone in on a target?

Male bullies:

- tend to be more physical than their female counterparts, and they exude the threat of violence

---

<sup>5</sup> About.com, *How to Deal with a Bully at Work*, Susan M. Heathfield

## The Graduating Bully

in their behavior toward their targets. Women are sneakier.

- Male bullies tend to swear at their victims.
- Male bullies shout at their victims.
- Male bullies enjoy publically humiliating their victims.
- Male bullies engage in sexual harassment.

I was talking to a friend the other day and the topic of bullying came up — of course! (She knows I'm writing this series of books and she always asks how it's coming along . . .) Anyway, she told me that she and her husband were watching a TV show that was about military boot camps. She commented to her husband that if she were in the military, she would have a hard time being yelled at all of the time. Her husband responded that it was simply the way of the military, and that the intent is to make weak men strong and strong men stronger.

My friend didn't agree – she said it was bullying, pure and simple. What do you think?

Now, of course, military training is a different animal, but our conversation did make me think about how men bully, and

## The Graduating Bully

why they bully. Men are more overt in their bullying and women are more underhanded — the screaming and yelling you hear from a military sergeant and under the guise of ‘motivating’ his troops are quite similar to the ranting and raving you might hear from your bully male boss — in front of everyone!

*It all boils down to power.* Bullies of all ages recognize that bullying behavior empowers them and they feel good about themselves. Bullies within the corporate environment may bully because of corporate pressure to perform — if they don’t, the alternative may be hitting the ‘road to nowhere’ highway. Mesh that stress with corporate performance pressure, and you have an explosive recipe for disaster. The fact is, many corporate bullies yell, intimidate and micro-manage their way through their corporate lives.

The Men vs. Women graphic on the following page shows that women are gaining valuable ground in the gender bully fight.<sup>6</sup> The hard facts are these: we need to raise awareness about bullying in the workplace. We need to compel lawmakers to act on bullying legislation that will protect every employee. We need

---

<sup>6</sup> [mdstopbully.com](http://mdstopbully.com), *Bully Tactics*

## The Graduating Bully

to open our eyes and recognize that bullying is pervasive and pernicious.

*It destroys lives.*

## The Graduating Bully

Check this out:

### More likely to adopt these tactics:

	Men	Women
Public screaming	66%	58%
Illegal verbal tactics	55%	47%
Sabotaging contribution	54%	42%
Post-complaint retaliation	57%	47%
Timing abuse to correspond with medical or psychiatric vulnerability	53%	39%
Withholding resources for success, then blaming the target	52%	42%
Name calling	48%	35%
Threatening job loss	45%	32%
Interfering with paycheck or earned benefits	37%	28%
Blocking access to equipment	34%	26%
Illegal discrimination that is potentially actionable	22%	10%
Assigning person to unsafe work environment	19%	12%



# 3

## *Corporate responsibility*

It doesn't really matter whether it's men or women perpetrating the bullying — the sad fact is that bullying entrenches itself in the corporate culture and it's becoming an accepted workplace practice. I think one of the most disturbing aspects of bullying in the corporate culture is how we have allowed it to get to this point. It truly is rampant and, many times, the bullying behavior goes without consequence. Corporate executive administration often times takes the stance that 'it's just the way it is' and they refuse to do anything about it.

But is it really 'just the way it is'? I don't think so. As you've probably figured out by now, I have a lot of experience in dealing with the effects of corporate bullying. On the other hand, and, to

## The Graduating Bully

be fair, I have to admit that (in defense of corporations) many of them are beginning to take the bully by the horns and they are being proactive by instituting anti-bullying campaigns, as well as imposing severe consequences on employees, management and/or executives who participate in such despicable behavior. All I can say is . . . it's about time!

If corporations adopt the attitude that workplace bullying is an accepted, commonplace occurrence, then they're shirking their corporate responsibility to provide a work environment that is free from harm or danger for their employees. Most companies already have safety practices in place, but they don't pertain to guarding against bullying practices. And they certainly don't pertain to verbal assaults, which is the modus operandi for the workforce bully. I guess the upshot of all of this is that corporations know there is a bullying problem, but they're really not willing to do anything about it. Oh, some are — but, the majority of them prefer to sweep the problem under the rug and ignore the fact that their corporate bullying problem is costing them thousands and thousands of dollars.

## The Graduating Bully

Up until this point, I've tried to give you a little bit of background about the workplace bully — I think it's important that you have a working knowledge of what you may be up against. If you are a victim of a bully, the next several chapters will help you gain confidence, self-esteem and self-worth as you learn how to deflect your bully's arrows. You will learn, understand and practice how to react and respond when your bully targets you.

*You will become strong.*

# 4

## *Nuts and bolts*

If you're reading this book in its print version, grab a pencil and an eraser and settle in — you're about to do some heavy-duty thinking! If you're reading this as an e-book or on an ereader such as Kindle or Nook, grab any old piece of paper and a pen and keep track of your answers in this chapter. Ready? Good. Let's get to it . . .

I know it's easy for me to recognize if someone is being bullied — I've been around it for a very long time. I also know that it's easy for *you* to recognize when someone is being bullied. What's not so easy is to recognize and admit when you are the target of the bully . . . it's not easy to admit that you don't know what to do. After all, you're an adult!

## The Graduating Bully

*A quick story . . .* a colleague of mine is a private teacher and she teaches students from ages eleven through adult. Over the years, she's noticed an interesting trend — young people, for the most part, are resilient when they make mistakes. They typically don't brood about it, they don't get too bent out of shape, and they tend to get back on the proverbial horse and give it another go. Adults, on the other hand, exhibit opposite responses. They bring to their lessons the mistaken belief that just because they're adults, they should learn faster and their progress should be better than that of a child. In other words, they bring unreasonable expectations to their lessons. What do you think? Do you believe that just because you're an adult you won't make mistakes? I'm here to tell you — child or adult — it doesn't make any difference one way or the other. Everyone makes mistakes. So, how does that apply to bullying? Just this — not achieving an unreasonable expectation often serves as a catalyst for bullying behavior. In the corporate world, the lack of achievement causes stress for managers and supervisors, because the ultimate responsibility lies with them. Then, the stress flows downhill — if the manager or

## The Graduating Bully

supervisor possesses a bully personality, chances are pretty good that subordinate employees will get the flack.

Within the corporate environment, expectations are high and achievement is expected — success, reputation and money are at stake. Sometimes, when you're in the middle of a difficult situation (such as bullying at work), it's hard to see outside the parameters of a very small circle in which you stand in the middle. Your comfort zone becomes more compressed and you focus on self-protection, rather than what you might do to resolve whatever it is that is causing you to be uncomfortable. The bullying. In other words, you let the bully get the best of you and you don't stand up for yourself.

I totally get it. It's the reason I'm writing this series of books — bullies cannot be allowed to continue their behavior without consequence. I want you to be able to stand up and face your tormentor with grace, dignity and self-confidence — I want you to be strong!

One more thing before we get started — if you're reading this book because you know or suspect someone in your life is

The Graduating Bully

being bullied, answer the following questions from *your perspective* as an observer.

When you answer the following questions, please take your time and really think about your answers. If you get a little upset, that's okay. To be honest, I'd be surprised if you didn't get upset — we're going to be talking about a pretty heavy-duty stuff.

EXERCISE #1

1. Do you think you're the victim of a bully at work?

Yes

No

2. If your answer is 'yes', how long have you been a victim?

\_\_\_\_\_ Years    \_\_\_\_\_ Months    \_\_\_\_\_ Days

3. In five words, describe your personality *before* the bullying.

---

---

4. In five words, describe your personality *now*.

---

The Graduating Bully

---

5. Describe how you're being bullied.

---

---

---

6. Describe the changes in your personality since the bullying started.

---

---

---

---

---

7. How have the changes in your personality affected your family?

---

---

---

---

8. How are you handling those changes?

---



The Graduating Bully

---

---

9. Do you feel depressed?

Yes       No

10. Do you find excuses in order to miss work?

Yes       No

11. Is the quality of your work performance compromised?

Yes       No

12. Have you reported the abuse to your supervisor?

Yes       No

13. If your answer is no, why haven't you reported it?

---

---

---

14. Are you afraid you'll lose your job?

Yes       No

15. Have you received any disciplinary action at work because of the bullying?

Yes       No

16. If you answered yes, what kind of disciplinary action?

---

## The Graduating Bully

---

O.K! I've put you through enough! These are just some of the questions, though, that you'll need to answer if you really want to be honest with yourself about how bullying is affecting you. The questions represent the 'nuts and bolts' of how your being a victim of bullying is affecting you — the fact that you're willing to answer the questions in the first place, tells me that you have the guts to confront this problem head-on.

Props to you!

# 5

***So, now what do you do?***

Good question. Now that you've confronted your demon by honestly answering the questions in the last chapter, you're ready to take action and do something about it. I'm not going to lie to you — it may be difficult to read my words because you see yourself in the mirror. You may want to bail — and, if you do, it's fine. Just remember that if you want to regain control of your life, you'll have to make it through the tough stuff. Whenever that may be.

*Just sayin' . . .*

## The Graduating Bully

Since I don't have the opportunity to know the workplace bully situation with each of you, we'll work from the same criteria — a fictional story that has components of workplace

bullying. I'll ask, "What would you do?" more than once! I'll be willing to bet that when you look at a scene from 'the bully dialogues', you'll start to see that there is a way out — but only if you take action.

*Another story . . .*

*Sarah's dream of joining the best accounting firm in Miami finally came true three months ago. After a whirlwind move, she settled into a small two-bedroom condo only minutes from the beach — she thought she'd 'died and gone to heaven'! That's what her Mama always used to say . . .*

*She loved waking up to an ocean breeze, and as she dressed for her first day at work, she felt a sense of freedom. Finally, after all of her hard work, it paid off. This was her dream.*

*Sarah snagged a plum job at an accounting firm in the south — its reputation touched the northern tip of South Carolina and it seemed as if everyone knew the name of Hollis & Drake, Accounting Consultants. As much as she hated to admit it, her*

## The Graduating Bully

*dad probably played a part in her getting this job — his golf partner was the Sr. VP of Operations at H & D. But, it didn't*

*make any difference — she was where she knew she needed — and wanted — to be.*

*The first weeks flew by and by the time she started the second month, Sarah felt as if she were starting to fit in. It took awhile, but she was finally included in the 'let's go grab a beer after work' group, and for the first time in a very long time, she felt solid and included.*

*But, alas — it wasn't meant to last long. Within the first couple of months, Sarah began to feel pangs of self-doubt, stress and mild depression. She didn't think too much about it, because she thought she was just missing her family and friends from back home. When the feelings started to intensify, however, she began to take a closer look at the things in her life that may be causing such a strong sense of frustration. When she began to piece the puzzle together, a pattern of abuse and ridicule began to emerge.*

So, if you were a friend of Sarah's or part of her family, what would you do? Would you bring the changing behavior to

## The Graduating Bully

Sarah's attention and let her know that you're concerned about her? Or, would you let it go because you don't want to interfere?

Read on . . .

*When Sarah first began her position at Hollis and Drake, she thought her direct supervisor was cold and unwelcoming. Her supervisor made no attempt to make Sarah feel at home and, as the months crawled by, it was clear her supervisor had no interest in helping Sarah become successful at H&D. Whenever Sarah would complete a project, there were never words of praise, props or kudos for a job well done. In fact, it was just the opposite — her boss would pick apart her work and find every minute detail that may not be quite right. In the weekly team meetings, Sarah found herself as the target for her supervisor's barbs, and she could feel herself spiraling downward into a deeper depression.*

What would you do if you were one of Sarah's colleagues, and you witnessed the verbal abuse at the team meetings? Would you mention to Sarah that you saw and heard what was going on? Or, would you confront Sarah's boss about the behavior?

There's more . . .

## The Graduating Bully

*It wasn't long before Sarah's friends and family began to wonder what was wrong, but when they asked her about it, she adroitly dodged their questions and changed the subject. She didn't want anybody to know she was the victim of a bully.*

*Then the unthinkable happened. On a particularly humid morning in June, Sarah was found in her bathtub, warm water barely trickling from the faucet, her wrists nearly slashed to the bone.*

What would you do if you witnessed the abuse increasing against your colleague? Would you stand up for your peer or would you let him or her take it . . . alone?

*Colleagues from work attended the memorial service, including her boss, and a few of Sarah's closest friends murmured words of sorrow, as the perpetrator of Sarah's abuse stood by, her lips clenched tightly.*

*She never said a word.*

---

Don't you think it's interesting that Sarah's boss stood quietly by at the memorial service without saying a word? What do you think could be so wrong in her life that she had to take her

## The Graduating Bully

frustration out on someone else? Of course, we'll never know. However, we can make an educated guess that's predicated on research:

- low levels of empathy
- inability to handle stress well
- having positive beliefs about the self and negative beliefs about others
- immoral imagination (i.e., the ability to assign positive value to others' suffering)
- desire for revenge
- inability to communicate frustration and, therefore, resorting to aggression
- lack of self-control
- low self-monitor (i.e., unconcerned with what others think)
- learned bullying behaviors from parents or other coworkers
- narcissism
- motivation for power
- bureaucratic (the need for strict rules and the desire to enforce them)



## The Graduating Bully

- type A personality
  - jealousy
- 
- theory x orientation (the belief that others are lazy and will avoid work; therefore, requiring close supervision)
  - low self-esteem
  - sociopathic tendencies (i.e., aggressive impulses, gain satisfaction through anti-social behavior, lack remorse)

While there isn't one particular trait that defines bullies, researchers and scholars agree that workforce bullies are likely threatened by the people they bully and, therefore, they strike out in an effort to regain the control they think they have lost.<sup>7</sup> The truth is I could go on for the remainder of this book simply describing bullies and their behavior. But, I'm guessing you already know the behavior and you're ready to stand up and confront your situation.

---

<sup>7</sup> [www.noworkplacebullies.com/information](http://www.noworkplacebullies.com/information)

The Graduating Bully

*You're ready for a new start . . .*

# 6

## *Dealing with the abuse yourself*

You know now that a workplace bully may be a boss, a coworker, or anyone else who is employed at your place of business. It doesn't make any difference, though, who the person is because you should never be put in a situation where you are uncomfortable at work.

If you're dealing with a workplace bully, there are several responses you can implement in an effort to deal with the problem yourself:

- report the abuse to your human resources department
- seek the advice of someone you trust

## The Graduating Bully

- confront your tormentor in a professional manner (only if your physical well-being isn't threatened)
- don't try to win other employees over to your side
- don't allow your bully to diminish your self-worth
- perform your job responsibilities to the best of your ability
- make it a point to inform your direct superiors about the situation
- don't allow the bully to alienate you from your coworkers
- make every effort to maintain your workplace friendships

Let's take each one of these bullet-point responses one-by-one — since it's difficult for me to address your specific situation, it will be important that you think about each item and apply it to you.

1. *Report the abuse to your Human Resources Department.*

The thing to remember is that if you don't report the abuse, there won't be any record of it. And, having a record will be important if your situation persists . . . keep a log of all

## The Graduating Bully

communication and request to see your employee file on a regular basis.

Many times, the HR department will have a resource for an outside, third-party complaint line, so be certain to have the contact information at the ready.

In conjunction with reporting the bullying to HR, you should begin keeping a journal of incidents and witnesses, as well as the dates and settings regarding where the abuse took place. If you are a victim of discriminatory emails, keep them in a personal folder that no one else can access. Knowing that you are taking action (even if it's something that you may think is inconsequential) will help you gain confidence, and you'll begin to feel empowered that you are actually taking action against your tormentor.

It's also helpful to take a look at the Federal laws for discrimination or any other offense that may be linked to bullying. If you report any kind of harassment that occurs at the workplace, the company must address it in a timely manner.

## The Graduating Bully

Of course, you always have the option of contacting an attorney to represent you. Sometimes, all it takes is a Letter of Intent from an attorney to force the bully to cease and desist. Even though it may seem like you have to keep a bunch of records and study some of the law pertinent to your area, it will be worth it in the long run — especially if you need to seek legal counsel. (Records, records, records! Keep them tidy and in chronological order!)

However, all of that said, the possibility exists that HR professionals aren't going to help you — for a number of reasons:

- they may not believe your claims
- they may 'wait to see what happens'
- it's too much trouble
- the HR department may be ineffectual
- they may not want to deal with the trouble that may arise from your complaint

The fact that HR might not help you is one reason you shouldn't put all of your eggs in one basket — find several

## The Graduating Bully

different sources (the Internet is a good one) that may be able to help you confront your bully tormentor.

### 2. *Seek the advice of someone you trust.*

It may not seem like much, but simply by confiding in someone who is close to you will help you in several ways. First, the observations of a third party will allow you to see the situation from, perhaps, a different perspective. Your confidant may recognize the symptoms of your being a bully victim and he or she may be able to diffuse the situation. It's always possible that you're minimizing the affect that the bullying has on you — or, you may not be certain that you're being bullied.

### 3. *Confront your tormentor in a professional manner.*

Unfortunately, bullies come in all shapes and sizes and they can be male or female. Many times, it's difficult to spot the workforce bully and, if the bullying situations arise with you as the intended victim, it's critical that you take action immediately. If your physical well-being isn't threatened, make it clear that you will not be a victim — do so with a

## The Graduating Bully

clear, authoritative voice and make eye contact. Just by exuding self-confidence, you will become a formidable force and one, perhaps, that will discourage any further abuse. You can well imagine that the perpetrator of your abuse isn't going to want any 'bad press' — he or she prefers that you won't fight back for *your* rights. Keep in mind that bullies often act and react in secrecy and under the cloak of personality disguise. By that, I mean not everyone sees the bully personality and, for that reason, bullies often go unrecognized and unchecked. It makes sense not to isolate yourself — bullies often torment those who are alone, which makes you more vulnerable.

#### 4. *Don't try to win over other employees to your side.*

Although it's important to discuss your situation with someone you trust, it's not wise to discuss it with another employee of your company. Rumors spread quickly within any corporate culture, and if it becomes known that you are being bullied or you 'think' you're being bullied, you may be placing yourself in a more precarious position. After all, you don't know how other people think of and perceive the



## The Graduating Bully

individual who is bullying you. While it's wise to discuss your situation with one you trust, it's also wise to make certain your confidant is someone who is outside of your corporate environment.

### 5. *Don't allow a bully to diminish your self-worth.*

Bullies thrive on watching their target victims crumble. They live for it, they enjoy it, and they'll do anything in their power to achieve the feeling of superiority, power and control that victimizing someone gives them. Don't forget, bullies target those whom they perceive as weaker than they, and they don't expect their victims to stand up to them.

### 6. *Perform your job responsibilities to the best of your ability.*

If you are experiencing bullying from a direct supervisor, it's vitally important that you stay on top of your job — don't hand a bully a silver platter loaded with reasons to abuse you! Oh, he or she may still try to diminish your self-worth and effectiveness to the company, but it will be much more difficult to achieve that goal if you continue to perform

admirably. A supervisor or manager bully often seeks out other people with whom to discuss *your* problems — by performing your job responsibilities and staying at the top of your game, your colleagues will perceive you to be better than your bullying boss makes you out to be.

7. *Make it a point to inform your direct superiors about the situation.*

If the person who is bullying you is a colleague and not your direct manager or supervisor, it's always wise to bring the situation to your direct superiors' attention. However, it's not wise to report a bullying situation to a manager or supervisor without the proper documentation or evidence. Managers or supervisors worth their salt will always request pertinent examples of your allegation — if you hem and haw and can't pinpoint any one definite example of abuse, then you really don't stand much of a chance of convincing them that the situation is intolerable, unacceptable, unprofessional and inexcusable. Do you remember the television series *Dragnet*? Joe Friday always requested the victim to tell 'just the facts' — the same applies to you when you document all incidents of bullying.

## The Graduating Bully

Rather than taking a chance on catching your manager or supervisor at a bad time, schedule an appointment for a period of time that will allow you to discuss, in depth, the level of abuse that you are enduring. You want your manager or supervisor to be a captive audience, and if you don't schedule an appointment to discuss the situation, it's a pretty good bet that your manager or supervisor will not give you as much credence or time as you deserve.

8. *Don't allow the bully to alienate you from your coworkers.*

I mentioned earlier that bullies tend to target their victims when they are alone. If you work in a team environment, make an effort to maintain a group of friends and colleagues within your team, as well as elsewhere in your corporate organization. Remember that bullies tend to target those individuals who appear to be social misfits, or one who tends to function outside a circle of teammates or friends. If you make it a point to be with your teammates or other colleagues at your company, your bully tormentor may think twice before choosing you as a target. If you are

already a bully's target, you can minimize the abuse by being with a group of people while you're at work.

9. *Make every effort to maintain workplace friendships.*

This really goes along with the previous suggestion — i.e., don't let a bully alienate you from your coworkers. But, this one is slightly different — when you surround yourself with friends and people who enjoy your company, it's going to be very difficult for a bully to target you by permeating a strong circle of friends. Your friends will stick up for you and they will guard you from your bully's assaults — many times, without even knowing it!

The important thing to take away from this chapter is to realize that you cannot be a shrinking violet. It's important to recognize that you must stand up for yourself, you must take matters into your own hands, and you must be responsible for your happiness.

*The bottom line? No one is going to do it for you . . .*

# 7

## *Fight, flight and fear*

So, what's the difference between conflict and abuse? I can certainly understand how and why you may be confused about what appears to be an imperceptible difference. We've all experienced conflict, whether it's within our own families, with strangers or with coworkers. And, you know when conflict or discord crosses the line to abuse — well, the same thing applies here. Bullying, without question is *abuse*. Bullies enjoy exercising power with the express intent to inflict pain and suffering. I think you'll agree that those intentions will cross the line . . .

When you were in middle school or early high school, you probably learned about how the body works. And, at some time during those years, you learned about the adrenal glands. You

## The Graduating Bully

know, those tiny little glands that secrete adrenaline, which is the 'fight or flight' hormone? (I'm always amazed that something so tiny can have such a huge impact on our lives!) When you are in a precarious or uncomfortable situation, adrenaline is the catalyst for your response — to stay and fight or get the heck out of there!

The same thing applies to your response to bullying. Fight and flight are two strategies that you may implement when faced with a bully's assault. If you decide to incorporate the fight strategy, you may choose to engage with or confront your bully yourself, or you might choose to bring in one of the big guns from corporate — i.e., your direct supervisor or manager (providing, of course, that either one of them is not the bully). You may choose to respond by using the flight strategy, which usually culminates by leaving the company or organization. Let's face it, you have to do one or the other — there really isn't a whole lot of middle ground, unless you enjoy being miserable. If that's the case, sit by and don't do anything because it ain't gonna get a whole lot better!

So, it's your choice.

## The Graduating Bully

Fear is a funny thing. You have the option to stay (fight) or bolt (flight) and, I think, running away is the standard response. But, the majority of people don't know you're running away from the assaults and barbs of a workplace bully. As the victim of a bully within the workforce, you have to move through your day as if nothing is out of the ordinary and as if you're not scared. You have to be professional, efficient, cost-effective to the company, pleasant and interesting, as well as engaged in the corporate process. It's very difficult to tell just by looking at somebody whether or not they're a victim of a bully — unless you spill the beans to someone, no one on your team or in your organization will have any idea that your days are filled with fear and torment. They don't know that you're scared out of your mind, or that you're fearful of losing your job if you report the abuse.

*They don't know how badly you're hurting.*

Your bully knows, though. He or she loves the look of fear on your face when your eyes connect, and that moment of realization when you recognize you're only moments from a verbal assault. Fear is a mighty motivator and bullies rely on it in order to achieve their ultimate goal — humiliation, embarrassment and personal degradation.

## The Graduating Bully

Bullies, no matter where they are, are tyrants — and, tyrants spread misery. Few suspect their tyrannical ways because, from the outside, everything seems fine — or, in the words of the hippies from the '60s, everything seems *copacetic*. I suppose they're right — everything is fine — with the *bully!* It's the victim (that would be you) who's not doing so well.

According to recent research, confrontations with a supervisor or manager often stir up deeply recessed fear and pain from old conflicts with parents, siblings or other formidable figures from childhood. Once those feelings surface, bully victims may be unable to manage effectively the bullying situation.<sup>8</sup>

The sad fact is bullying supervisors, managers and bosses thrive on the fear they instill and incite in others whom they perceive to be weak and unable to defend themselves.

---

<sup>8</sup> *Fear in the Workplace: The Bullying Boss*, NY Times.com, Benedict Carey, June 22, 2004



# 8

## *Far-reaching effects*

Unless you're living in a hole, it's a pretty good guess that those around you are noticing your changing behavior. How could they *not* notice? Especially your family — even though they aren't experiencing the abuse directly, there's bound to be an effect on your family as your torment begins to infiltrate your home life.

Employees who are bullied often feel they have no safe haven in which they can discuss and talk freely about the problem, so they bring it home to the ones they love. 'It' is the venting by the victim and the spouse or family member often feels desperate to help fix situation. You know what I'm going to

## The Graduating Bully

say, don't you? Well, you're right — no one can solve the problem except you. The only one who can help the problem is the one facing it — and, if you're thinking that's kind of a bummer, I don't blame you.

Stress (when you're the victim of a bully, there's certainly a bunch of stress) often filters down into the realm of the family; when that happens, it's time for those affected by your work situation to point out gently how the workplace stress is taking a toll on your marriage, as well as on the kids. As much as you don't want to hear it, be willing to listen to your friends' or family's recounting of incidents when you 'vented'. It will be an emotional discussion, I'm sure, but you must be willing to accept and understand the repercussions of your allowing yourself to be a victim, as well as the repercussions of venting to your family.

Let's turn the tables a bit — let's say that your spouse is the one who is enduring bullying. What would you do to attempt to alleviate the feelings of being trapped and low self-esteem of your spouse? You might be tempted to tell your spouse to get over it, quit or ask why he or she cares what the bully thinks of them — this is, perhaps, not the best technique. Think about it — if your spouse

## The Graduating Bully

is in a vulnerable state because of eroded self-esteem, he or she may have difficulty envisioning success in a new position. Even though it's not your intent, you may cause even greater stress and instability if you suggest quitting the current position. Plus, there's the possibility of one more thing happening that you didn't intend — even if your spouse does take your advice and quits, you may catch the blame if he or she is unable to obtain suitable employment elsewhere. Either way, the results aren't good.

One of the best courses of action is to encourage your spouse to seek professional support for stress and angst. An excellent coach or counselor will be a much more appropriate venting station than a loved one who feels powerless to aid in the change of environment, or help develop any realistic coping skills. Let's be honest — even if you do possess the appropriate skills to deal with the situation, your objectivity will rate pretty low. If the cost of professional intervention is too much of a leap, consider encouraging your spouse to speak to a member of the clergy, a crisis volunteer or an objective friend who is willing to help brainstorm plausible solutions to the problem.

## The Graduating Bully

So, what do you do if you're sitting around the table or on the couch, and your spouse begins to vent? Well, get out and try to get your spouse to walk and talk — but, try to do this in a rather inconspicuous way. When walking and talking, your spouse expends emotion quicker through physical activity (you may want to consider a racquetball court or tennis court to help in this process, as well.) Once the venom ceases, gently guide your spouse toward brainstorming some options for addressing the problem. Have your pen and paper ready, and brainstorm about ten action steps your spouse can take to address the problem. It will take some work, but the exercise will help redirect energy and focus towards something more useful and productive than screaming or venting at you and the kids!

Realize that the steps your spouse takes do not have to be entirely successful — it's often the assurance of having some action steps ready to go that provides the greatest relief from uncertainty.

Here's the deal — whether you are watching your spouse or loved one deal with the torment created by a bully, or *you* are the victim of a bully, it's wise to engage the services of a professional

## The Graduating Bully

counselor when the need to vent arises. Allow your home to be your safe haven and use it as a place of refuge. The far-reaching effects of a bully's abuse are many, and you must realize that you can't deal with the problem alone.

# 9

## *Emotional responses*

Depression. We've all heard the term and we know what it means — you probably recognize the symptoms in a friend, a family member or, perhaps, yourself. 'Depression' is a clinical term which is thought to aptly apply in about forty percent of counseling cases, and bullying is often the culprit for the depression. Unfortunately, the word 'depression' is often bandied about without regard to the actual clinical meaning. So, rather than using the symptoms of depression to further clarify the prolonged impacts of bullying, I'll identify the various emotions that augment the feeling of despair so often felt by the bullies' victims.

## The Graduating Bully

As you can well imagine, targets of bullying often feel an overwhelming sense of *anger*, which translates into feeling a sense of *injustice*. In addition, a profound sense of *shame* (a feeling of *I totally deserve this*) inserts its ugly head into the mix; and, when coupled with anger or a sense of injustice, the resulting emotional response is often a feeling of 'there's no way out'. Unfortunately, when a person feels there is no way out and there isn't a way to make the situation better, depression is a natural byproduct. It probably goes without saying, but if you, your spouse or loved one is enduring bullying, the best solution is to seek professional counseling. Recognize that unless you have professional psychology training under your belt, you are not equipped to diagnose depression — leave that diagnosis to the pros!

The profound sense of anger that I previously mentioned is definitely a part of the grieving process, so it can look and feel very much like the grief cycle following a death. And, in many ways, it is a death —victims of workplace bullies grieve lost dreams, potential earnings and, perhaps, even their overall self-esteem or well-being. The workforce bully preys on the mindset that your social or business status is important to you and your

## The Graduating Bully

overall performance. The bully *preys* on it and *counts* on it, and the overall objective of the bully is to raise his or her status and lower yours. As a result, over a prolonged period of time, bully targets may feel anger at having lost their dream job (much like an individual feeling angry due to the loss of a loved one too early). Interestingly, anger is a natural part of the grieving cycle and it activates the injustice trigger in the brain (e.g., *He was too young and I never deserved to be treated like that!*)

One of the main emotional responses that the victims of bullies feel is a sense of how horribly unfair the situation is (the injustice trigger) — they didn't ask for this, they don't want it and they don't know how to deal with it. Dr. Matthew Lieberman and his colleagues at UCLA proved that our brains chemically react to fair and just treatment just the same way it responds to chocolate and sex. The science is complex, I know, but the result isn't. If, as a victim of a bully, you feel that you are getting the short end of the deal, you will behave in a way that may sabotage you. The craving for justice and fairness (in your brain) is so intense, that *vengeance* becomes a pleasurable event because it gives rise to the hormones in the chocolate/sex area of the brain. Tapping into that vengeance is why we often act or speak impulsively, and in



## The Graduating Bully

ways that we regret later — then it's back to the *shame* factor. Are you getting it? I thought so — your emotions become like tangled fishhooks, and you travel in circles of torment and despair.

Even if we don't use the term 'clinical depression', we recognize that prolonged bullying episodes can definitely lead to powerful feelings of loss of self-worth, perceived value and status. Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) can occur in some cases (akin to burnout and depression cycles), and prolonged stress often gives rise to *depression symptomology*, which is why it's diagnosed so often in bullying cases.

You've probably seen it – burnout, fatigue and stress are often signs of and synonymous with depression. You may not feel like getting up and going to work, and you may also feel as if you lack the courage or strength to do anything about it. If left unchecked, this behavior will drip relentlessly into your personal life and you, a once enthusiastic family member, will lose interest in activities and social events — even holidays. When you look at it that way, it doesn't sound as if there's much to look forward to, does there? Well, it doesn't have to be that way — that's why you or someone you know who is the victim of a bully must take

## The Graduating Bully

action now! Stand up! Let your anger work for you! Take charge of *your* life and don't leave your happiness up to someone else!

And, there you have it. Those last five sentences sum up what this book is about. I hope when you read the remaining pages, you're inspired to take command by taking even one small step — it will be the best thing you've ever done. Always keep in mind that the first step is the hardest, and it's also the most important.

---

There is a saying — 'depression hurts'. Well, it's true, but maybe not in the way you may think. Depression can manifest itself in aches and pains, IBS, chronic fatigue syndrome, headaches, heart palpitations, indigestion, increased infections and injuries — and, that names only a few of the physical maladies that can erupt. The same types of physical reactions occur when you lose a loved one — not always, of course, but they certainly aren't uncommon. In fact, science tells us that we are likely to develop a serious illness, approximately 18 months after a specific trauma. Let that statistic sink in for a second. Eighteen months is going on two years, and it's sad to realize that

## The Graduating Bully

stress has such a lingering impact. The fact is that victims and targets of bullies often grieve the life they used to lead.

# 10

## *The young workforce bully victim*

Most of the time, you may tend to think of workplace bully victims as adults — and, they usually are. But I think I would be remiss if I didn't discuss the young workforce bully target — children from the ages of 15 to 18. Even in these tough economic times when it's difficult for an adult to get a job, kids still have the opportunity to work and they should expect to receive the same respect from their supervisors and managers, colleagues and peers as a worker who is of legal age.

Do you remember your first job? I know I do. Recently, I was talking to a friend of mine who recalled the first job she ever had — a waitress in a diner. At the tender age of fifteen, she

## The Graduating Bully

endured pats on the butt, wolf whistles and the occasional request for a date. My friend is on the downhill slide to sixty years old, and times were very different when she was a teenager. In those days, it was virtually unheard of for a teenager to register a complaint against a supervisor, boss or manager, because of fear of reprisal. And, losing the job. Young people really didn't have a place to go — labor grievances were beginning to take hold, but they usually related to individuals who were over twenty-one. Today? We shouldn't tolerate that behavior . . .

You may wonder if a bully who targets a younger worker is considered a child predator — it's a good question, but it's one that would be difficult to resolve in a court of law. The American and Canadian justice systems consider child predators to be sexual deviants, and the term 'predator' defines someone who willfully and purposefully attempts to limit, restrict or control an individual against his or her free will. And, if you want to get really technical about it, a child worker can leave an organization, switch jobs or departments, or simply vacate the premises as an undeniable right. A true predator will prevent this from occurring.

## The Graduating Bully

Of course, we hope that our children will find themselves in wonderfully supportive working environments where they understand their rights to personal safety, and they are encouraged to grow and develop insight, motivation and the desire to contribute. However, some of our kids aren't so lucky. Screaming supervisors plague workplaces, as do low supervision and demands for risk-taking beyond official health and safety standards. Many times, these children have no idea that they can say, "No" unless their parents practice delivering messages of resiliency and independent thinking. Even then, it's still possible to miss a step.

So, what's the best course of action for a young workforce bully victim who doesn't have the life experience of an adult? Well, I have to tell you, that I have many clients who fit into this category and I encouraged them to talk through strategies and brainstorm options with me. By brainstorming the options, the bully victims have the opportunity to have an important hand in planning the strategy, and they realize that they are in charge of their own lives. After brainstorming, we make a priority list of what must happen first, and then we brainstorm about the subsequent steps based on the results of the first step. Does that

## The Graduating Bully

make sense? In other words, bully victims need to create that first, initial step toward normalizing their lives. Then, once that action takes place and they know the result or response from the bully, the bully victims determine the next steps of their action plans. Each step has a cause and an effect, and each step relates to the next step in the action plan.

Remember this — *kids need to hear stories about others who came before them*. They also need to know that they are not alone and that there are many adults facing exactly the same issues. I teach that surviving a workplace bully is more strategic than you might think and it's necessary to develop skills and tools, as well as a resilient mindset in order to help bounce back from horrible bosses and workplaces.

Many times, a young workforce victim will take out the frustration of a dysfunctional work environment on siblings, and they will often repeat the bullying behavior to younger siblings. Just as I mentioned in the first question with respect to spouses, the sense of injustice and anger tends to filter into our quasi-safe zones — i.e., home, school and groups of friends. Many kids don't truly realize that their abusive behavior is a natural response to the behavior they must endure at work. Many of them don't

## The Graduating Bully

even think about it. But, when someone is feeling unjustly treated, vengeance becomes the dessert of choice — and, the best place to eat it is at home!

If you notice that your teenage child is taking out his or her frustration on younger siblings, sit down and have a chat about what is changing, and inquire specifically about work and school. Try to hone in on the source of the stress and angst.

Several years ago, my daughter was dealing with a bully situation at the grocery store where she worked. I didn't have any idea that anything was really going on, until she started overreacting at home. As soon as her behavior indicated something was changing, we hashed it out and narrowed down the problem. Then I intervened. Why? Because with students it's important to have them hear how you handle the issue, so they can learn to model your responses. Unlike an adult, a child needs an advocate — an accomplice of reason to demonstrate your suggestions. In my case, my daughter did wind up quitting the grocery store, but the horrible bosses were more angry with me (Mom), because I was harder to bully!

There are some parents who slough it off when bullying occurs to their child. Not all parents, of course, but some do.



## The Graduating Bully

Those who tend to minimize the gravity of bullying are probably not certain of what they would do themselves, if they were in the same situation. They also consider employment for young workers more transient — they look at it as a matter of learning a work ethic rather than developing a dream career opportunity. Unfortunately, this attitude is destructive and it may cause young workers to lose their workplace self-esteem early, and getting them off the couch and gainfully employed later may prove to be a huge challenge. Children need to learn they are valuable and they need to know you think they deserve respectful treatment.

We know that we can't intervene on every petty issue with kids — they need to learn resiliency tools. They need to know how to command fair treatment from their immediate supervisors. By teaching children how to respond in difficult situations, we increase their abilities to deal with life, build their courage and elevate their senses of self worth.

As a concerned parent, you need to be able to spot the workplace bullying incidents, because they are completely different than the, *"I can't believe my boss expects me to actually get up for a 7 AM shift! Doesn't he/she know that teenagers do better at night?"* Simply by marking the pages in this book that

## The Graduating Bully

refer to indications or symptoms of bullying, you will be able to discern if your child is enduring the abuse of a workplace bully. Know what to look for — and, when you find it, broach the subject with care, caution and an open mind.

You never know what you're going to hear . . .

# 11

## ***What to look for...***

So, what do you look for if you suspect someone you know (or, yourself) is enduring the torment of a workplace bully? Most of the time, bully victims exhibit similar behavior and demeanor. Usually, there's a lack of eye contact, eyes casting downward, shoulders slumping, tears, fidgeting, frustration, anger and exhaustion. Nine times out of ten, that's what I see when a bully victim walks in my door.

There are other similarities — they're desperate for me to align with their way of thinking, and they want me to help them to stop feeling so alone. And, when they seek my help, they really don't have any idea of what to expect — the visit to my office can be just as intimidating as facing their tormentor.

## The Graduating Bully

It's my job to normalize and move the bully victim from 'victim thinking' to critical problem solving as quickly as possible. It's important to get to the crux of the issue quickly, and there isn't any need to rehash all of the pain. But, getting to the bottom of their bullying torment is easier said than done. Kids may hide in a hoodie and cross their arms in an attempt to block me, but only because they feel powerless to effect change and they don't believe I can help them. Thankfully, we move away from that pretty quickly by sharing stories.

---

*Counseling.* If you or someone you know is the target of the workforce bully, I strongly urge you to seek counseling from a trained and educated professional. The sad fact is ineffectual counseling often creates long-lasting psychological damage to the victim and, unfortunately, this happens all too often. The best counselors are those who believe in a conflict intervention approach instead of rehashing painful incidents time and again. By being proactive and keeping the endgame in mind, it's easier to address the bullying issues. Always be aware that, sometimes, there isn't a lot that can effect change other than the individuals

## The Graduating Bully

who are making complete changes themselves. Examples of long-lasting ineffectual counseling are:

- Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
- burnout
- suicide

Typically, when bully victims experience these types of feelings, they feel no one can help them and it leads them down the path of 'no option' thinking.

Then, there are times when religion plays a part in the bully victims' thinking, but it's really not any different than the sense of injustice and unfairness I mentioned earlier. In this case, the blame is on God, because when the chips fall, the victims need a scapegoat — someone to blame. Sometimes, though, if a bully victim has a sense of a higher power in his or her life, that sense can present a massive depression. Many religions loudly oppose suicide and the fear of living in hell keeps this option (depression) from coming to fruition. For others, a sense of hope for a higher being can prevent a victim from taking steps that ultimately lead to dire consequences.

## The Graduating Bully

If faith plays a part in your life, just by having a spiritual guide to talk to and the comfort of your church congregation around you, you may prevent feelings of isolation. Bully victims often feel like outcasts, and they feel as if there isn't anyone to talk to. If you're a bully victim, remember to surround yourself with people who love you — and, whom you love!

---

*Are the signals of workforce bullying the same in young workers as they are in adults?* For the most part, yes. Look for deviations from normal behavior in adults and teens (the young worker). If they are normally social, are they becoming anti-social? Are you witnessing a normally calm person explode in a violent rage? Do you see a once optimistic and adventurous souls becoming withdrawn, hesitant and speaking about themselves negatively? Are they self-deprecating? Do they seem tired all of the time? Is their posture slumping? Have they quit looking at you in the eye? Is work or school performance diminished? Are they claiming illness more often — especially headaches and stomachaches?

When we break it down, there are myriad signals — the trick is to *know* what they are and then to *recognize* them!

# 12

## ***How to respond to and deflect a bully's abuse***

Well, here we are — at the crossroads. Will you confront your bully's abuse or will you say nothing? Will you stand firm or will you crumble? Up to now, we've discussed how to recognize bullying behavior and how to deal with it *within* the corporate structure. Now, it's your turn. This chapter will give you strong answers and responses for when your bully targets you — and, before long, he or she will lose interest and move on to someone else whom they perceive to be weak — or, threatening.

I suggest that you treat these responses as an acting exercise, because if you don't, your response may not be as strong as possible. Grab a family member or good friend and practice these

## The Graduating Bully

scenarios — the more you practice, the more confident you will become and your responses will be more effective.

Here we go . . .

### LANGUAGE PATTERNS — NLP

In case you're not familiar with NLP, it means Neuro Linguistic Programming. If you really listen to what people say, you'll begin to notice three basic patterns in their language: visual, auditory or kinesthetic. A visual person may *look* into a problem, an auditory person may make sure everyone is *singing* from the same hymn sheet, and a kinesthetic person may *grasp* an opportunity. Once you learn to recognize these three types of individuals, you will know how to respond to each of them in an appropriate manner.

Effective communication on a one-to-one basis involves the recognition and reciprocal use of the language patterns other people use — in other words, speak to them the way they speak to you. By doing this, they will understand and respond to you quicker and in a positive manner — much more so than if you use a different language pattern and one to which they are not



## The Graduating Bully

instinctively attuned. However, in order to recognize the language pattern, you need to know what to look for:

### VISUAL PEOPLE

- Speak quickly (remember that a picture is worth a thousand words), and they also use broken sentences. They also tend to jump ahead and finish your statements.
- Gesture a lot with their hands, as well as use pointed movements
- Breathe shallowly and quickly; they may even get breathless if speaking on a subject they like
- Are very mindful of how they look — they like color, and they like everything to match (they would rather look good than be comfortable!)
- Look up a lot with their eyes
- Socialize a lot — such as being seen in the right places at the right time
- Are neat freaks
- Are impatient

## The Graduating Bully

- Are result-oriented — they get the job done
- Use ‘*show me*’ as their watch words
- Think very fast (speed of light versus speed of sound)
- Love graphs, charts, visual presentations, EYE  
CANDY
- Like short, clear, concise presentations that get to the point
- Hate to be interrupted — they may lose their thoughts
- Ask questions that stimulate visual responses, such as, “How will this look to the others?”
- Are keen on, “Can you see this happening? Would you like to see our information?”
- Use visual words: *look, see, clear, sharp, focus*

## AUDITORY PEOPLE

- Speak slower and are rhythmic
- Like long conversations
- Tug at their ears or touch their mouths
- Have deeper breathing that is mid-chest range

## The Graduating Bully

- Dress casually — no bright colors, but still like to ‘match’
- Are slower in their thought processes, but are more deliberate in their thinking
- Like to talk things over with others, as well as with themselves to check on how it sounds
- Love animals and they have a kinship with nature
- Look to the sides frequently
- Would rather live in the quiet countryside than in a city
- At a party, they will huddle with others to talk
- Like soothing music at work
- Are good at handling people
- Are more open to both sides of an argument
- May over-explain things
- Need to be told what to do
- Need to be heard
- Do not like charts and graphs
- Use a lot of stories and metaphors

## The Graduating Bully

- Use auditory words: *hear, talk, discuss, cry and buzz*

### KINESTHETIC PEOPLE

- Speak slowly and deliberately
- Touch chest or rub chin, and use gestures that draw you in
- Look down
- Breathe slowly and deeply
- Dress casually and dress for comfort
- Need to apply feeling to thoughts, such as, “I’m not sure how I feel about this.”
- Like to hug and they may be moody
- Like parties where they feel comfortable
- Make great counselors and brilliant business people
- Like hands-on learning
- Can read through manipulative presentations and people
- Do not like graphs or charts
- May be one step ahead of others in negotiations

## The Graduating Bully

- Use feeling words: *touch, grasp, handle, dig in*

So, here's the deal — *when we understand these types of individuals, we tap into the most powerful ability to influence how others make decisions!* Don't forget that bullies come in all shapes and sizes, and they will be members of one of the three categories. After learning and paying attention to how your bully speaks, you will be able to diffuse and deflect the abusive behavior.

### HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT

Take the time to notice how people move their eyes — listen to their language and step into their world. It will dramatically improve your understanding of their unique needs and perspectives.

### EXPLORE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF LANGUAGE PATTERNS

One of the single most important activities in your life relates to your ability to communicate — those who have great communication skills can communicate well, despite being under pressure.

## The Graduating Bully

In order for you to be effective in dealing with your bully, you must understand that you (and, the bully) are always communicating with each other. Whether or not your communication is well received is really all that matters, especially if you need to communicate under pressure (such as when you confront the bully).

When I work with bully victims, we concentrate on how the *little* words matter in the big scheme of things. It's important to understand that what you *don't* say is more important than what you *do* say; and, we are more influenced by body language and tone of voice. Because of your recognizing and paying attention to the subliminal 'tells', it's unlikely that a bully can influence you by using pretty words. To make it easier to understand, think of it this way: if body language and the tone of voice don't match what's coming out of the mouth, be on your guard!

There are classes that teach how to control your non-verbal communication, and I encourage you to participate in one or several; discover how you present yourself to others. Whether we are listening or whether we are speaking, the *way* a person says something matters more than *what* they are saying.

## The Graduating Bully

When you speak, your face communicates your attitudes, feelings and emotions — more than any other part of your body. Removing expressions that don't belong on your face is a great way to confront a bully, as well as gain control of a potentially traumatic bully situation. So, what do I mean by ‘removing expressions’? Well, if you're confronted by a bully and you show fear on your face, then the bully will be motivated to increase the torment. If you can learn how to gain control of your emotions and erase that look of fear on your face, the bully isn't receiving the satisfaction that he or she craves. Trust, me — bullies enjoy seeing a look of terror on their targets' faces. If you continue to exhibit no fear, bullies will eventually tire of you as a target, and they'll move on to someone else.

Another very important element of confronting bullies is eye contact, for it is the cement that binds people together. Do you remember playing the ‘staring game’ with your family or friends when you were young? You know — whoever breaks the stare first is touted the loser. Think about how you might take this childhood game and turn it into an effective way to confront bullies — if bullies see that you're not turning away from their gazes, you begin to take control of the situation.

## The Graduating Bully

Putting others at ease starts with you. When you're feeling confident and positive, others around you are more positive and open to your influence and charisma. And, because your physical demeanor impacts your overall mood, you can use body language to change the way you feel, including reducing nervousness and fear.

There are extremely powerful, unspoken signals that help gain attention, trust and respect:

- **Listen to your own voice.** The tone of your voice can communicate as much (if not more) than the words you choose. If there is an edge to your voice, it will be harder for you to influence productively.

Although stats vary, at least 70% of us are followers, and we prefer to follow rather than make decisions. Using a firm tone is the quickest way to let people know you are the person in the lead — this activates our desire to follow and puts you in a more influential position. However, we aren't talking aggression here. 'Firm' is a state of confidence and certainty, not ego posturing.



## The Graduating Bully

- **Learn how to bluff.** If you want to be a great influencer, you must first learn how to ‘bluff’. No, I am not talking about being deceitful — I mean that you have to learn how to bluff so no one guesses that you are nervous. Even if you are nervous or under pressure, you have to look like you’re in total control and loving every minute of it. You have to look cool and calm, because the moment you break under pressure spells the end of your control.
- **Focus on what you need.** By that, I mean focus on what you *need* to get out of the dialogue with a bully, rather than the emotions that are triggering you. When you don’t know what you want, there are many people who will be delighted to see you work toward *their* outcomes — i.e., bullies get what they want because they feed on your fear and emotions. If you don’t focus, you can’t be in control. When you’re slammed by emotion or under pressure try to remember you hear things literally. If there are two ways to interpret a message, someone under pressure will usually choose the most negative interpretation. Words are tools for making your intention clear, so focus on creating a calm, safe environment with them.

## The Graduating Bully

- **Be optimistic, but keep things in the boundaries of truth.** Use words that affirm the ability to accomplish things rather than words that suggest only possibility of accomplishment. Start phrases with, “You can . . .” or, “You will . . .”

Since over 70% of our communication is actually non-verbal, use it to your advantage by projecting calmness or confidence.

*Remember: Our intention and degree of empathy are communicated in a dozen ways before we even open our mouths.*

### HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT

Before you learn the language patterns of influence, I want you to gain powerful insight into the non-verbal communication that is always in play. Begin by watching the news or a show where guests are being interviewed live — with the sound off — to see if you can detect the unspoken communication. Un-mute the program and check back in to see if you were on the money. Recognition takes practice, so keep at it until it becomes second nature! There are many books on the subject of body language, as well, so next time you’re at the library, check one out. It’s fascinating stuff!

## 5 PRACTICAL WAYS TO DEAL WITH THE ‘CONTROL FREAK’

We’ve all encountered control freaks in our lives, but, for some reason, they seem to be prevalent within the workforce. Many years ago, I worked with a woman who made Attila the Hun look good — she was micromanaging, over-controlling, bombastic and just plain difficult to work with on a regular basis. She didn't just want to know what her staff was *doing* every second — she wanted to know what they were *thinking* every second! She refused to credit people with intelligence or initiative, and morale at the workplace sank to low levels that I never thought possible.

Honestly, though, I didn’t take it personally. It wasn't that she was monitoring *my* every move — she was monitoring everyone's moves. We all suffered from the same malady, and our boss’ desire for complete control made our lives miserable. Now, don't get me wrong — there's nothing wrong with control. However, if someone needs to have control in order to feel secure, it turns into unnecessary greed. And, even though the mantra of 'it's my way or the highway' feels like bullying, the control freak may not necessarily intend to bully you.

## The Graduating Bully

If you have a control freak in your life, here are some practical solutions that will help you — keep in mind that these solutions will work for the control freak who doesn't mean to bully you, as well as the bully who does intend physical or emotional harm.

### 1. **Separate controlling behavior from the good behavior.**

If someone controls us much of the time, we may justify their control of us. So, why would we allow this to happen? Well, perhaps they really are good to us in some ways — maybe they work hard, perhaps they're generous and maybe they have done you a ton of favors. However, to deal with their control, you need to compartmentalize it in your mind; otherwise, you run the risk of being held for ransom by an emotional blackmailer.

If someone is wonderful to you most of the time, but, once a month, they steal money from you, then *that's* what you have to deal with regardless of all of the other times they are nice, kind and decent. You shouldn't be abused and controlled by them as the price you have to pay for their being great all of the other times. For example: if you

## The Graduating Bully

have a control freak in your life you might tell yourself, "Okay, they're wonderful in many ways — she made that cake for my birthday and he picked up my kids from school that one time, but they always seem to be telling me what to do; and, it's *that* behavior that I need to address." If you choose not to do this, then you'll feel too guilty and beholden to them to *ever* deal with their controlling nature. Now, the control freak might give you the 'after all I've done for you' response; nonetheless, by isolating the controlling behavior, you can be clear in your mind and communication that you're only talking about the controlling behavior — nothing else.

It's important that you give the control freaks a chance to control their behavior. Take them aside and say, "Look, you're wonderful in many ways, but in this specific instance, I find that you keep trying to control me and boss me around. Will you stop, please?" Keep in mind that some control freaks really don't know how dictatorial they are until it's pointed out.

2. **Stand your ground with a control freak by not arguing.** The thing to remember is arguing with control

## The Graduating Bully

freaks seldom works. Why? Because they are experts at justifying to themselves and to everyone else the reasons they are right. They are the world authorities at 'being right' and they have spent their lifetimes practicing 'being right'. So, trying to out-argue them is next to impossible! Instead, state your position, but don't always feel as if you have to justify it. If you want to buy a certain pair of shoes and the control freak feels you should get the pair he or she thinks is right for you, then don't fall into the trap of trying to come up with reasons to justify your decision. Just stick to the most unarguable statement you can think of, such as, "I like the shoes!"

### 3. Use the 'broken record technique' to confuse the **control freak**. For example:

*Control Freak:* "You should get these other shoes, because they are better value for the money."

*You:* "I know, but I like these shoes the best!"

*Control Freak:* "These other shoes are better made and they will last longer."

*You:* "I know, but I just like these other shoes!"

## The Graduating Bully

*Control Freak:* These shoes are more fashionable at the moment!”

*You:* “I know, but I really like these other shoes!”

*Control Freak:* “You know what? Why don’t you get the other shoes, then?”

In this example, the control freak had to do all of the work because you just had one reason that you stuck to, and it was a reason with which he or she really couldn't argue. The control freak could argue that the shoes were fashionable or a good value for the money, but he or she couldn't disagree that *you* that you like them best. Here's the tip — give one reason (the broken record response) and stick to it until the control freak runs out of steam!

4. **Use humor to manage the control freak.** Control freaks have a need for high status and they may often show a lack of humor, especially where they're concerned. People who can laugh at themselves tend to see the bigger picture and, therefore, they don't always try to inflict their limited viewpoint as the *only* possible viewpoint. By gently starting to introduce humor into your dealings with control freaks, you will gradually

## The Graduating Bully

5. introduce more flexibility into their approach without directly confronting them.

One woman I know said that a particularly controlling colleague (not a manager) kept issuing 'orders' to her as if she were a slavish minion. Eventually, my friend took to bowing deeply and saying, "My role in life is to hear and to obey." As you can imagine, the control freak was a little disconcerted by this, but soon he began to correct his own behavior. This woman's over-the-top reaction to his bossiness gave him a chance to observe his own actions objectively. Don't underestimate the power of humor!

However, I must issue a word of warning here — by all means, use humor, but if you really feel the need to confront the control freak about bossiness, then making jokes may send the message that you're not serious about how annoying you find the behavior. So, make jokes as a way of tempering the control freak's dictatorial attitude — but, when you mean business, don't mix your messages.

6. **Prepare to walk away. Let them control *other* people.** Ultimately, it's not your role to control a control freak.



## The Graduating Bully

7. Mature human beings know what they can and cannot influence and control — compulsively trying to control everything is what children do when they still think they are the center of the universe. If the control freaks won't change, then get out of their way if you possibly can — because, while you are being controlled too much by someone else, you will never be free to develop your potential and ultimate success.

So, what did I do when confronted with a control freak as a boss? I left that job and went on to better things!

### DEALING WITH MOODY PEOPLE

As with the control freak, we all come across people who are moody. Moody people may be going through difficult stages in their lives; they may be exhausted, ill, chronically worried or lacking what they need in terms of love, sleep, challenge or security. Such people need to be listened to, supported and cared for; clinical depression and other 'mood disorders' will entail mood extremes and fluctuations. However, there is another type of moodiness — that of the bully. Bullies use their moods to intimidate and manipulate and it's this aspect of moodiness that I want to address.

## The Graduating Bully

Bullies may be moody because their lives or the way they are leading their lives isn't meeting their emotional needs adequately; and, as a result, they become 'moody manipulators'. That means they use others to meet their moody needs. So, if you find yourself in this position with a moody bully, what are you going to do?

Here are some tips:

- **Consider your options.** If you know people who always seem to dictate the emotional atmosphere, then be very clear — they are dictators. And, another term for 'dictators' is 'bullies.' If your empathy, patience, advice and general attention-giving doesn't seem to help them, and you are suffering because of their moodiness, then consider if you need them in your life. 'Friendship' is reciprocal — it should be give and take — however, not in the sense that you're always giving and they're always taking. If you *must* have the person in your life for whatever reason, then consider implementing these tips.
- **Don't play their games.** If you're not careful, moody people can receive preferential treatment because it just

seems easier to 'smooth things over' for them. Beware! Short-term 'ease' means long-term hassle! Here's another thing to remember — people won't change if they are being 'rewarded' for not changing. Refuse to be unduly influenced, stop tiptoeing around these people and stop making special allowances for their behavior.

- **Don't reward moodiness.** *“Next Monday, after she has told you all about her weekend, I want you to talk about yours, no matter how she seems when you speak.”* That's what I asked my client to do. And, she did — for several weeks. At first, the other woman sighed, and she looked bored and irritated. “At one point,” my client commented, “I even thought she was going to collapse to the floor!” Eventually, though, all of that stopped and she began to listen respectfully.

*I was teaching my client how not to reward moodiness!*

What do you think this person was gaining from acting out? Remember — all behavior is purposeful. Did she act out to gain more attention? Or, is it a way to get out of work? Who knows? But, by not letting this woman's

## The Graduating Bully

moodiness influence her at work, my client blocked the moodiness from having an impact — at least in that context, and she reduced the moodiness to a lifeless force.

- **Just ask.** I love this one! Not mentioning someone's mood can be paramount to being sucked into his or her games. Sometimes, it's effective to challenge moody people's moods because that challenge may force them to observe their behavior. By calling them out on their moodiness with responses such as, "I notice you keep yelling. Is something bothering you?" or, "You have a bored look on your face. Do you think what I'm saying is boring?" You can just get right to the point, too.  
"I think your bad mood is bringing everybody down in the office this morning." A sentence such as that doesn't leave much room for argument and, hopefully, the person to whom you're directing your comment will see the error of his or her ways.
- **Practical sympathy.** There are people who are genuinely distressed and are in need of a helping hand. However, we still need to separate the need for help from

## The Graduating Bully

unacceptable behavior toward others. Just because people are distressed doesn't mean you should let them get away with it; if you do, you're making it tempting for them to use their 'distress' as a means to a psychological end. The bottom line is you don't help people by making allowances for their behavior.

- **Don't take it personally.** Bullies like to work through implication. They tend to imply that, somehow, you have done something wrong. You can't allow yourself to fall into that trap — be very clear that you haven't done anything wrong, because it's all about them. It's their problem, not yours!
- **Take time for yourself.** If you have to be around a moody person on a regular basis, you need to take time for yourself. Get out and go somewhere! Relax! Whatever the cause for someone's moodiness, it's draining for others.

You probably recognize that some of the tips I listed can apply to many people, not just bullies. But, don't lose sight of the main topic — you can deflect bullies' behaviors simply by

## The Graduating Bully

incorporating some of these suggested responses. Bullies tend to be emotional and they have trouble reining in their anger, frustration or whatever emotion they may be dealing with on any particular day.

# 13

## *More Tips!*

If you're the target of workplace bullies, you know how difficult it is to respond to a bully's criticism. Your first response isn't necessarily the best one, and you may be more emotional than you want to be; or, you may not have all the facts you need in order to respond adequately. So, instead of trying to craft a response when you're on the spot, why not carry bully-proof insurance? While you can't buy it, you can learn to respond to workplace bullies so you can have some breathing room.

Your bully-proof insurance comes in three parts:

- **Part 1.** Expect an attack.
- **Part 2.** Know some ready-made responses.

## The Graduating Bully

- **Part 3:** Practice your responses ahead of time before the pressure is on.

Let's look at each part, so you gain a firm understanding of how you can respond to bullies.

### PART 1 — EXPECT AN ATTACK

Workplace bullies are good at manipulating a relationship, and while they can be charming for a short time, they strike when you let your guard down. Recognize bullies for who they are and expect the bully to attack — always expect it and always be ready (ABR)!

Remember that bullies only have their own interests at heart, and they're not interested in a relationship of equals. They want power! When you accept a rationalization for their behavior or get emotional and argue with them, they win. Instead of excusing their behavior or allowing them to engage you, proceed to Part 2.

### PART 2 — KNOW SOME BULLY-PROOF RESPONSES

Train yourself to listen critically to a bully. When you hear the words of their attacks — usually couched as criticism, blame or self-justification — fall back on your response. Very simply,



## The Graduating Bully

excuse yourself with one of the following bully-proof responses and walk away.

- “Excuse me, I have a meeting to attend.”
- “I have something I have to attend to. I’ll get back with you later.”
- “Pardon me, I was just heading out. Let’s talk tomorrow.”
- “Let’s talk later. I have something to do that can’t wait.”
- “Do you think so? Maybe you’re right.” (non-defensively)
- “I don’t agree, but I’m sure we can talk about this another time.”

### PART 3 — PRACTICE YOUR RESPONSES

When left to chance, it’s likely that you’ll fall into the bully’s trap. That is, you’ll take the bully on before you’re ready, because it’s natural to respond to a comment or question with an answer. Athletes know that the key to being ready is practice, practice, practice, and you can also adopt this strategy when dealing with a bully.

## The Graduating Bully

Here's how:

- Decide on the bully-proof responses that you'll find the easiest to say. Choose responses from the list above or invent your own.
- Imagine a situation in which the bully attacks. Say your response out loud.
- Repeat with another situation. Again, say your response out loud.
- Write out the response five times. The next day, write it out ten times.
- Practice every day at the same time.

Your goal is to make the response automatic and one that you don't have to think about. This is one time that thinking will get you in trouble — instead, you want to respond before you think.

After you have a chance to cool off, you can approach the bully; you are calm and can deal with the bully's complaint. Now you have the upper hand, and your bully-proof insurance has paid off!

## The Graduating Bully

### NAÏVETÉ

Naïveté is the greatest enemy to you, as well as the stalwart companion of bullies. Most people can't or won't believe that the person they're tackling is a serial bully and, consequently, they expect bullies to recognize their wrongdoings and make amends. Unfortunately, serial bullies *cannot and will not* change their behavior — and they will ruthlessly exploit other people's naïveté to ensure their own survival. Never underestimate the serial bullies' deviousness, ruthlessness, cunning and ability to deceive. And don't forget vengefulness and vindictiveness . . .

Try these phrases:

- "By the way they choose to behave, they prevent others and me from fulfilling our duties."
- "By the way they choose to behave, they bring themselves, the staff, the department and the employer into disrepute."
- "Your criticisms and allegations lack substantive and quantifiable evidence."

## The Graduating Bully

### SET LIMITS ON WHAT YOU WILL TOLERATE FROM A BULLY

Once you have set the limit in your mind, exercise your right to tell the bully to stop the behavior. You might want to rehearse these steps with a friend, so you are more comfortable responding when the bully attacks.

- Describe the bully's behavior – don't editorialize or offer opinions, just describe what you see. Example: "You regularly enter my cubicle, lean over my shoulder and read my personal correspondence on my computer screen."
- Tell the bully exactly how his or her behavior is impacting your work. Example: "Because much of my work is confidential, these actions make me feel as if I need to hide what I'm working on from you, or, change screens, and it's a waste of my time."
- Tell the bully what behavior you will not tolerate in the future. Example: "In the future, you are not to enter my cubicle unless I invite you. This is my private workspace and your actions are unwelcome."
- Stick with your statement and if the bully violates your space, move on to confrontation.

## The Graduating Bully

### CONFRONT THE BULLIES WITH THEIR OWN BEHAVIOR

Confronting a bully is scary and difficult, but, as Jonathan Littman and Marc Hershon suggest in *I Hate People*, bullies are only effective when they're on solid ground — ground that *you* can take away. They suggest that the next time your bully swears or heaves a phone book, call out the behavior. Point out the swearing or yelling and leave the room. Or, if you're speaking to the bully on the phone, end the call. Remember that you're the adult dealing with a tantrum; no wise parent gives in to a child's tantrum, because it just leads to more tantrums. By making statements about the conduct, you're putting the bully on notice. Keep up your game and, by the second or third attempt, your tormentor will realize the futility of the tantrums.

Call out the bully on *your* terms!

### DOCUMENTING THE BULLY'S ACTIONS

I previously mentioned the importance of documenting every incident of bullying, but I think it bears repeating. Any time you are feeling bullied or experiencing bullying behavior, document the date, time and details of the incident. Note if another employee witnessed the incident. If you eventually seek help from

## The Graduating Bully

Human Resources, documentation, and especially documentation of the bully's impact on business results and success, provide HR the necessary information so they can work on your behalf. The bully is not just hurting your feelings — the bully is sabotaging business success. If the bullying occurs in email or correspondence, maintain a hard copy of the trail of emails and file them in a folder on your computer. I recommend storing the information off site, as well, just in case your documentation mysteriously disappears.

### YOUR COWORKERS ARE TARGETS OF THE BULLY, TOO

When you're at work, make a mental note regarding whether the bully pulls the same behavior with your coworkers. Ask your coworkers to document the bully's behavior and any scenes they witness when the bully targets a coworker. If five of you experience the bullying and five of you document each incident, then you build a case to which HR and your management can respond. They need evidence and witnesses, even if everyone knows that the bully is 'a bully'. Also, if you decide to press charges in the future, you need witnesses and documentation.

## The Graduating Bully

So, it's best to confront the behavior, but don't rule out the possibility of a lawsuit, especially if your employment is terminated or threatened by the bully.

# 14

## *Do victims deserve the bullying abuse?*

So, how are you supposed to deal with victims who feel as if they deserve the behavior? Well, when I hear this, I usually go for specifics — I force victims to take a more analytical, not emotional, inward look. I influence them to start building a list of deserving qualities, in addition to removing ‘sour’ qualities. We work at rerouting the damage inflicted by a bully much the same way we reroute an artery to the heart when it becomes blocked. Through stories, metaphors and, sometimes, hypnosis, we attempt to reach a new 'description' of themselves.

If you're the victim of a bully and you're seeking answers to help you regain strength and control of your life, try this:



## The Graduating Bully

1. When describing yourself, work on incorporating phrases that connote strength and courage.
2. If you feel you deserve the bullying now, think about how you can change to ‘deserve better’.
3. When thinking about confronting your bully and victim issues, think affirmations such as, *“I got this!”* or, *“I’m ready and I can!”* Or, how about, *“I am and I will!”*

I use NLP and hypnotherapy with great success in these instances, but we have to do the hard work first. You cannot help someone who doesn't want to be helped, and this is often the hardest part of watching a loved one who is being bullied!

---

When a client walks in my door for the first time, I generally notice the same things I notice with most bully victims. Although, how victims carry their torment depends on the stage of bullying that entrenches them. But, overall, there is a sense of hopelessness, neglect and sadness — and, their eyes signaling defeat are the telling signs when they cross my threshold. Sometimes, I have to put myself in the place of each new client (bully victim) in an effort to get to the soul of their torment. After all, even though they make a decision to seek help, bully victims

## The Graduating Bully

really have no idea about how long the whole process is going to take — in fact, "How long will it take?" is one of the first questions I'm asked. I understand that victims seek relief from their physical and emotional pain, but, unfortunately, I can't put a timetable on healing. Each case is so personal and each case varies substantially — some, with effective coaching, begin the process and after two or three visits, they begin to feel a sense of relief. It's my job to guide bully victims, mentor and support them to the best of my experience and ability. And, once we figure out the first step, I make certain we practice appropriate responses in a safe environment prior to their taking them into the real world — i.e., confronting the bullies.

It's important for each bully victim to understand that while he or she is in therapy, the bullying will, most likely escalate. Just because you (if you're the victim) are taking a new path by learning appropriate responses in an effort to confront your bully, it doesn't mean that the bullying is going to stop while you're in therapy. Chances are pretty good that the bullying *will* escalate and, when it does, it's important to spend time with your coach or therapist to vent, reposition and strategize your next move. (Remember that you don't deserve the bully's arrows of insults or

## The Graduating Bully

degradation!) I often equate human intervention with a game of chess — you simply need to anticipate the next three moves, so you can prepare strategically for yours. When you practice strategy and prepare for your next move, your mindset rebalances your power.

People often inquire if I have a specific set of questions that I ask bully victims when they first begin therapy with me. I suppose I probably do, but nothing as formal as all of that. I encourage my clients to tell me their stories, and then I reframe negative statements and realign thought patterns as we explore alternatives to normalizing their responses. Usually, simply having someone with a plan in your corner helps alleviate the pressure, and a boatload of questions typically isn't necessary. Bully victims need to tell their stories and I just speed up the telling into bullet points, so they don't relive the pain, torment and agony as they tell them. I know it will be difficult for the victim, and I try to make the first, difficult session as easy as possible.

If you're a victim of bullying, it's important to seek or create a safe haven in which you can regroup, gather your thoughts and reassess your position. As unfortunate as it is, many bully victims don't have the support of their spouses or families,

## The Graduating Bully

because they don't believe the victims' stories. If you choose to confront your situation head on, professional coaching and/or counseling will help you express your thoughts, feelings and ideas in a manner that will be heard by those you love. Sometimes, the spouse is part of the bullying problem, and professional assistance can help sort through that, as well. It's sad, because if left unchecked, these kinds of stressors are the catalysts of divorce — all because of failed understanding.

There are instances when ignorance is bliss — even though you're telling your spouse or loved ones what you're going through, they may not know how to help you. Of course, they'll probably feel guilty about that and that's when I encourage 'couple meetings' in an effort to determine if the relationship is salvageable. I also encourage the victims to knock off taking the problems to their spouses and coming to me instead — venting doesn't always need to fall at the feet of the members of your family.

---

The remaining pages of this book are about what you've learned — review the answers you wrote down in EXERCISE # 1, before you go on to the next chapter. I think you'll be surprised

## The Graduating Bully

when you see how much your thoughts have changed regarding standing up to a workforce bully.

And, that's a good thing!

# 15

***A fresh start...***

Are you ready? For a fresh start, I mean . . . I'm guessing and hoping that you are. As I've said a few times in this book — *the fact that you're reading it tells me you're ready for a change.* Even though I don't know you personally, I'm proud of you for making it this far. When I think about it, I'm always curious about how many victims read my words, and yet they choose to remain tortured and tormented.

*They choose to remain victims.*

A 'choice' is what it all boils down to — and you, in your heart and soul, know it. Did I mention that it's probably not

## The Graduating Bully

going to be easy? You'll have to step outside of your safety cocoon, take a stand and fight for your right to be happy. You or that someone you know who is being bullied, have a choice to make:

- will you choose to stop being a victim, or
- will you stand firm in your own inaction?

Can you answer that question right now? Or, are you still waffling, weighing what might be ill-perceived pros and cons?

Let's find out . . .

### EXERCISE #2

1. What's the most important thing you learned by reading this book?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

The Graduating Bully

2. In five words, describe how you feel about your new empowerment to stand up to your workforce bully.

---

---

---

3. If you're married, describe how your spouse will help you.

---

---

---

---

---

4. If you haven't reported the abuse to your immediate supervisor or boss, when will you?

---

---

5. What documentation of the abuse do you have to present to your direct supervisor or manager?

---

---

---



The Graduating Bully

---

---

6. Are you still afraid of losing your job?

Yes  No

7. If you answered 'Yes', why are you afraid?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

8. If there's a possibility of losing your job, are you willing to take that risk?

Yes  No

9. When it really comes down to it, are you willing to change jobs in order to get away from your workforce bully?

Yes  No

10. How difficult will it be to report the abuse?

The Graduating Bully

---

---

---

---

---

11. Are you planning to confront your workforce bully?

Yes

No

12. If you answered 'Yes', how will you go about it?

---

---

---

---

---

---

13. If you answered 'No', why aren't you going to confront your bully?

---

---

---

The Graduating Bully

---

---

---

---

14. If you choose to confront your bully, how do you think your action will change your life?

---

---

---

---

---

---

So, what do you think? You have the answers even though you may not want to admit it. You know that you have to take action in order to achieve your goal. One thing is clear — if you choose to remain stagnant and don't do *anything* — nothing will change. There's an old saying — *do what you did, and you get what you got*.

Amen.

# 16

## *Final thoughts ...*

I guess I'm what you might call 'an optimist'. I prefer to look at the positive side of life, rather than steep myself in negativity — my husband calls me 'a Pollyanna'. For those of you who have no idea who Pollyanna was, in literature, she was a young British girl who lived her life with the glass always half-full. There was a movie of the story and the main character, Pollyanna, was played by Hayley Mills — I think I must've seen that movie five or six times when I was young, and I'm pretty sure I wanted to *be* Pollyanna! The point is, I still have that zest for life and I still like to see the glass half-full — do you?

## The Graduating Bully

The reason I'm bringing this up is because I think the way you view life translates into the way you view yourself. If you choose to be negative, life may be full of disappointment. But, if you choose to be positive and you strive to move forward, your life will probably be filled with success. Of course, there will be disappointment, heartache and hurt along the way, but the sad fact is nobody can avoid those. But how you choose to deal with those life challenges speaks to the kind of person you are — and, if you don't believe that you are that person now, there isn't any reason to believe that you can't strive for and become empowered, strong, and resilient.

*You just have to choose which is right for you.*

Remember that the people who love you are in your corner — they're not going anywhere. They will continue to love you no matter what your struggles are, and they will continue to admire your resolve to stand up for your happiness by confronting your workforce bully.

I know you can do it.

I want *you* to know you can do it!