Workplace Bullying
What You Can Do

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Training and Education sponsored by
Asian Pacific American Officer Committee
December 19, 2012

Disclaimer

Dr. Kawamoto’s activities in the area of workplace bullying are unrelated to her role and responsibilities at her current full-time place of employment.
The information and opinions she presents are based on personal experiences, observations, readings, trainings, and interviews.
The opinions she expresses do not represent the policies or recommendations of her employer.

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Workplace Bullying
Issues

1. Defining Workplace Bullying
2. Recognizing Workplace Bullying
3. Personal and Organizational Impact

4. What you can do

Defining Workplace Bullying
Challenges

I know it when I see it.

U.S. Supreme Court Justice Potter Steward’s threshold test for pornography, 1964

Defining Workplace Bullying
Is it or isn’t it?

- Incivility
- Disrespect
- Rudeness
- Toughness
- Harassment
- Abuse

Defining Workplace Bullying
WBI Definition

Workplace Bullying noun
Repeated, health-harming mistreatment by one or more people of an employee by

- verbal abuse
- threats, intimidation, humiliation
- work interference, sabotage
- exploitation of known vulnerability

12/19/2012
Defining Workplace Bullying Language

**Bully**
- Perpetrator
- Agent
- Actor

**Victim**
- Target
- Witness

Bullies
- Personality
- Interpersonal conflict
- Intellectual differences
- Resolvable dispute

Bullying
- Behavior, conduct
- Power and abuse
- Organizational tolerance
- Form of violence

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**What You Can Do**
**Understand What Happens to Targets**

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WBI 2010 Survey, Representative sample of U.S. adults

**What You Can Do**
**Understand Targets’ Initial Responses**

**Denial**
- “I’ve done everything right.”
- “It can’t happen to me.”
- “It can’t happen here.”

“Sunk cost” / investment rationalization
- Despite lousy odds,
  - “I can’t afford to give up. I put in so much.”
  - “If I do just one more thing, it will get better.”

**What You Can Do**
**Understand Importance of Biology**

Biology (e.g., flight or fight) trumps:
- Knowledge
- Intelligence
- Motivation
- Productivity
- Quality
- Achievements

**What You Can Do**
**Understand Impact on Mental Health**

From sense of unfairness, betrayal, injustice, attack on dignity to

**Anxiety and panic attacks** 86%
**Induced clinical depression** 39%
**Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder**

30% of targeted women
21% of targeted men

WBI 2003 Survey
Musculoskeletal  
Cardiovascular  
Gastrointestinal  
High blood pressure  
Heart attack

What You Can Do  
Understand Impact on Physical Health

What You Can Do  
Understand Potential Severity  
Being surprised and overwhelmed → trauma  
Lack of support → worse impact  
Stress-related diseases KILL

What You Can Do  
Understand Legal Limitations  
No prohibitions unless involves  
Physical violence  
Sexual harassment  
Discrimination against EEO protected class  
Retaliation against whistleblower

What You Can Do  
Understand Legal Reality  
Protections may not protect  
Statute of limitations  
Specific exemptions  
Lack of evidence  
Misrepresentations  
Legal criteria

What You Can Do  
Understand Witnesses’ Reality  
lack of POWER

What You Can Do  
Understand Management’s Reality  
POWER

Management trumps employees

Intimidation

“Bullying by Proxy”

Fear  
Silence

Ingratiate self with managers and supervisors

“Bullying by Proxy”
**Workplace Bullying**

- Empowers target and witnesses
- Identifies
  - Causal and contributory factors
  - Undesirable and desirable outcomes
- Focuses on possibilities
  - Resolution and prevention

**What You Can Do**

**Name It**

“Workplace Bullying”

- Focus on SITUATION, not individual
  - Individual disposition
    - Blames/shames target
    - Ignores unacceptable practices, behaviors
    - Ignores organizational factors
  - Situation
    - Addresses causal and contributory factors
    - Makes systemic improvements possible

**Think of Similarities**

Domestic violence, sexual harassment

- Violence
  - Control
  - Passive witnesses
- Target blamed, shamed, humiliated
  - Institutions fail to protect

**Support Target**

- Do not pressure
  - Support self-esteem
- Do not place conditions on support
  - Support unconditionally
- Do not abandon
  - Be there, enlist others

**Support Target**

- Avoid emotional triggers
  - Approach like a work project
  - Focus on scientific advances
    - Biology of stress, social psychology
  - Avoid denial
  - Expect retaliation and/or job loss
  - Rethink career
  - Prioritize health
What You Can Do

Document Bullying Incidents

- Key details
  - Who: Perpetrator, witnesses
  - When: Date, time
  - Where: Location, situation
  - What: Key quotes, specific behaviors
  - How: Objective description of acts
  - Perception: Level of threat, feelings

- E-mails
  - Save perpetrator’s messages
  - Do not engage in flame wars

What APAOC Can Do

Organize, Investigate, Educate

- Raise awareness
- Identify protections, resources, procedures, limitations
- Build support system for members
- Connect with other organizations

Resources

Workplace Bullying – Websites

- Gary Namie, PhD, & Ruth Namie, PhD
  Workplace Bullying Institute
  http://www.workplacebullying.org/
- Robert L. Mueller, JD
  Bullying Bosses
  http://www.bullyingbosses.com
- Robert I. Sutton, PhD
  Bob Sutton: Work Matters
  http://bobsutton.typepad.com/

Resources

Workplace Bullying – Facts & Tips

- Ten Self-Defense Tips for Bullied Employees
  http://www.bullyingbosses.com/employess/ten_self.htm
- Contending with Bullying Bosses (myths, truths)
  http://www.bullyingbosses.com/employess/bosses.html

Resources

Workplace Bullying – Books

- Gary Namie, PhD, & Ruth Namie, PhD
  The Bully at Work: What You Can Do to Stop the Hurt and Reclaim Your Dignity on the Job
- Robert L. Mueller, JD
  Bullying Bosses: A Survivor’s Guide
- Robert I. Sutton, PhD
  The No Asshole Rule
  Good Boss, Bad Boss

Resources

Workplace Bullying – Other

Workplace Bullying and Disruptive Behavior: What Everyone Needs to Know (pamphlet)
http://www.lni.wa.gov/Safety/Research/Files/Bullying.pdf

Stress: Portrait of a Killer (documentary film)
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eYG0ZuTv5rs
some public libraries
**Highly recommended BEFORE the meeting**

**Reading**

**Workplace Bullying and Disruptive Behavior:**

*What Everyone Needs to Know†*

[http://www.lni.wa.gov/Safety/Research/Files/Bullying.pdf](http://www.lni.wa.gov/Safety/Research/Files/Bullying.pdf)

Pages 1 to 4 of this Washington State publication clearly and concisely summarize workplace bullying.

*Disruptive behavior*, covered from pages 4 to 7, is a term used by the Joint Commission on the Accreditation of Health Care Organizations, which requires healthcare organizations to address such behavior because of its adverse effect on patient safety and quality of care.

The reporting recommendations are for employees in Washington State, the source of this publication. Options relevant to the meeting’s audience will be discussed at the meeting.

**Viewing (optional)**

**Stress: Portrait of a Killer**

58-minute documentary

Useful for understanding the biology of stress, its adverse effects, and measures for reversing adverse effects.

Features researchers Dr. Robert Sapolsky (wild baboons), Dr. Michael Marmot (Whitehall, British civil service hierarchy), Dr. Carol Shively (monkeys in captivity), Dr. Elizabeth Blackburn and Dr. Elissa Epel (telomeres and telomerase), and Dr. Bruce McEwen (rat brain neurons)

Youtube (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eYG0ZuTv5rs), and some public libraries

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