

Bully 101...

Thank you for the opportunity to join this important workshop. I wish you well in your endeavor to find solutions for this serious matter.

Bullying is truly a serious threat. We are witnessing it in many places, at all levels from young children to those of us in the paid workforce to our elders. I believe we must have stronger avenues for educating, re-educating, no-shame reporting, and consequences for this huge problem. We live in fear of the bully. We feel alone, wrong and wronged. But often we don't initiate much as we believe we won't be believed, or suffer harassment, or lose our ability to earn a living. The time is now to put a plan in place for stopping the bully. We witness children bullying children for sport. Will some of the bullies create the next playground injury, be our next boss, or our parent's caregiver? And where will the victims go for support, protection, or justice? These decisions are for now and for the future.

As I was thinking about my work life....I could think of quite a few examples both experienced and witnessed. Let me begin with two stories, both true, from my own experiences.

The first one was when I was quite a bit younger, single Mom, with two small kids. I tell you this because the lack of 'other' support does not help when being bullied. You know you need your job. You have been told this job does not want people who 'make waves'. Things begin to happen. I will try and convey this story without being too lengthy. I was an Admin Assistant, with an inner office outside my employer's private office. This was tucked in behind another hallway. One afternoon, the door opened from this hallway and a security guard said, "Mrs. O, we have been told you are smoking marijuana at your desk". Well, it took my by such surprise, I threw my head back and just laughed, and then I looked at the guard, and said, oh my goodness, you are serious! I mean if you could imagine such a thing coming out of nowhere. I said, "That is ridiculous"! But then I stammer and say, oh, my, could it be my new perfume? (In the days before the scent-free office). Now I'm upset and hadn't done a thing wrong. He stood there and glared at me and then he left. And I am all upset. Who do I talk to? Is this going to be put in my file? I am really starting to worry. I don't know what to do. I hear nothing more

about it. However, a few days later, I am in my Boss's inner office, taking dictation, and he changes his jacket...and lo and behold, a homemade smoke comes flying out of his pocket. It was him! The boss had been smoking marijuana in his office and blamed it on me. Some time later, I find out he has some illness that he used marijuana to help with the symptoms. But there I was, maybe 30 years old, trying to work to support my family, and he does that. I felt I had no protection, he was the big Head of the particular department, who would back me? He for sure would never be blamed. Anyway, while I was there, I was quite afraid, felt if he would do that, what else would he do? So he covered his deed with my reputation and kept me on edge for the whole time I was there. To this day, I do not know how far that went in the reporting in personal files. I was just plain scared, for my job, and for my faith in the goodness of people.

The second story comes later in my working life. I had applied for a confidential transcribing position, had gone through all the testing, extra security checks, super references. This was something I was good at. I had done this type of work for years. Finally got through all the hoops for this totally confidential job. Well, I had worked lots of totally confidential jobs, so had no worries.

I was matched up with a 'trainer' who, from the second minute we started became totally obsessed with spaces, or lack of, and changing her mind on what she wanted and so on. The instruction I was given was that this transcribing was to be totally verbatim. Except when the speakers use slang, and then put in the slang. Except when there is too much slang, then you take it out, as it doesn't look good in print. Okay. How does that go again? You want it perfect, unless it isn't perfect, but if it is made too imperfect, you want it changed to perfect because it looks bad in print. Okay. Well, let's see if I can follow that instruction..... perfectly.

Did I mention the names have been changed to protect the innocent....me!

Anyway, we transcribers were all in very close contact in our workspace, so every word uttered was heard by all. And every day, this trainer would make a big deal out of proofing my work, complete with a big red marker, like the meanest teacher you had ever heard

of. She talked loudly, every day, in front of everyone, saying, “oh this is wrong and this is wrong and this is wrong”. So she shames, and humiliates me in front of my co-workers every day. And the things she picks out, which were the only things she could find was K and Okay, and Cause and because. So I am thinking about the instructions, hmm, slang or no slang...and she changes her mind every day, and does this to me every day in front of everyone. Making it look like my work is horrible, and all wrong.

Now, by this time in my career, I am not 30, and I have been beat up many times with work. I have stayed in the past, thinking, oh, just have to try harder, oh, it will get better, oh, I am only losing some of my hair due to stress. Oh those physical systems caused by stress will go away, will subside, I can ignore them. Well, my experience says, no, I am doing what I was supposedly told to do. So, after some time of this ‘training’, I went to my Supervisor and said this is what was happening, and it was not conducive to learning or production. I was told to hang in there that some people get a little power and get anal. Oh, well thanks for that! So back I went into the trainers punching room. It continued. I had no backing. They needed help to complete some extra work. I worked harder. I worked overtime...no backing. The bully kept at it, as hard as she could, the same from the first day to the day I handed in my keys and said, bye. There was no pleasing this trainer; I no longer believed things would change. And I left. Jumped ship, so to speak. I knew my work was good. I knew she was out of line. I had no one to make any noise for me, so my choice was to leave. It’s too bad to have the only option be to run. And sad but true, not all can run.

These stories are only the tip of our iceberg. But if the bullies know they can’t get away with this stuff, they will certainly lessen their efforts. Some will try in a more underhanded way, but I believe the majority of these weak bullies will not try this openly if there are consequences.

Bullying is truly a serious threat. This goes for our children at school and in the playground. This goes for us in the paid workforce. This goes for our seniors in isolation. We owe it to ourselves, and those in our protective care. That is why I am speaking out. That is why I am

commending you for hosting this workshop which will help direct a bright light on the face of the bully.

Thank you and good luck with this issue.