

Stopping Workplace Bullying in Healthcare

Professional Issues Conference
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AFT Nurses and Health Professionals is accredited as a provider of continuing nursing education by the American Nurses Credentialing Center's Commission on Accreditation.

Conflict of Interest:
The planners and faculty have declared no conflict of interest.

Criteria for successful completion:
Sign in at beginning of session.
Active participation for the entire workshop.
Completion of evaluation form.

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Outcomes

After this workshop you will be able to:

- Recognize characteristics associated with the workplace bullying in healthcare settings
- Identify the consequences of being bullied
- Discuss collective strategies to address workplace bullying

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2008 Joint Commission Alert

- Defines disruptive behavior as:
 - ANY behavior or conduct that interferes with safe patient care.
 - This includes overt and covert behaviors by ANY person(s) that threaten individual performance and/or performance of the health care team.

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What Examples Come to Mind of Disruptive Behavior in Health Care?

Most common in health care:

- Emotional-verbal abuse
- Intimidation

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Many Examples of Disruptive Behavior are Workplace Bullying!

- Using threatening, abusive, profane or insensitive language
- Making demeaning or degrading comments
- Humiliation in front of team members, patients, visitors and other hospital staff
- Comments that undermine trust
- Work interference – sabotage which prevents you from doing your job
- Rolling eyes in disgust
- Exclusion or social isolation
- Sending nasty emails/texts
- Being treated differently than the rest of your colleagues

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Workplace Bullying Defined

Repeated and unwanted actions by an individual or group intending to intimidate, harass, degrade or offend

Abuse or misuse of power

Bullying is psychological violence

“Tough” or “demanding” bosses are not necessarily bullies as long as they are respectful and fair.

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Difference Between Workplace Bullying and Illegal Discrimination and Harassment

- Workplace bullying is inappropriate and unacceptable behavior, but it is not prohibited by any federal law.
- Illegal discrimination and harassment is covered by:
 - Title VII of the Civil Rights Act (EEOC - protected group status)
 - State Fair Employment laws (Fair Employment Practices Agencies - FEPAs)

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Protected Federal Categories

Race National Origin Color

Disability Religion Sex Age +40

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What the Research Says ...

- A recent National Institutes of Health (NIH) study estimates that **1 in 5** U.S. workers has experienced destructive bullying in the past year.
- According to a study conducted by the Bullying Institute, bullying is **4 times more prevalent** than illegal sexual or racial harassment.

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Healthcare Workers At Great Risk

According to a recent OSHA report, employees of healthcare and social services have a sevenfold risk of being bullied compared to the general working population.

WHY?

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Can It Be The Culture In Healthcare?



What if anything about the way work is organized on your unit might contribute to bullying?

Who Can be Disruptive and or Bullies in a Health Care Setting?

- Administrators
- Physicians
- Nurses
- Aides
- Patients
- Vendors
- Hospital Guests



Surveys

- **21 percent** of registered nurses and nursing students reported being physically assaulted—and **over 50 percent** verbally abused—in a 12-month period (2014 American Nurses Association's Health Risk Appraisal survey of 3,765 registered nurses and nursing students).
- **12 percent** of emergency department nurses experienced physical violence—and **59 percent** experienced verbal abuse—during a seven-day period (2009–2011 Emergency Nurses Association survey of 7,169 nurses).

Emergency Nurses Association and Institute for Emergency Nursing Research. 2010. Emergency Department Violence Surveillance Study. Hodgson, M.J., Reed, R., Craig, T., Murphy, F., Lehmann, L., Belton, L., and Warren, N. 2004. Violence in healthcare facilities: Lessons from the Veterans Health Administration. Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine. 46(11): 1158–1165.

Surveys

- **27-85%** of all staff nurses report being bullied
- **44%** report being bullied by a peer in the last year
- **35%** nurses leaving their jobs
- **70%** nurses report abuse from a physician

Vessey et al: Bullying of Staff registered nurses in the Workplace: A preliminary Study for Developing personal and Organizational strategies for the transformation of Hostile to Healthy Workplace environments. Journal of Professionals Nursing, (25) no. 5 September October, 2009

Study on bullying in the OR

- **59%** reported witnessing coworker bullying weekly
- **34%** reported at least two acts weekly
- **28%** reported having one's opinion ignored is the most common bullying act
- **Emotional exhaustion** also was correlated with bullying

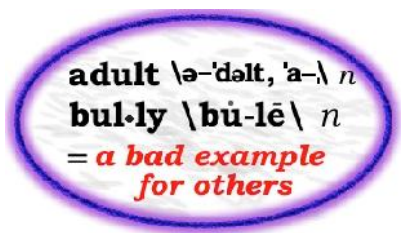


New Nurse Qualitative Study Results (2010)

- Structural bullying - perceived unfair and punitive actions taken by supervisors
- Nurses "eating their young" – statements of no support or guidance from senior nurses
- Feeling out of the clique – alienation related to ethnicity, education, per diem or travel nurse, etc.
- Leaving the job and/or profession – orientation period new nurses most vulnerable

Bullying in the Workplace—A Qualitative Study of Newly Licensed Registered Nurses by Shellee R. Simps, PhD, RN, and Barbara Mawn, PhD, RN - AAOHN Journal • Vol. 58, No. 7, 2010

Have you or someone you know ever been bullied at work?



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What are The Consequences For The Victim: Outside the Job and At Work

- Queasiness on Sunday night
- Frustration with family demands that you stop obsessing about work at home
- Trips to the doctor; sky-rocketing blood pressure
- Fatigue/ Lifelessness/Diminished family time
- Magical belief that you "provoked" the workplace bullying

- Have feelings of never being "good enough"
- Brace for torment that is arbitrary
- Have chronic agitation and anxiety
- Experience a sense of doom
- Fear bad evaluations if you fight back
- Believe everybody agrees that the bully is a jerk "but there is nothing they can do about it"

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How Bullying Affects Your Health:



- Victims of bullying experience significant physical and mental health problems:
 - High stress; post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
 - Reduced self-esteem; shame; guilt
 - Musculoskeletal problems
 - Phobias
 - Sleep and digestive disturbances
 - Clinical depression; panic attacks; anxiety
 - Family tension and stress

Harmful effects have been described as additive in that they **accumulate burden** and can become synergistic. Moreover, their combined effects can go beyond what each can do alone.

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A Finnish Study on Municipal Workers Found ...

- Not only the targets of bullying, but also bystanders, suffer stress and psychological ill-health when someone is bullied in the workplace.

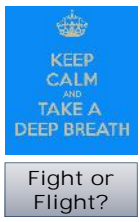
They concluded that:

Bullying must therefore be regarded as a problem for the **entire work unit** and not merely as a problem of the target.

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Does Workplace Bullying Stress You Out?


- Stress response is actually a good thing ... sometimes.
- Physiological reaction that occurs in response to a perceived harmful event, attack, or threat to survival.
- After the threat or demand passes, your body relaxes on its own and returns to its normal self.



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It Served our Ancestors Well ... But at a Cost

- Staying physiologically on guard against a threat eventually wears down the body's natural defenses.
- Suffering from frequent stress or frequently interpreting experiences as stressful can create a serious health risk: an essentially healthy stress response can become distress.



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Research Shows ...

An extreme amount of stress can have health consequences and adversely affect the immune, cardiovascular, neuroendocrine and central nervous systems.

What Stress Does to Your Body

- Head**
Issues with mood, anger, depression, irritability, sadness and a lack of energy; swings in appetite, concentration problems, stress-related headaches and pain; mental health issues, like anxiety disorders and panic attacks.
- Skin**
Skin problems like acne.
- Joints and Muscles**
Aches and pains, tension, lowered bone density.
- Heart**
Increased blood pressure, increased heart beat, higher cholesterol and instances of heart attack.
- Stomach**
Stomach cramps, reflux, and nausea and weight fluctuations.
- Pancreas**
Diabetes.
- Intestines**
Irritable bowel like irritable bowel syndrome, diarrhea and constipation.
- Reproductive System**
Reduced sex drive, lower sperm production (for men) and increased pain during periods (for women).
- Immune system**
Reduced ability to battle and recover from illness.

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Why Don't People Fight Back?

Bullying and other harmful actions can be "surrounded" by a 'culture of silence,' fears of retaliation, and the perception that 'nothing will change'.

(Vessey, DeMarco, & Difazio, 2011, p. 142)

- Targets often face retaliation... **52%** faced retaliation after complaining to the employer.
- Targets are often **ostracized** by co-workers, who may also be fearful of attracting the bully's wrath.
- **70%** of targets are forced out of their jobs voluntarily or involuntarily.

Sources: APA Monitor on Psychology, Volume 37, No. 7 July/August 2006 and "Worrying for a living?" Workplace Bullying Institute 2003 Report on Abusive Workplaces

But We Need to Fight Back!

Addressing the problem at the:

- Individual
- Union
- Institution

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The "Low Road" - Individual Stress Strategies

- Take Care of YOU!
 - Eat a healthy diet and get regular exercise and plenty of sleep
 - Practice relaxation techniques or learn to meditate
 - Foster healthy friendships
 - Have a sense of humor
 - Seek professional counseling when needed

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If You're Being Bullied, You Can Regain Control:

- Recognize that you are being bullied—you are NOT the source of the problem.
- Realize that **bullying is about control**, and therefore has nothing to do with your performance.
- If you feel safe to do so, tell the perpetrator to stop. Bring a witness with you. Expect the bully to deny or misconstrue the accusations.

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Take Action:

- **Document** all incidents and all efforts to remedy the problem.
 - Obtaining copies of harassing/bullying paper trails; hold onto copies of documents that contradict the bully's accusations against you.
- Ask your union rep, supervisor, a top manager, or a trusted co-worker for help.
- Identify witnesses—get written statements if possible.

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What Can Union Steward Do For The Individual(s) Being Bullied:

- Get training so that you can listen, provide support, and build rapport.
- Encourage the victim to file a report.
- Obtain permission before taking action.
- Enforce the member's union rights.

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What Can Union Steward Do For The Individual(s) Being Bullied:

- **Investigate.** If both parties are in the same unit, get a 2nd rep or steward to represent the other party.
- **Get involved early.** Offer to talk with the perpetrator, either with or separately from the target.

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How Do We Collectively Take On The Bully?



ZERO Tolerance

- What are there things we can do as a union to tackle workplace bullying?
- Does any of your workplaces have a policy against workplace bullying?

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Take Advantage of Professional Organization Resources and Recommendations!

- The Joint Commission
- American Nurses Association
- Pacers - **P**assionate **A**bout **C**reating **E**nvironments of **R**espect and **C**ivilitie**S**

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To correct bullying behaviors that can undermine a safety culture, all health care facilities should consider taking the following specific safety actions, which are highlighted in The Joint Commission's Sentinel Event Alert, Issue 40: 15

- **Educate** all team members on appropriate professional behaviors that are consistent with the organization's code of conduct
- Hold all team members **accountable** for modeling desirable behaviors
- Develop and implement **policies and procedures/processes** that address:
 - o Bullying
 - o Reducing fear of retaliation
 - o Responding to patients and families who witness bullying
 - o Beginning disciplinary actions (how and when)

In developing these policies and procedures, **solicit input from an inter-professional team** that includes representation of medical and nursing teams, administrators, and other employees.

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Incivility, Bullying and Workplace Violence Position Statement

- **Purpose:** This statement articulates the American Nurses Association (ANA) position with regard to individual and shared roles and responsibilities of registered nurses and employers to create and sustain a culture of respect, free of incivility, bullying and workplace violence. Registered nurses and employers across the healthcare continuum, including academia, have an ethical, moral, and legal responsibility to create a healthy and safe work environment for registered nurses and all members of the health care team, health care consumers, families, and communities.

American Nurses Association July 22, 2015

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Bullying Prevention Strategies for Nurses

It's up to all of us

<https://www.nursingworld.org/practice-policy/work-environment/violence-incivility-bullying/>

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PACERS –RWJ Foundation Executive Nurse Fellows Program

<http://stopbullyingtoolkit.org/>

- The tool-kit provides a systematic approach to the appropriate level of intervention, timing of intervention, and focus of the intervention.
- There are five levels of influence : 1) Individual; 2) Interpersonal; 3) Institutional; 4) Community; and 5) Policy. Each level lists risk factors and identifies comprehensive strategies that can be found within the civility tool-kit to address bullying and promote respectful, civil, and safe environments within healthcare organizations and beyond.
- Outcomes for positive behavioral change are expected to be maximized when environments and policies support respectful and civil behaviors, strengthening cultural norms and social support for civility.

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Union Tools

- Member Surveys

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Taking the "Pulse" of the Membership

- Surveying the membership is a good place to start.
 - Can determine priorities
 - Can assess potential remedies
 - Ask for their solutions – many times workers know the best remedies to the problem!

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Union Tools

- Member Surveys
- Training
- Union H&S Committees

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Forming a Union Health and Safety Committee

- Committees:
 - Determine important issues and problem areas
 - Prioritize problems to solve
 - Identify possible and desired solutions
 - Develop an overall plan for getting the problem solved
 - Carry out specific actions
 - Publicize the progress and successes of the actions

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Union Tools

- Member Surveys
- Training
- Union H&S Committees
- Labor-management committee with equal representation
- Strategic planning



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What Can A Joint Labor-Management Committee Accomplish?

- Effective policies/code of conduct
- Criteria for hiring and promotions
- Systems in the policy for reporting and addressing bullying (including multiple ways to report)
- Training—identifying, responding, and preventing bullying

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Union Tools


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Making Strategic Plans

- What are your short-term and long-term goals?
- Who has the power to give you what you want?
- Who are your allies and how will you influence them?
- What or who are potential barriers and how can you overcome them?
- What actions will you take to get what you want?



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Let Us Know How You're Doing!

- If you need help, have victories to share, please contact me!

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- Workplace Bullying Institute <http://www.workplacebullying.org/>
- Violence, Incivility & Bullying <https://www.nursingworld.org/practice-policy/work-environment/violence-incivility-bullying/> American Nurses Association

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