

Tips for Dealing with Being Bullied at Work

Don't get emotional. Bullies take pleasure in emotionally manipulating people. Take a deep breath and stay calm and rational to diffuse the situation. Try to clarify what the other is really saying by using mirroring. If the bully continues, politely excuse yourself to go to the bathroom so he/she can calm down.

Don't blame yourself. Do not take a bully's behavior personally. Acknowledge that this is not about you; it's about the bully. Don't lose your confidence, or think you are incapable or incompetent. They are usually beating you at a mind game, not based on your actual work performance.

Do your best work. The bully's behavior will seem more justified if you aren't doing your best work, or if you do things like come to work late, take long lunches, turn in work late, etc.

Practice your responses. Practice with a friend or family member how you might respond to the bully. This preparation will provide you with the confidence you'll need next time something happens. Keep it simple and be clear. For example, "Please don't speak to me in that tone. It is disrespectful and unprofessional." Your consistent response to the bully will ensure that his or her behavior is not reinforced. The person won't get what he or she wants and will eventually cease the strategy and move on.

Build a support network. Instead of allowing the bully to make you retreat into your office, work on building your relationships with your coworkers so that you have support and the bully doesn't turn them against you as well (although s/he will try and may even be successful). Just because one person in the workplace is being unpleasant make sure it does not jeopardize your relationship with other colleagues by refusing to go out for lunch or after work drinks.

Document everything. Keep a journal (on your personal computer or in writing, but never leave it in the office) of what happened when (and who witnessed it) so that if you need to escalate this problem to management, you have the information you need to make your case. Keep emails and notes.

Seek help. If you think you're being bullied, it's time to start talking to others who can help you manage this situation. Talk to your union representative and let them know what's going on. You might not be alone and collectively, change can happen through a workplace policy on bullying. Talk to your co-workers, friends and family and ask for their support and guidance. Don't suffer in silence.

Get counseling. It will help you deal with the stress, especially if the bullying is already affecting your physical and mental health. You have to take care of yourself.

Stay healthy. Maintain a healthy and balanced lifestyle outside of work to help you cope with the madness at work. Work out, get a good night's sleep and eat a healthy diet.

Educate yourself. Learn everything you can about bullying, your employer's policies on inappropriate behavior and occupational law regarding this kind of experience. The more you know, the better your chances of successfully dealing with this situation.

Be strong and be fearless. Don't be an easy target. If you shy away and cave to the bullying, it sends the message that the behavior is OK, since there's no consequence. Instead, stand strong. Eventually, the bully will be disarmed.

Don't expect to change the bully. Real behavior change is difficult and it takes time. You have no control over a bully's willingness to accept that they have a problem and to work on it. You can do your best to manage the situation, but it's really the employer's responsibility to be observant and responsive to the needs of their workers and the general work environment.