

CHANGING A WORK RELATIONSHIP

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Goals for Today

- ▶ Discuss Three Types of Work Situations That Employees May Like to Change:
 - ▶ Workplace Bullying, Interpersonal Conflict, and Workplace Mediation
- ▶ Will present “3S’s” (Statistics, Strategies, and Solutions) you can use to change a toxic work relationship
- ▶ Specific UB-Based Discussion
- ▶ Questions/Answers/Discussion

Workplace Conflict and Stress

- ▶ Has increased and become the #1 problem seen in EAPs
- ▶ Accounts for 74%-90% of all visits to physicians
- ▶ Is the leading source of stress for adults, more so than general health complaints, financial or family problems
- ▶ Causes about one million Americans to miss work every day

- ▶ Sources: NIOSH, American Academy of Family Physicians, APA

Workplace Bullying



Is This Workplace Bullying?



Dilbert.com DilbertCartoonist@gmail.com



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Is This Workplace Bullying?

- ▶ Sarah, a newly-employed technician at the University is growing accustomed to her position. However, she notices that a few of her co-workers ignore her, stop talking when she enters a room, and she has just now started to receive hang-up telephone calls from them on her cell phone. She often hears them laugh about what they are doing.

What is Workplace Bullying?

The act of repeated, aggressive behavior intended to hurt another person physically, verbally, or emotionally.

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What is Workplace Bullying?

The act of _____ ,
intended to hurt another person physically,
verbally, or emotionally.

What is Workplace Bullying?

The act of

another person **physically,**
verbally, or emotionally.

The background features abstract, overlapping geometric shapes in various shades of green, ranging from light lime to dark forest green. The shapes are primarily triangles and polygons, creating a dynamic, layered effect. The text is centered on a white background that is partially obscured by these green shapes.

Can you come up with
examples of workplace
bullying?

Workplace Bullying

DIRECT

Name-Calling

Being sworn at

Invalid Criticism

Sabotage

Aggressive “in Your Face “

Behavior

SUBTLE

Rumors-Gossip-Lies

Being Treated Differently

Exclusion/Social Isolation

Being micro-managed

Being given unfair deadlines

Workplace Bullying

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8chl1LKbqn0>

Example?

- ▶ I thought I would get promoted within six months of being hired. I felt that I had clicked with the hiring manager during my interview, and I thought I really got along well with my supervisor. Well, I've been working at the same job now for four years, and frankly, I'm bored. I've been passed over for a promotion three times already. This proves that my supervisor is bullying me!

Confused With Bullying

- ▶ Being Told to do Your Job
- ▶ Expressing Differences of Opinion
- ▶ Offering Constructive Feedback-Criticism-Advice About Work Performance-Behavior
- ▶ Not Being Promoted/Given Raises
- ▶ An Isolated Behavior or Slight

Consequences of Workplace Bullying

- ▶ Stress
- ▶ Anxiety
- ▶ Lowered Productivity
- ▶ Physical symptoms (Migraines, Digestive, etc)
- ▶ Lowered self-esteem and depression
- ▶ Trouble with Other Relationships
- ▶ Thoughts of Suicide

Impact on the Workplace

- ▶ High Turnover
- ▶ Low Productivity
- ▶ Lost Innovation
- ▶ Difficulty getting good hires as reputation of being a bad place to work spreads
- ▶ US businesses lost over \$300 Billion Yearly due to bullying (Source: American Psychological Assn)

Statistics

- ▶ Approximately 27% of employees have been bullied at work, and another 21% report witnessing it.
 - About 69% of bullies are men
 - Men bully women more than men (57-43%)
- ▶ Women also more frequently bully women than men (69-31%).
- ▶ Men more commonly report being witness to bullying than women (25-16%)

Statistics

- ▶ On average, targets get out from the bullying after two years have passed.
- ▶ If somebody leaves their job due to bullying, in 82% of the instances it is the target (only 18% of the bullies leave). Some of the 82% leave of their own volition, whereas others are fired. For these individuals, being fired is the last bullying behavior

Why does bullying persist?

- ▶ The target of the bullying does not report it (sometimes the target thinks that what is happening is normal, or they know that it's bad, but they don't think of it as bullying)
- ▶ Witnesses to the bullying fail to do anything about it
- ▶ The bully's supervisor is unaware, or looks the other way
- ▶ HR may look the other way, or be unaware of it
 - ▶ A lack of formal policies similarly enables bullying.
 - ▶ 51 percent of employees say their company has a policy for dealing with bullies, and only 7 percent know of anyone who has ever used that policy.

How should targets respond?

- ▶ Recognize the Behavior as Bullying
- ▶ Know that they are not to blame
- ▶ Think about options
- ▶ Reverse Thinking
- ▶ Document
- ▶ Validate/Disarm
- ▶ Do NOT Retaliate with Own Negative Behavior
- ▶ Smile?
- ▶ Talk to Somebody about it (Union/HR/the bully/EAP)

Bullies **Can** Change

Bystander Response

If you witness bullying behavior, you have some power to stop it. Silence is the bully's friend.

- ▶ But what if there are a lot of other witnesses?
- ▶ Set out to develop a “no bully zone” (in your department/work area/floor/university)

How Can UB EAP Help?

- ▶ Provide a neutral and confidential place where staff member can talk with supervisor (non-bully or bully) about situation
- ▶ Provide a place where a bystander can get strength to counter bullying behavior
- ▶ Listen, Listen, and Listen. And Make suggestions.
 - ▶ After friends and close co-workers, HR and EAP are the first places that a bullying claim is made. The first person who is told can make a big difference!

Interpersonal Conflict

- ▶ **Anyplace that communication occurs, conflict may also occur**
- ▶ Communication occurs on a daily basis, in all forms, and all types of relationships
- ▶ Conflict occurs when we **PERCEIVE** that someone(s) are preventing us from achieving a goal



Conflict Can Occur With ...

- ▶ People who dominate conversations;
- ▶ People who can't make a decision;
- ▶ People who are undependable;
- ▶ People unable to do anything for themselves;

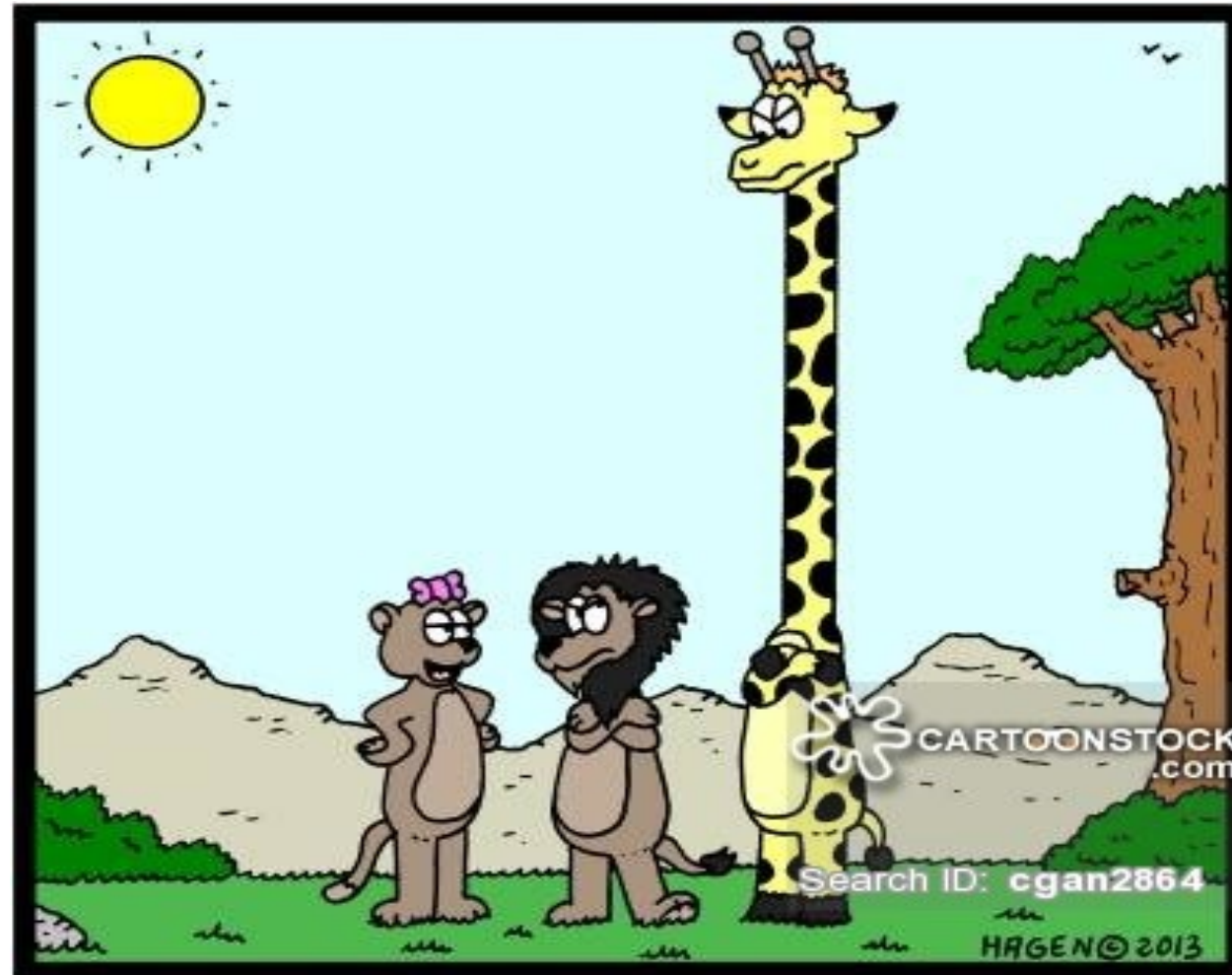
Interpersonal Conflict

- ▶ People who are not always truthful;
- ▶ Gossips;
- ▶ Angry People Who Always Seem Ready to Explode;

Interpersonal Conflict

- ▶ People who blame or shame for mistakes, errors or problems;
- ▶ People who are sarcastic;
- ▶ People who are uncooperative

Conflict



What you're saying basically
is that you and Bob do not seem to see eye to eye...

Ask Yourselfs

- ▶ What are the causes of my conflict?
- ▶ Is it more than just a minor difference of opinion?
- ▶ If I am in a conflict with someone, will I always be in that conflict?
- ▶ Is it better to solve a conflict than to allow it to continue?
- ▶ What are some ways to get out of a conflict?

When We Are In Conflict

- 1. We misunderstand the other by focusing solely on what **they** do, not what we do.*
- 2. We forget their positives and overemphasize their negatives.*

When We Are in Conflict

3. *We tell others about the problem.*

This is OK if we need support. But it makes it more difficult for the other to “fix” things.

4. *We assign motives to the other person that makes him/her seem narrow, self-serving, vengeful, or stupid. These motives usually support our view but are usually more negative than the reality.*

Adapted from: “Winning with Difficult People” by Arthur Bell and Dayle Smith

Solutions that Won't Work

1. *Repeatedly urging the difficult person to change;*
2. *Demanding acknowledgement that you are right;*
3. *Using the indirect approach (hinting that he/she needs to change);*
4. *Trying to conquer your fear of confronting the person with endless preparation.*

Is Conflict Automatically Bad?

- ▶ It may be good or bad
 - ▶ What happens if conflict is dealt with in each of these ways?
 - ▶ Avoidance
 - ▶ Accommodating
 - ▶ Competitive
 - ▶ Compromising
 - ▶ Collaborating

Constructive Conflict

- ▶ Conflict is not necessarily bad because it can
 - ▶ Be an opportunity for learning or growth
 - ▶ Result in new ideas about thinking and/or behaving than had come up previously
 - ▶ Challenge us to value differences (e.g., in opinion)
 - ▶ Improve Communication
 - ▶ Lead to better solutions, and change

General Tips for Defusing Conflict

- You control your actions & reactions!
- Look closely in the mirror
- Address other by name.
- Remain **calm**, and use a calm tone.
- Use open body language.
- Provide adequate personal space.
- Use “I” Statements

Tips for Defusing Conflict (cont.)

- Use active listening (reflect the feeling first & then reiterate the problem/ concern).
- Find common areas of agreement.
- Make Eye Contact
- Try Problem Solving***
- Take responsibility for addressing concern.
- Treat with respect.

Using “I” statements

Helps to communicate thoughts & feelings

without:

blaming,

attacking,

criticizing.



Listening

studies in labor-management negotiations demonstrate that the time required to reach conflict resolution is cut in half when each negotiator agrees, before responding, to repeat what the previous speaker had said.”

Stay Centered

- Do not use violence or other negative behavior
- Understand that the other person has a problem, while also acknowledging your role in the conflict
- Do not allow yourself the “luxury” of reacting emotionally - act strategically!
- Deep Breathing - stay relaxed!

Be Assertive

1. Evaluate your rights
2. Designate a time
3. State the problem situation in terms of its consequences for you
4. Make your request
5. State the consequences of gaining (or not gaining) the other person's cooperation

Respond to the Underlying Message

- ▶ Listen to what the other person is saying with their words and behavior and try to respond to that, instead of their difficult behavior
- ▶ Try to determine their underlying needs:
 1. To be heard
 2. To be taken seriously
 3. To be understood
 4. To be respected
 5. Need to hear your apology?

Terminating the Relationship

If nothing else works, there may come a time for a relationship to end. This can be a difficult option if the person at work is your supervisor, or if you love your job.

It takes courage to end the poisonous nature of some of our relationships, but sometimes that is what we need to do in order to preserve our integrity

Maybe get a third party involved?

Costs of Unresolved Conflict

- ▶ Parties don't get along, conflict could get worse
- ▶ Less Happy in general
- ▶ Other relationships suffer
- ▶ General Tension and stress
- ▶ Damage to Your Reputation

Third Parties in Conflict

- ▶ Sometimes, to deal constructively with conflict, you may need the help of someone not directly involved
- ▶ Who are some people who play this role?

What is Mediation?

- ▶ What do you think?

What is Mediation?

- ▶ Mediation is a process in which an impartial third party assists those experiencing conflict develop a mutually acceptable solution to their concern
- ▶ Voluntary and Confidential
- ▶ Both Formal and Informal
- ▶ Can produce more peace where it is used
- ▶ Workplaces that have active mediation programs are more peaceful than those that do not

Types of Cases Amenable to Mediation

- Many of the Types of Problems Where There is Conflict That We Discussed Earlier. This includes
 - ▶ Interpersonal Problems
 - ▶ Nuisance Cases
 - ▶ Long term Grudges
 - ▶ People not “getting along”
 - ▶ People who said or did the wrong thing at the wrong time in the wrong place

How Do Cases Get to *Mediation*?

- ▶ Party or parties themselves
- ▶ A University Department or Staff Member Makes a Referral

Mediation is Voluntary

- ▶ Both parties need to want mediation, and agree to it, for mediation to take place
- ▶ What happens if one party wants it, and the other doesn't?
- ▶ What are the alternatives to mediation?

At The Mediation

- ▶ Venting/Information Provision
- ▶ Fact Finding
- ▶ Questions for Clarification
- ▶ Joint Discussion
- ▶ Private Caucuses
- ▶ Joint Discussion/Negotiation
- ▶ More Caucuses?
- ▶ More Joint Discussion/Negotiation
- ▶ Closure

Key Factors at the Mediation

- ▶ Are parties adversarial, avoidant, accommodating, or searching for solutions?
- ▶ Are parties listening to each other?
- ▶ Who are the parties talking to? What are they saying?
 - ▶ Are there more negatives (Cognitive Distortions. Jumping to Conclusions, Insults) or More Positives (Do they sound similar, Do they sound hopeful, are they talking with each other)?

Key Mediator Behaviors

- ▶ Praise positive steps parties have made
- ▶ (Active) Listening
- ▶ Encouraging parties to listen to each other
- ▶ Ask clarification questions
- ▶ (Gently) prod parties to move off of their position
- ▶ Assess underlying thoughts
- ▶ Search for, and identify common ground
- ▶ Stay Balanced
- ▶ Come up with Ideas
- ▶ Understand Priorities
- ▶ Test Solutions/Reality Test

Resolutions/Settlement Agreements

- ▶ Will Be Balanced
- ▶ Will Be Behaviorally Clear
- ▶ Will Be Written
- ▶ Will Be Kept Confidential
- ▶ CAN Be Temporary
- ▶ CAN Be Tweaked

Benefits of Mediation

- ▶ Neutral, Fair, Professional, Personalized, and Confidential
- ▶ Improves Communication and Allows parties to make concessions
- ▶ Preserves Ongoing Relationships
- ▶ Learn What the Real Issues and Concerns Are
- ▶ Avoids Having Things Get Worse
- ▶ Helps People Get Along Better
- ▶ Helps Develop Win-Win Solutions
- ▶ Produces Department and Interpersonal Peace





University Resources Available

- ▶ Employee Assistance Program (645-4461)
- ▶ Employee Relations (645-8169; 645-7777; <http://hr.buffalo.edu>)
- ▶ Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (645-2266; (<http://www.buffalo.edu/equity.html>))
- ▶ University Mediation Service (645-4461)
- ▶ University Police (645-2227)

Questions / Comments?