

Why Don't More Employees Use EAP?



It's an idea that has gone round and round for years: Why don't more employees use EAP? The following are suggestions that Steve Albrecht, a domestic violence investigator with the San Diego Police Department, presented in an online EAP NewsBrief.

❖ **They don't think it's confidential.** Employers need to continually educate employees about how EAP works, starting with the fact that it is absolutely confidential. Moreover, EAP providers also need to remind employees that no reports come back to the organization and that there is no external record of their use of the EAP.

❖ **They feel there is a stigma involved in seeking help.** It cannot be overstated that it's no sin to reach out for help when you're struggling. Reiterate the many ways that EAP can help, including: financial problems, marital issues, stress, ailing parents, substance abuse, depression, and others. Each of these concerns can be

addressed competently by EA professionals, who may have a list of resources where they can refer the employee as well.

❖ **They think they need permission from their boss or from HR.** Just as use of the EAP is confidential, there is no need for employees to tell anyone, ask permission, or do anything other than call the EAP phone number and make an appointment. Many EAP providers are quite flexible. They will work with some employees at their therapist offices; they will

EAP Study

'High Impact, Low Cost'

Employee assistance professionals are always on the lookout for studies that verify the usefulness and effectiveness of EAPs. A leading study conducted by XpertHR and published in *Personnel Today* does just that.

Employee assistance programs are effective in helping staff members overcome challenges at work and home in a cost-effective manner, the survey of 156 organizations finds. Two employers in three (66%) provide access to an EAP and an additional 17% are considering doing so.

Face-to-face counseling can be the most expensive aspect of a program, but 82% of employers

work with the employee over the phone if desired; or they can even meet the employee at the worksite.

❖ **They don't know it exists.** This one is the most puzzling, at least if the EAP has done an adequate job marketing its services. Is EAP mentioned in new employee orientation sessions? *Are there posters and brochures in break rooms?* Forward-thinking EAP providers come to organizations and lead lunchtime presentations to introduce themselves and offer help on a variety of topics. ■

provide it, and it is rated as the most effective aspect of an EAP. The biggest change since XpertHR's previous EAP research in 2009 was an increased use of online resources – a feature of 79% of EAPs in 2014, compared with 51% in 2009.

Asked to rate the cost-effectiveness of their EAP, two thirds (66%) of employers said that it completely or partially justified the cost. Not a single employer stated that it did "not justify its cost at all".

One employer's verdict on EAPs was: "High impact, low cost. It would be remiss of organizations not to consider their use. ■"

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Bullying ... Harassment ... Violence Key Workplace Differences Explained

By Catherine M. Mattice, MA, SPHR

I have traveled around the world speaking about the topic of workplace bullying, and I am often asked: "What is the difference between workplace bullying, harassment, and violence?" This article will discuss the answer.

Workplace Bullying

Workplace bullying involves unwanted, recurring aggressiveness that causes psychological and physical harm, which creates a psychological power imbalance between the bully and target. There are three main concepts that are central to defining workplace bullying:

❖ **Bullying must be repeated.** Bullying does **not** refer to incivility or someone who's just having a

bad day. In fact, in an effort to quantify bullying, researchers indicate that bullying needs to occur at least once per week for a period of six months, and on average, last for a period of two to five years.

❖ **Bullying causes psychological and physical harm to targets and witnesses.** Targets of bullies frequently experience anxiety, depression, stress, and other issues, which ultimately results in physical problems. The stress of being "beaten down" at work each day causes sleeplessness, headaches, stomach aches, heart disease, and other maladies. Research shows that bullying can also cause Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and even lead to suicide.

❖ **Bullying is about psychological power.** An initial bullying incident occurs, but for whatever reason the target doesn't speak out. Over time, as long as the target doesn't speak up, the bully will pick on the target more frequently and aggressively until there is an understanding that the bully has

power and the target does not. The abuse ultimately leaves the target feeling helpless.

Bullying behaviors can be divided into three categories: *Aggressive communication, Humiliation, and Manipulation of work.* The following are the key traits of each.

continued on Page 2

FEATURED INSIDE

- ▶ What Happens when the Alternative Proves Addictive?
- ▶ Smart Supervisors...
- ▶ Management Principles to Consider ...
- ▶ De-stressing the Workplace: Part I
- ▶ Sleep Apnea Treatment Eases Nightmares
- ▶ Is CBT as Effective as Clinicians Believe?
- ▶ Understanding the Impact of Bullying
- ▶ Why Don't More Employees Use EAP?
- ▶ 'High Impact, Low Cost' INSERTS
- ▶ *Brown Bagger*: Tools to End Workplace Bullying
- ▶ *Payroll Stuffers*
- ▶ *LifestyleTIPS*®



❖ *Aggressive communication* – Insulting or making offensive remarks; shouting, yelling, angry outbursts; bypassing co-workers in order to avoid communicating with them; harsh finger pointing, invading someone’s personal space; and harsh emails or other electronic communication.

❖ *Humiliation* – Ridiculing or teasing; spreading rumors or gossip; ignoring peers when they walk by; playing harsh practical jokes; and taunting with the use of social media, intranet, etc.

❖ *Manipulation of work* – Removing tasks imperative to job responsibilities; giving unmanageable workloads and impossible deadlines; arbitrarily changing tasks; using employee evaluations to document alleged decreased quality of work; purposely withholding pertinent information; and leaving employees out of email correspondence or meeting invitations.

Discrimination

Discrimination occurs when an employee or manager treats one group of people less fairly than other groups of people such as race, religion, gender, nationality, age, disability, or another defining characteristic. Examples include consistently giving bonuses to men because they are male, or to women

just because they’re female, and not because of individual performance; not letting a person take off for a religious holiday; or taking responsibilities away from a woman because she is pregnant.

Harassment

This is defined as unwanted conduct that is intimidating, hostile or abusive; interferes with an employee’s ability to work; or is a condition of continued employment. Examples include using racially derogatory language; telling inappropriate jokes; making offensive remarks about skin color or age; expressing negative stereotypes; or placing offensive posters in the workplace.

Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment involves unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical harassment of a sexual nature.

Harassment & Bullying: Similarities & Differences

The defining difference is that workplace bullying is legal in most of the U.S., while discrimination and harassment are illegal. Harassment refers to protected characteristics such as race or gender, while workplace bullying does not.

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Table 1:	Harassment	Bullying
Protected category	Required	Not required
Repetition	Not required	Required, unless especially severe and blatant
Power imbalance	Not required by law, although it often exists	Usually included in academic definitions; legal definitions allude to it
Intent	Not required	Up for discussion
Subjectivity	Law does not focus on the harm caused	Academic and legal definitions focus on the harm caused
Perpetrator	Can be anyone	Can be anyone

continued on Page 3

Understanding the Impact of Bullying

By Norbert “Bert” Alicea, MA, CEAP

According to the Workplace Bullying Survey, workplace bullying impacts 65.5 million employees across the country. The pervasiveness of this issue makes it critical that employers take action to protect their employees and put an end to workplace bullying.

In this day and age, bullying does not even have to occur face-to-face. Cyber-bullying is prevalent in the workplace and can happen over e-mail, social media, and other online platforms. While surveys vary on the prevalence of cyber-bullying, one study indicates that 14-20% of employees experience it on a regular basis.

Bullying in the workplace has a tremendous impact on the workplace. It causes stress-related issues among employees, leading to absenteeism, presenteeism, reduced productivity, decreased morale, and other factors than can

cost a company tens of thousands of dollars each year.

Workplace bullying also generates extra costs due to turnover. Eighty-two percent of employees targeted by bullies leave the organization as a result. If this happens, the company must now spend time and money to recruit and train a replacement. This does not include lost revenue if that employee was responsible for specific clients or accounts that leave with them. And if the bully remains employed with the company while a high-performer leaves, it’s likely that the cycle will continue repeating.

For organizations who work with an EAP, experts are often available to offer insights on company policies, provide training to employees, and work with individuals who may be experiencing challenges that could lead to behaviors like bullying. ■

Bert Alicea is the vice president of EAP+ Work/Life Services at Health Advocate.

postal” and gains retribution against the bully through violence. Most often, however, lost deep in their feelings of shame, helplessness, and depression, a target is more likely to commit violence.

In other instances the bully’s anger and frustration at the target get the best of him and he lashes out. I was an expert on a court case against a large retailer where the bully punched the target. The employer was sued because the target called the retailer’s risk management team when he could see the bully’s behavior getting worse, and risk management told the target to finish his shift and they would then transfer him. Unfortunately during that time the bully’s behavior escalated into violence.

Summary

In conclusion, negative behavior at work should be thought of as being on a spectrum, with incivility at one end, bullying somewhere in the middle, and violence at the other extreme. ■

Catherine Mattice is the president of Civility Partners, LLC (www.civilitypartners.com) a consulting firm that specializes in developing systemic solutions for negative behaviors in the workplace. She is also the co-author of Back Off! Your Kick-Ass Guide to Ending Bullying at Work.

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Send your announcements, press releases and news tips to *Employee Assistance Report*, (715) 445-4386 or email mike.jacquart@impacttrainingcenter.net.



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Sleep Apnea Treatment Eases Nightmares

For returning service members suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder and sleep apnea, treatment with continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) reduces their nightmares, according to a leading study.

Researchers reviewed the medical records of U.S. veterans who had been treated in a VA medical center sleep clinic over a two-year period. They looked at the average number of nightmares per week before treatment and up to six months after CPAP was prescribed for the veterans.

The use of CPAP led to a significant reduction in the number of nightmares, which was most connected to how well veterans complied with the treatment.

“One out of six veterans suffers from PTSD, which affects their personal, social and productive life,” said Dr. Sadeka Tamanna, medical director of the sleep disorders laboratory at G.V. (Sonny) VA Medical Center in Jackson, Miss.

“Nightmares are one of the major symptoms that affect their daily life, and prevalence of [sleep apnea] is also high among PTSD

patients and can trigger their nightmares.”

CPAP, which is a common treatment for sleep apnea, helps keep the airway open by providing a stream of air through a mask that is worn during sleep. PTSD symptoms such as nightmares usually start soon after a traumatic event but may not show up until months or even years later, according to the National Center for PTSD at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. ■

Additional source: HealthDay News.

Clinical Perspective

Is CBT as Effective as Clinicians Believe?

For nearly 50 years, cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) has had more research demonstrating its effectiveness than any other therapeutic method. Indeed: nearly 90% of the approaches deemed empirically supported by the American Psychological Association involve cognitive behavioral treatments.

Increasingly, that track record of empirical evidence has been acknowledged and even translated into government funders and insurance companies requiring therapists to use CBT if they want to be reimbursed.

But recent developments have raised questions about whether the effectiveness and scientific

bona fides of CBT have been overstated. A 2013 meta-analysis published in *Clinical Psychology Review* comparing CBT to other therapies reported that it had failed to “provide corroborative evidence for the conjecture that CBT is superior to bona fide non-CBT treatments.”

Further, in November 2014, an 8-week clinical study conducted by Sweden’s Lund University concluded that CBT was no more effective than mindfulness-based therapy for those suffering from depression and anxiety.

Some critics of the method have jumped at the recent negative findings to argue that alternative therapies are just as

effective as CBT, or even better, but its supporters argue that plenty of reasons to question those findings remain. Steve Hollon, a psychologist at Vanderbilt University who specializes in treating depression, argues that, because conditions of replicated trials can be so wildly different from original ones, it’s unsurprising that results, too, can differ.

“It may be that the more recent studies don’t have the same methodological rigor,” Hollon says. “It may be that we’re just seeing the more variable results you’re going to get in the real world.” ■

Source: “Psychotherapy Networker”.

Bullying... cont’d from Page 2

However if someone is bullied due to race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability, nationality, or a host of other reasons, then the behavior is against the law because it is considered harassment. In such cases the targets of the behavior have legal recourse.

If an individual is an equal opportunity offender and bullies a variety of people from different categories, then the behavior is **not** considered harassment and is therefore legal.

Despite their legal differences, bullying and harassment often include relatively similar behaviors – and both are about power. (See also Table 1.)

What about Intention?

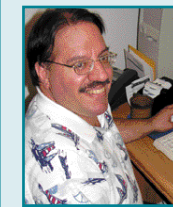
The issue of bullies’ intention is widely debated in academic circles. Some fervently believe that bullying is intentional while others do not.

There are currently four states where workplace bullying is illegal. The laws all refer to it as abusive conduct, but it is the same thing as bullying. Two states (Utah and California) require intention, one doesn’t mention it at all (Tennessee), while the fourth (Nevada) indicates that bullying is illegal regardless of whether it “is intended to cause or actually causes harm.”

The gist of the issue is this: If the behavior is causing one or more people to feel uncomfortable, unhappy, or stressed out, then it should be stopped.

Workplace Violence

Workplace violence can involve any act of aggression, physical assault, or threatening behavior. There are three main levels of workplace violence. While Level 3 violence is the type that gets the media’s attention, Level 1 and 2



Editor’s Notebook

Employee assistance professionals are accustomed to skating an often thin line

between balancing employers’ needs with that of employees. Likewise, the difference between workplace bullying and harassment can appear to be subtle, but clearly there ARE differences that are explained in this month’s cover story by Catherine Mattice, an expert on this topic who’s appeared on FOX, NBC, ABC, and worked with clients such as Chevron and Kaiser Permanente, to name a few.

And what about workplace violence? Where does that fit in? Catherine also explains this key distinction.

Certainly these are often difficult problems that aren’t easily resolved (someone involved might need to find another job), but it’s also clear that the EAP is

in a perfect position to help ... and gaining a greater understanding between bullying, harassment, and violence is a great step toward doing just that.

While the bulk of the main concepts are explained in the cover story and this month’s *Brown Bagger* insert, Catherine (and co-author E.G. Sebastian) present a wealth of **additional**, practical tools you can use to even better “understand, report, and effectively end workplace bullying” in their awesome book *Back Off! Your Kick-Ass Guide to Ending Bullying at Work*. It is available at the “Products” tab on her website, www.civilitypartners.com.

Mike Jacquart

Mike Jacquart, Editor

(715) 258-2448

mike.jacquart@impacttrainingcenter.net

occur in workplaces *every day*. Here is a brief look at each:

❖ **Level 1 – Verbal aggression:** Constant refusal to cooperate, spreading rumors to harm others, being aggressively argumentative, or showing belligerent behavior toward others.

❖ **Level 2 – Unreasonable behavior:** Refusal to obey company policies and procedures, sabotaging equipment and/or stealing property for revenge, or destroying property.

❖ **Level 3 – Physical acts:** Making suicidal threats, physical fights, or committing arson, rape, or murder.

Bullying & Violence: Similarities & Differences

In reviewing these traits one can see that bullying and violence can easily overlap. However, differences do exist. Workplace violence is overt and physical, while bullying is insidious and manipulative. Perpetrators of workplace violence throw things, become visibly angry, and make clear threats of violence. Bullies, on the other hand, use work flow and communication to bully, such as bottlenecking information, overworking the target, giving deadlines impossible to meet, and using evaluations to document alleged poor performance.

In rare cases bullying turns into violence because the target “goes

continued on Page 7

What Happens when the Alternative Proves Addictive?

Three shaky months into recovery from heroin addiction, Dariya Pankova found something to ease her withdrawal. A local nonalcoholic bar sold a brewed beverage that soothed her brain and body much as narcotics had. This seemed to be a perfect solution — until it backfired.

Ms. Pankova grew addicted to the beverage itself. She drank more and more, awakened her cravings for the stronger high of heroin, and relapsed. Only during another stay in rehab did Ms. Pankova learn that the drink's primary ingredient, a Southeast Asian leaf called kratom, affects the brain like an opiate and can also be addictive.

Some users embrace kratom as a natural painkiller and benign substitute for more dangerous substances that, in most states, is legal. But its growing popularity and easy availability are raising concerns among substance abuse experts and government officials who say it is being furtively marketed as a way out of addiction, even though it is itself addictive. Worse, some of those experts say, kratom can lead some addicts back to heroin, which is cheaper and stronger.

Kratom is now available around the country. Powdered forms of the leaf are sold at head shops and gas-station convenience stores and on the Internet. Bars have recently opened in Colorado, New York, North Carolina and other states where customers nurse brewed varieties, varying in strength, from plastic bottles that resemble those for fruit juice.

Kratom exists in a kind of legal purgatory. Because it is categorized

as a botanic dietary supplement, the Food and Drug Administration cannot restrict its sale unless it is proved unsafe or producers claim that it treats a medical condition. (Some packages are coyly labeled “not for human consumption” to avoid tripping such alarms.)

The Drug Enforcement Administration has listed kratom as a “drug of concern” but not a controlled substance, which would require proven health risks and abuse potential. Indiana, Tennessee, Vermont and Wyoming have banned it on their own; several other states, including Florida and New Jersey, have set aside similar bills until more is known about kratom's health risks. The Army has forbidden its use by soldiers.

Robert Waina, a Florida resident, said he had abused dozens of different drugs before discovering kratom three years ago. He enjoyed the mild high to the point that he found him-

self ordering bottle after bottle. When he tried to cut back, he couldn't, and eventually suffered from such withdrawals that he had to go to rehab for kratom three times, most recently last spring.

Sitting in a coffee shop in Delray Beach, Waina said recently that he had stayed sober since then, avoiding kratom like any other drug. “If I'm taking it,” he said, “as far as I'm concerned, I'm not clean.” ■

Source: “The New York Times”.



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Smart Supervisors...

- Set clear expectations to employees.
- Don't wait to get professional help, such as from an EAP.
- Don't take matters personally.
- Communicate with employees about their problems.
- Are willing to see a problem through to resolution. ■

Sources: Bob Gilson, a retired government labor and employee relations director; FedSmith (www.fedsmith.com).

On the Job

De-stressing the Workplace: Part I

By Audrey McLaughlin

Stress is an often-overused word that can incite a physical reaction simply by mentioning it.

The American Psychological Association says that routine stress from work—things like long hours, manual labor, low-reward positions and projects—can contribute to mental health issues and even have physical impacts such as an increase in heart attacks.

The good news is that employers can help to manage and even reduce employee stress, which serves to boost employees' well-being. And when employees are happy and know their employer cares about them, they have improved work quality, productivity, lower absenteeism, less turnover and better customer service ratings.

There are five ideas for getting started. This article will take a look at two of them. The others

will be addressed in part two of this two-part article.

❖ **Establish flexible hours and paid time off.**

We are humans and humans get sick, as do their little humans. Offering employees the ability to come in a little early and stay a little late, not only earn but use paid time off, or telecommute occasionally gives them the flexibility they need to have a life outside of the office. This works great for those times when an employee has an urgent need, as well as for maternity and paternity leave.

Worried about people slacking when working offsite? Don't. Studies show that employees increase their productivity by 13% when allowed to telecommute.

The key to implementing this benefit is by releasing the old mindset that a job has to “look a certain way.” Choose flexibility instead.

❖ **Offer on-site resources for reducing stress.**

Stress and the physical symptoms that come with it are often ignored due to the time off it takes for appointments. Even the smallest employers can assist their employees by providing resources on-site such as chair massages, minor medical screenings, and over-the-counter medications such as antacids and acetaminophen.

Additionally, providing a space for moving about on-site and other physical activity can reduce the overall stress of office life. The key to implementing on-site resources lies in a little extra space for the taking and keeping a few supplies on hand such as a stow-away massage chair. ■

Audrey “Christie” McLaughlin is a registered nurse who writes for *Quill.com* about health and medical issues. For more about Audrey, visit physicianspractice.com. Additional source: www.business.com.

Management Principles to Consider ...

- Tell the truth.
- Prove it with actions.
- Manage for tomorrow.
- Conduct public relations as if the whole company depended on it. ■

Source: Arthur H. Page