

# EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE REPORT



supporting EAP professionals

## Seeking Civility

### Understanding & Eradicating Workplace Bullying

By Catherine Mattice

**W**orkplace bullying is a hot new topic in the business world.

Although academic research spans over 25 years, and laws against workplace bullying are prudent in several other countries, the United States has only recently begun to pay attention. The popularity of the topic and the increasing interest of employers to deal with it effectively put EAPs in a unique position. As a liaison between employees and their employers, an EAP can offer *employees* the guidance they need to navigate through their sticky situation, and provide *management* with the direction they need to effectively end it.

#### Defining Bullying

Workplace bullying involves



systematic and perpetual aggressive communication and manipulation, with acts aimed at humiliation. This behavior creates an unhealthy power imbalance between bullies and targets, and leaves targets with many physical, psychological and psychosomatic symptoms. They include feelings such as anxiousness, stress and depression, problems sleeping, stomachaches, and even heart disease. Since targets are unable to perform as a quality employee – bullying also results in presenteeism and absenteeism. Of course these reactions, and the communication bottlenecks caused by bullies, hurt an organization's bottom line.

Examples of bullying behavior include:

- Persistent criticism;
- Taking credit for others' work;
- Excessive and unnecessary micromanagement;
- Yelling;
- Aggressive body language (e.g., getting in an individual's personal space); and/or
- Assigning work that's impossible to complete on time.

We may have all experienced these behaviors at one time or

another; but when the behaviors are *ongoing, persistent*, and they are designed to *put people down* they are considered bullying.

However, bullying involves more than just the bullies and their targets. The organization's members and its culture play a significant role in allowing bullying, or any other negative

*continued on Page 2*

#### FEATURED INSIDE

- ▶ Steps to a Stress-Free Day
- ▶ Dealing with Unconscious Bias – Part I
- ▶ Companies to Increase \$ Value of Incentives
- ▶ Do's and Don'ts in the Workplace
- ▶ The Frugal Doctor is 'In' – Part I
- ▶ 'Tis the Season for Shorter Workdays
- ▶ Health Concerns for Frequent Travelers
- ▶ Can an EAP Counselor Refuse to See a Client?

#### INSERTS

- ▶ *Brown Bagger*: Ending Bullying in YOUR Workplace
- ▶ *Payroll Stuffers*
- ▶ *LifestyleTIPS*®

behavior, to thrive.

Organizational members who witness bullying may avoid standing up for the target or speaking out to management because they fear backlash. This inactivity encourages bullies and allows negativity to creep into the organization's culture. This isn't without consequence; research has shown that witnesses of bullying, called reinforcers, also experience anxiety, stress, and depression.

### What can an EAP do?

There are numerous strategies that EA professionals can use in the workplace:



❖ **Counsel targets** – The most common reaction of managers who hear complaints of bullying is to do nothing or to blame the target. For instance, CareerBuilder found that 62% of employers did nothing, and the Workplace Bullying Institute found that 70% of targets are eventually fired. Given the pervasiveness of this inactivity or wrong action by managers, targets should be counseled in how to talk to managers to get the help they need.

First, document bullying whenever it occurs in a journal. Write down where it transpired, what was said, and who was there. This journal should remain strictly fact-based. Any thoughts about emotions belong in a separate journal. The target should also collect any tangible evidence such

as bullying emails or memos, and even doctors notes describing psychological and physical manifestations of stress.

Second, when targets present their complaint to management, again, they should stick to the facts. Focusing on describing the behavior, and explaining how it impacts performance, productivity and the bottom line will make targets' complaints much more successful than if they focus on themselves. Too often targets simply focus on how much they hurt, and *they* are subsequently seen as the problem.

❖ **Coach bullies** – Although the media often paints bullies as blood-sucking psychopaths out for blood, most bullies have no idea why their behavior is so hurtful. When I coach bullies, they often tell me they understand that people are hurt, but they don't understand what it is about their communication that is so terrible. EA professionals can help them gain *empathy, emotional intelligence, and effective communication skills.*

❖ **Avoid traditional conflict management programs** – The jury is still out on the best solutions to end bullying in the workplace, but there seems to be one area in which researchers agree: traditional conflict resolution strategies are probably not the answer. That's because bullying creates a severe power imbalance that pushes targets into a state of helplessness not much different than that of a battered wife, and it is this power imbalance that makes traditional conflict management the wrong solution.

❖ **Educate the organization** – EA professionals can easily add the topic of bullying to existing harassment training pro-

## EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE REPORT

Editor - Mike Jacquart  
Publisher - Scott Kolpien  
Designer - Laura J. Miller  
Circulation - Matt Deets

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grams, or encourage employers to do so if they do their training internally. While bullying is legal, and harassment is not, this is a perfect opportunity for EA professionals to create awareness about the importance of a positive workplace and standing up for one another.

❖ **Help the organization identify ground rules** – During training, ask employees to

*continued on Page 3*

develop a list of desirable workplace behaviors, as well as undesirable ones, and include that list in a healthy-workplace corporate policy or in corporate values. Participation in the creation of a policy or the values they are meant to live by creates buy-in.

❖ **Guide managers in developing positive departmental cultures** – Managers can be encouraged to create a positive workplace within their own department. If they create SMART goals and action items for their employees to carry out, the success of their efforts can even be tied to performance management and rewards systems.

### Summary

EA professionals have the resources and credibility to help management understand the value of respect and civility. If management affords the opportunity to help them end bullying, take a holistic approach, as it will enable you to make real, sustainable change.

When working with an organization in a consulting capacity, avoid getting focused on ending the problem of workplace bullying. Instead focus on the *outcome*, a positive culture in which employees thrive. Let that intended outcome guide your efforts. It may seem like a small twist in point of view, but it will make a world of difference in your success. ■

*Catherine Mattice is the President of Civility Partners, a consulting firm specializing in ending workplace bullying and replacing it with positivity. She may be contacted at Catherine@CivilityPartners.com.*



### Editor's Notebook

First, I'd like to thank Shelley Plemons for her seven Marketing Matters columns, which debuted in November 2011 and concluded with the May 2012 *EAR*. I'm hopeful Shelley will consider sharing her considerable marketing expertise in the future, but new ventures in her professional life make writing all but impossible, at least for now. However, I recognize that writing goes "above and beyond" for nearly *all* contributors – so I wish to thank each and every one of you who takes time out of your busy lives to pen an article for this newsletter.

Speaking of writing, I wish to also thank Catherine Mattice for her excellent articles this month on the topic of workplace bullying. In a litigious day and age, you wouldn't think that bullying could be a workplace concern, and yet it is. I've

witnessed it, and I'll bet many readers have, too. Catherine's cover article offers tips for EA professionals, while the *Brown Bagger* presents advice for employees and employers who are dealing with this overlooked subject.

Finally, this issue of *EAR* also features an article on the delicate issue of whether an EAP counselor should be required to see a client whose core personal values conflicted with hers. In the issue of fairness and objectivity, both point and counterpoint sides are presented. Additional comments are welcome by either emailing me – or leaving a comment at one of the blog posts on this topic. Check out <http://impactpublishing.wordpress.com>. Until next time.

*Mike Jacquart*

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### Quick Ideas

## Steps to a Stress-Free Day

**A**re you or the employees of one of your corporate clients overwhelmed at work? The following are four steps to a stress-free day at work:

❖ **Be sociable – but not TOO sociable.** British research shows that sociability is good for your health. Having friends at work, getting encouragement from your boss, and moral support from co-workers reduces stress, anxiety, and depression by 36%. But too much socializ-

ing causes work to pile up. Studies show that one-quarter of the workday is lost to interruptions, such as email, phone calls, and text messaging. In addition, about one-quarter of all tasks get put off until the next day, sending stress levels soaring. So, take quick breaks with friends, and save the long discussions for after hours.

❖ **Make sure co-workers are visible.** Studies show that people

*continued on Page 6*

# Dealing with Unconscious Bias – Part I

By Howard J. Ross

**R**aise your hand if you are biased.

If you were slow to raise your hand, you are not alone. Many of us are reluctant to admit we harbor some bias. We have been taught that to be biased means that we are bad. Or worse, that we are bigots and discriminators. But bias is a normal part of human behavior.

Bias resides inside all of us, whether we like it or not. All of us need practice to reveal our thinking and understand not only what we think, but also *how* we think. The following are some “conscious” steps to help you deal with unconscious bias. The remaining steps will be presented in part two of this two-part article.

❖ **Tell the truth to yourself & notice what influences your**

**decisions.** Remember that *all* humans have unconscious preferences and biases, which is completely normal, and that those preferences and biases impact most, if not all, of the decisions we make, *including those regarding people.* Be willing to honestly admit your biases. Also, keep in mind that unconscious preference and biases can influence decision-making in both negative as well as positive ways.

❖ **Gather data about yourself.** The Implicit Association Test, [www.implicit.harvard.edu](http://www.implicit.harvard.edu) can help you identify your unconscious preferences. Taking one or more of the IATs is a free, voluntary activity that you can do at home on your own computer. Keep track of your decisions and review them to see if there are any patterns that may not have been apparent to you (e.g.,

similarities in the persons you socialize with, people you hire or select to be on your team.) Patterns don’t automatically indicate bias. But if you see a pattern, it would be wise to examine it further.

❖ **Stretch your comfort zone.** If you discover that you view a particular group with discomfort, make a conscious effort to learn more about that group. Expose yourself to positive images and other information related to that group. Don’t be afraid to question yourself. If others question your decisions, instead of reacting defensively, try to listen to the feedback. Be open to change. ■

*Howard J. Ross is one of the nation’s leading diversity training consultants and a nationally recognized expert on diversity, leadership, and organizational change. For more information, visit [www.reinventingdiversity.com](http://www.reinventingdiversity.com).*

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# Companies to Increase \$ Value of Incentives

**M**ost companies plan to increase the dollar value of the incentives they offer employees to participate in health-improvement programs this year, according to a new employer survey conducted by Fidelity Investments and the National Business Group on Health (NBGH).

The survey found that almost three out of four (73%) companies used incentives in 2011 to engage employees in health-improvement programs and the average incentive value was \$460. That figure has steadily increased from an average of \$430 in 2010 and \$260 in 2009. According to the study, employers used different types of incentives including cash, gift cards and contributions to Health Savings Accounts. The majority (57%) agreed that incentive-based programs had a better than expected success rate at increasing employee participation.

“As companies have increased their commitment and investment

in health-improvement programs, they have made their incentives more enticing,” said Adam Stavisky, senior vice president of Fidelity’s Benefits Consulting business, which commissioned the study with NBGH. “They have also learned which programs resonate best with their workforce, whether that involves on-site flu shots or weight loss challenges. Now employers are starting to see results from their efforts.”

## Companies Requiring Participation

The survey found that a small but growing number of companies are requiring employees to participate in health-improvement programs in order to be eligible for medical benefits. For instance, last year 5% of companies required their workers to complete cholesterol screening or be excluded from coverage. That number is expected to nearly double in 2012 to 9%.

“This isn’t surprising given how much control employees can have over their own health and how much poor health habits cost employers,” said Helen Darling, president and chief executive officer of NBGH.

## Summary

The survey found that, incentives aside, the average employer spent \$169 per employee on health-improvement programs in 2011, comparable to \$154 in 2010 and up from \$108 in 2009.

While smoking cessation and *Employee Assistance Programs* (EAP) are the most prevalent lifestyle-management offerings in the workplace, healthy cafeteria food options are expected to be introduced by an additional 16% of employers this year. Currently, 51% of companies offer such choices. ■

*Additional source: Employee Assistance Professionals Association ([www.eapassn.org](http://www.eapassn.org)).*

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## Quick Ideas

# Do’s and Don’ts in the Workplace

❖ DO respond constructively when someone presents an idea.

❖ DON’T let negativity become your “go-to” response.

❖ DO push for solutions.

❖ DON’T give in to the temptation to whine. It doesn’t get anyone anywhere.

❖ DO conduct tough talks in person.

❖ DON’T leave critical or harsh messages on voicemail or send them to an email inbox.

❖ DO set goals and hold yourself and employees accountable for results.

❖ DON’T confuse activity with progress. ■

*Source: Jon Gordon, author of Soup: A Recipe to Nourish Your Team and Culture (Wiley, 2010, ISBN: 978-0-4704878-4-6, [www.soup11.com](http://www.soup11.com).)*

# The Frugal Doctor is 'In' – Part I

By Gary Foreman

I recently I had a physical, but outside of being a little overweight and growing older, I don't have any obvious health issues. I did, however, describe some minor symptoms to my doctor, which prompted him to order some tests. I was glad that he could read the symptoms and knew what to test for. Fortunately the tests found nothing seriously wrong.

It occurred to me that our finances are similar. We might have some small concerns, yet we don't know what to do about it. Just as with our physical health, we need a professional to help us read, in this case, the *financial* symptoms of a potential problem. Like a doctor, let's take a closer look:

**Symptom #1:** *Just making your monthly minimums without anything to spare. You'll look healthy. No bill collectors will be calling, and, your credit card companies won't be raising your interest rates or hitting you with late fees.*

But, if you're just making the



minimum payment you don't have any margin for emergencies. Just one new large expense (auto repair or appliance replacement) could raise the minimum over your ability to pay it. Or, any interruption in your income (a cutback in the number of hours) would put you over the edge.

**Prescription #1:** *Find a way to pay down your credit cards to reduce your minimum payments.* Look for something in your budget you can cut for a while and use that money to pay the card with the highest interest rate. If you can't find anything to cut, look for some type of part-time income until you get the credit balances (and minimum payments) down.

**Symptom #2:** *Each car loan is longer than the prior one. Yes, you'll be very stylish with your new wheels. Friends will ask how you like your new car. And, just like the salesman promised, you can afford the "easy monthly payments".*

The hidden danger is that you're increasing the time that you're "upside down" in your loan. At some point in the future you'll be committed to two or three years of payments on a broken-down car that you can't afford to repair or replace.

**Prescription #2:** Find a way to reduce the length of your auto loan. That means prepaying some principal – preferably each month. Again, you'll need to find some money from your current monthly budget or an additional source of income. But a little inconvenience today can prevent a major problem later. ■

NEXT MONTH: More symptoms and prescriptions are presented.

*Gary Foreman is a former purchasing manager who currently edits The Dollar Stretcher website at [www.stretcher.com](http://www.stretcher.com).*

## Steps to a Stress-Free Day

cont'd from Page 3

whose colleagues are out of sight feel too isolated – and the higher the partitions between cubicles, the more people complain about noise from their neighbors. Why? Because they feel disconnected, and the noise infringes on their personal space. According to a study at the University of Montreal, the ideal partition height is 4 feet 3 inches. That's high enough to provide privacy, but low enough to not feel alone.

❖ **Ask for more responsibility.** Studies reveal that people who remain on the bottom rungs are most likely to die young? Why? Because the less control one has over work life, the higher the stress – and stress can kill! The answer is to take on new tasks to be in charge of.

❖ **Make every day "bring your dog to work" day!**

Numerous studies state that having a pet around makes people laugh, reduce stress, and brings a calming, homey feeling to the workplace. Workers in offices where pets are welcome say they're more productive, and the days just fly by. But you might want to talk to your boss first! ■

*Additional source: John Tesh: Intelligence for Your Life ([www.tesh.com](http://www.tesh.com)).*

## 'Tis the Season for Shorter Workdays

Many workers love it when summer rolls around – because one of their favorite job perks kicks in: *Short Summer Fridays*. This means that employees get to leave work early on Friday afternoons and get a jump on the weekend.

According to MSNBC, despite the down economy, pink slips, and wage freezes, very few organizations – especially small ones – have done away with their traditional shorter Friday hours. How come?

Karyn Ravin, president of a New York PR firm, says that

giving employees a few hours off is smart for business – partly because it's tough for companies to attract and keep workers, and partly because it's a great morale-booster, and an easy way to reward and motivate employees, many of whom are working harder and longer hours than ever, because of layoffs.

For instance, Welz and Weisel Communications in New York City lets people leave at 3 p.m. as long as they've finished their work. Since all staffers have smartphones and access to email, clients can still reach them if necessary.

The Devon Group – a PR firm in New Jersey – keeps Summer Fridays going because most of their clients take time off on Fridays. As a result, having the office open wouldn't bring in any new business.

Other companies have created a more flexible approach to time off – for example, giving employees one Friday off each month during the summer, but letting the employee choose when to take the time. ■

*Additional source: John Tesh: Intelligence for Your Life (www.tesh.com).*

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### Quick Ideas

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## Health Concerns for Frequent Travelers

Are you a frequent traveler? Traveling for work may be good for your career, but it can be bad for your health because of too many restaurant meals, not enough exercise, a lack of sleep, and the stress of a hectic schedule.

One study at Columbia University followed more than 13,000 workers. The result: Those who travel more than 21 days a month are 92% more likely to be obese, which drastically raises their risk for heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, and cancer.

In addition, 75% of frequent travelers also rated their stress levels as “high” whenever they travel. Constantly feeling rushed, overwhelmed, and under pressure can lead to common stress-related symptoms such as headaches, heartburn, mood swings, sleep issues, and irregular heartbeat.

More than half of frequent business travelers experience sleep deprivation, and exercise tends to be neglected on the road. A lot of business travelers pack light to avoid having to check any luggage, so workout clothes don't

always make the cut.

What can you do? Work extra-hard to eat healthy on the road, and look for exercise opportunities wherever you stay. Kimpton Hotels offers yoga, Pilates, and workout videos on their hotel room TV, as well as yoga mats and resistance straps. Westin Hotels provide running maps, workout gear, and sneakers with disposable insoles, all free of charge. ■

*Additional source: John Tesh: Intelligence for Your Life (www.tesh.com).*

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# Can an EAP Counselor Refuse to See a Client?

## The Cases:

An EAP counselor who describes herself as “a devout Christian who believes that it is immoral to engage in same-sex sexual relationships,” refused to provide counseling to an EAP client because of her own “personal values,” which she claimed would interfere with the client/therapist relationship, according to the *Employment Matters Blog*.

The employee, meanwhile, who felt “judged and condemned” by the counselor, Marcia Walden, complained to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) about Ms. Walden’s treatment. (Walden managed the EAP for the CDC.) After numerous discussions with Ms. Walden about how she could handle similar situations in the future, and after concluding that Ms. Walden was unwilling to alter her approach, her assignment to the CDC was terminated.

In another similar, though not identical, case, a graduate-level counseling student at Eastern Michigan University (EMU) was expelled for refusing to counsel a gay client. Julea Ward, a devout Christian, asked her faculty supervisor either to refer the client to another student or to permit her to begin counseling and make a referral if the session turned to relationship issues. In support of its decision, EMU claimed it had a “no referral” policy and that Ms. Ward’s actions violated the American Counseling Association’s code of ethics.



### Point ...

Why can’t the counselor refuse to see the client and refer the matter to another counselor in the organization? In this way, the client still gets treated, and the counselor does not have to feel that he/she is being forced to do something against his/her conscience. Part of an EAP counselor’s responsibility is to assess and refer, and in this case, a referral should be made to a counselor who is comfortable working with gay clients. If you are choosing to be part of an EAP network, then I believe the provider has a contractual obligation to meet with the client at least once, and then provide an appropriate referral. I have difficulty believing that a fundamentalist Christian therapist who has anti-gay sentiments would be able to demonstrate the objectivity and client-centered approach that

would be required for brief, solution-oriented therapy for a homosexual client.

### ... Counterpoint

It must remain client focused.... It is always about them .... not us. The question wasn’t really whether a born-again Christian could refuse to treat, but rather, whether the EAP had the right to fire the counselor who refuses. Much of the discussion about these cases has been about a slightly different topic – scope of practice and therapeutic self-disclosure. Would we accept other categories of people getting lesser service based on their being “Christian,” “Muslim,” “Jewish,” “Black,” “White,” “Latino,” etc., which a counselor finds objectionable? I think most would call such practice discrimination, and would quickly agree the agency should fire the counselor. What makes us think it is any more acceptable to apply a discriminatory standard on the basis of sexual orientation? As counselors, we are behavioral scientists. The best science available tells us that there are genetic and brain physiology differences between gay and non-gay people, and that based on this research, sexual orientation is not a choice, or even a narrowly definable behavior. ■

*Additional source: Employee Assistance Professionals Association (EAPA). (Comments appeared on the Impact blog and an EAPA LinkedIn group. Names withheld intentionally.)*