



For you, your career, and your life

Vol. III No. 1 Resident Assistance Program Newsletter April 2006

Bullying Behavior in the Workplace – Its Costs and Consequences

Most working Americans can expect to witness - if not become the target of - workplace bullying at least once in their careers, says Susan Futterman, author of "When You Work For a Bully."

Futterman wrote the book after experiencing bullying first hand. "As I sought to understand the impact that experience had on me, I came to realize just how widespread the problem was and how serious it could be - ranging from long-term depression, bankruptcy, divorce, even suicide."

One in six American workers experiences workplace bullying, says Gary Namie, Ph.D., president of The Workplace Bullying & Trauma Institute in Bellingham, Washington, and author of "The Bully at Work."

"Workplace bullying is the repeated mistreatment of one employee targeted by one or more employees with a malicious mix of humiliation, intimidation and sabotage of performance," Namie explains. "It's a more general type of

harassment that crosses gender, race and age boundaries. Bullying is two to three times more prevalent than illegal discrimination. It is sub-lethal, non-physical workplace violence."

"Understanding the causes and impact of bullying can help doctors as, during their careers, they treat patients who come in complaining of excessive fatigue, depression, bouts of panic and/or anxiety - all symptoms exhibited by victims of bullying," says Futterman.

Over-the-top docs cost plenty

Might your own behavior be perceived as bullying? "It's not unheard of for doctors to be viewed as bullies by those they work with," says Futterman. In her book, she cites research conducted by Helen Cox, EdD, MSN, RN (1991) and by Laura Sofield, MSN, APRN, BC (1999).

"Both researchers found that more than 90% of nurses they surveyed had experienced verbal abuse, and most encountered an average of five incidents per month. The majority of respondents in

Is there a bully in the house? Consider the resources available to you through your Resident Assistance Program (RAP). We're here to help you deal with conflict, stress or adjustment difficulties during your residency. RAP professionals provide counseling, coaching and an extra measure of support when you need it most. Our goal is to help you become a more successful physician.

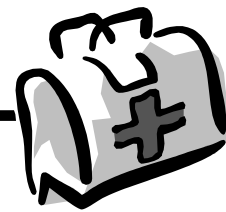
Call us at 813-870-3344.

CONFIDENTIAL

both studies named physicians as the most common perpetrators. And in both surveys, the majority of nurses said that the abuse increased turnover rates and contributed to the nursing shortage. Many also reported that such abuse tended to increase the number of errors on the job."

"Bullies are too expensive to keep," Namie emphasizes. "They can expose an employer to legal liability and higher workers'

Continued on next page



Formulate and stamp indelibly on your mind a mental picture of yourself as succeeding. Hold this picture tenaciously. Never permit it to fade. Your mind will seek to develop the picture...Do not build up obstacles in your imagination.

*-Norman Vincent Peale
(1898 - 1993)*



Money Matters

What do planners know that you don't about wealth?

Two studies released in January 2006 reveal that Americans think it is much more difficult to accumulate personal wealth than financial planners think it is. The Consumer Federation of America (CFA) and the Financial Planning Association® (FPA) studies also found that only about 49% of Americans know what constitutes personal wealth: financial assets plus home equity and other tangible assets minus consumer debts.

Most planners think that over four-fifths of young American adults could accumulate \$250,000 in net wealth over a period of 30 years. And planners typically believe that about half of young Americans could accumulate \$1 million in this period. Yet pessimism ruled when individuals were asked whether they thought they could save even \$200,000 at any point in their life, and less than one-tenth believe they could accumulate \$1 million.

“Planners know that it is easier for individuals to build personal wealth than they realize,” said FPA Chair James A. Barnash, CFP. “They understand the options that are most practical for individual families to maximize their wealth-building potential.”

For more information on building personal wealth, managing debt and planning for your family's financial security, contact Julio C. Muniz, a Certified Financial Planner (CFP) and a Chartered Life Underwriter (CLU).

*Muniz and Associates, 813-258-0033
www.munizandassociates.com*

Bullying Behavior, *continued*

comp and disability costs. Their behavior interferes with work performance. In a hospital, that jeopardizes patient safety. Over-the-top docs comprise much of my expert witness caseload.” Namie served as an expert witness for the plaintiff in the nation's first “bullying trial” in March 2005 in Indianapolis. The plaintiff, who worked with a bullying surgeon, received a \$325,000 jury award.

When you are the target

Short of moving on and out of a bully's range permanently - which may not be possible during your residency - there are some effective tactics you can adopt to modify a bully's behavior and mitigate its impact on you, says Futterman.

“Direct confrontation will likely only make matters worse,” she says. “But that doesn't mean you simply have to give up and cave in. Instead, keep calm. Stay professional. By not giving the bully the response he expects, you're destroying his rhythm. And, for a change, he's the one who'll have to react.”

(Futterman uses the male pronoun for convenience only, she says. Bullies are just as likely to be women as men.)

“Train yourself to be able to maintain eye contact with a bully,” she advises. “It will make you look confident. Check out your body language, too. Stand up straight, lift your chin and don't hunch. Try not to show that the bully has upset you. While he may not notice or care about your reaction, you will know that by refusing to cave in and by declining to play by his rules, you're gaining strength.”

“The worst way to deal with the bully is to accept what he or she is telling you,” Futterman says. “You can burn yourself out trying to achieve impossible - and often, constantly changing - goals. Don't believe that you deserve the abuse you are receiving.”

“Medical residents may be especially vulnerable because they have so much invested in their professional identities,” says Namie. “Yet ironically, the greater the investment in your career, the less ego strength you may have.”

A group response can be effective in dealing with a bully, Namie notes. “A bully counts on a group to do nothing when he or she singles out one person as a target,” he says. “Fear permeates the rest of the group and keeps them silent. But the bully interprets silence as positive reinforcement.”

“Residents who feel they are being subjected to abusive or humiliating behavior can tap into the power of their peer group,” Namie suggests. “Don't count on this happening intuitively. When the bully starts fist-pounding or screaming or behaving in other erratic or unacceptable ways, the target has to immediately turn to the team members and say, ‘I need your help on this. If he can do this to me he can do this to you.’ This will empower others in the group to voice support, and the target can then say ‘we are all witnesses to your behavior, and we're prepared to take it up the ladder if it continues.’ You might think the bully will respond by ripping someone's head off — but a bully respects power.”

Resources on Bullying in the Workplace

www.mytoxicboss.com
www.bullyinginstitute.org
www.workdoctor.com
www.kickbully.com