What is workplace bullying?

In the June 2005 edition of HRMagazine, the Workplace Bullying and Trauma Institute defines bullying as repeated nonphysical, health-impairing psychological mistreatment that falls outside discriminatory harassment.

Workplace bullying involves abuse or misuse of power and creates feelings of defenselessness and injustice and undermines the target’s dignity at work. Bullying is different than aggression.

Aggression may be a single attack, whereas bullying involves repeated attacks against the target.

Bullying should not be confused with “tough” or “demanding” bosses. These types of bosses are generally fair and respectful and seek to obtain the best performance by setting high and reasonable expectations for work.

Who to contact for help:

For additional information or to file a complaint, contact one of the offices listed below. The confidentiality of all parties involved will be strictly respected insofar as it does not interfere with the University’s obligation to investigate misconduct allegations and to take corrective action.

Retaliation is a separate issue from any complaint and is intolerable in any form. Discipline up to and including termination for any retaliatory behavior will be strictly enforced.

Faculty & Staff Assistance Program
1237 Pineview Drive
Morgantown, WV 26505
304-293-5590

WVU Employee Relations
http://employeerelations.hr.wvu.edu/

WVU President’s Office for Social Justice
B1 Stewart Hall
PO Box 6202
Morgantown, WV 26506
304-293-5496

WVU Extension Service
Human Resources Department
400 Knapp Hall
Morgantown, WV 26506
Phone: 304-293-4555

For more information:

www.workplacebullying.org/
www.healthyworkplacebill.org/

It is not just the nature of the incident; it is also the number, frequency and pattern that can expose bullying.
1. Recognize that you are being bullied.

2. Realize that you are NOT the source of the problem. You are not responsible for being bullied and did not invite the misery upon yourself. Remember: it is the employer’s responsibility to protect you from these types of situations.

3. Don’t feel victimized. The more you think the bully is focusing on you, the more you will feel that the bully is insulting you, even when the bullying may not intend to do so.

4. Recognize that bullying is about control. It has nothing to do with your performance.
   a. Be Competent: Be on top of your job so that you don’t give the bully material to use against you. Your work may be criticized but if you’re efficient then you give the bully less chance to focus on you.
   b. Be assertive: Keep calm but respond assertively to the bully. With a firm voice and eye contact, make it clear that you do not like the way the bully is acting or handling a situation (yelling, throwing things, demeaning you or others).

5. Document everything. Keep a specific and detailed diary listing dates, times, places, who was present and what was said or done and by whom. Be as specific as possible: “she was mean to me” is too vague. Describe the incident(s) using concrete behavior(s): “she yelled loudly and used curse words.” Also, keep copies of harassing/bullying paperwork, especially any paperwork that contradicts any of the bully’s accusations against you (letters, time sheets, reports, memos, etc.).

6. Do NOT retaliate.

7. Expect the bully to deny and perhaps misconstrue your accusations; have a witness with you during any meetings with the bully.

8. Report the incident(s) to your supervisor, WVU-ES HR Department, The President’s Office for Social Justice or the Faculty and Staff Assistance Program (FSAP). Don’t feel isolated or think that there is nothing you can do.


*Adapted from Prem Rao’s “7 Steps to Combat Workplace Bullying” and the Washington State Department of Labor & Industries.