



# BITE-SIZED CAREER STRATEGIES

## Bullying in the Workplace

Unfortunately, many employees experience bullying behaviors at work. What is bullying? According to healthline.com, “workplace bullying is harmful, targeted behavior that happens at work. It might be spiteful, offensive, mocking, or intimidating. It forms a pattern, and it tends to be directed at one person or a few people.”

In most states, bullying is not illegal; that doesn't mean that bullying behaviors are OK. Some examples of workplace bullying can include making someone feel unwelcome; making unkind and/or hurtful remarks about someone's family, lifestyle, body, appearance, shape, weight, clothes, or personal life; targeted practical “jokes;” unjust criticism; and more.

Unlike schoolyard bullying, bullying at work is often directed at those who excel. If you are the target of bullying, what can you do?

The first thing you should do is recognize bullying for what it is. Next, project confidence and stand up for yourself. Tell the person bullying you to stop; refrain from “taking the bait.” You should also document the behaviors: what happened / was said, when did it happen, and who was there. Know what your organization's policies around bullying are, and reach out to Human Resources (HR) for assistance, if it is available. If the behaviors do not stop, consider your options, which may include seeking legal counsel or leaving the organization.

Bullying affects more than just the bullied individual; it affects family members and coworkers, and has real consequences for sick leave usage, turnover, and productivity. If you are a manager, it is your responsibility to serve as a role model, and monitor and address the behaviors of your team. If you are a coworker, stand up for your colleague; if you see something, say something. Stopping bullying in its tracks is better for all of us.

Be aware of bullying and commit to not tolerating it. By taking a few simple steps, we can make our workplaces happier and more productive.



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