

WORKPLACE BULLYING: ARTICLE ONE

What is workplace bullying?

Workplace bullying is a persistent pattern of mistreatment from others in the workplace that causes either physical or emotional harm. It can include such tactics as [verbal](#), [nonverbal](#), [psychological](#), and [physical](#) abuse, as well as [humiliation](#).

This type of [workplace aggression](#) is particularly difficult because, unlike the typical [school bully](#), workplace bullies often operate within the established rules and policies of their organization and their society. In most cases, [bullying](#) in the workplace is done by someone who has authority over the victim. However, bullies can also be peers, which is very rare.

We need to be aware that bullying is a form of aggression, and the actions can be both obvious and subtle. There is no formula to predict who may be the bully or the target.

Below is a checklist, not exhaustive, of the forms of bullying. This list is included to highlight some of the ways bullying may happen in a workplace. We must remember that bullying is a pattern of behaviour where one or more incidents will help show that bullying is taking place, but it can also be one incident, especially one that has a lasting effect. Examples of bullying include:

- Criticizing a person persistently or constantly.
- Intimidating a person.
- Undermining or deliberately impeding a person's work.
- Physically abusing or threatening abuse.
- Removing areas of responsibilities without cause and constantly changing work guidelines.
- Establishing impossible deadlines that will set up the individual to fail.
- Withholding necessary information or purposefully giving the wrong information.
- Assigning unreasonable duties or workload which are unfavorable to one person (in a way that creates unnecessary pressure) OR underwork – creating a feeling of uselessness.
- Belittling a person's opinions.
- Unwarranted (or undeserved) punishment.
- Blocking applications for training, leave or promotion.

We however need to guard against labelling any form of discipline as bullying. Workplace bullying **IS NOT**

- Offering constructive feedback, guidance, or advice about work related behaviour.
- Reasonable action taken by an employer or supervisor relating to the management and direction of workers or the place of employment (e.g., managing a worker's performance, taking reasonable disciplinary actions, assigning work).

The following actions, when done reasonably and fairly, are generally not considered workplace bullying or harassment:

- with good reason, changing work assignments and job duties;
- scheduling and workloads;
- inspecting the workplace;
- implementing health and safety measures;
- delivering work instructions;
- assessing and evaluating work performance;
- disciplinary actions; and/or
- any other reasonable and lawful exercise of a management function.
- expressing differences of opinion

To be continued....