

The Impact of Workplace Bullying

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It is amazing how prevalent bullying occurs in the workplace. To many people, it seems that Bullying is more of a schoolyard occurrence than in an adult workplace. This article revealed that workplace bullying is very prevalent. “Thirty-seven percent of U.S. workforce member report being bullied at work”(Wiedmer, 2010) this is extremely high. When you consider that adults are supposed to be more mature. The impact that workplace bullying has on the victims and the organization is more than just a daily production impact. The impact has a chance to change the way employees feel about going to work, the way they live their lives and could prevent employees from being able to do the job they were hired to do.

The most astounding number in the whole article was that 72% of bullies are people's bosses. This statistic plays into the business communication. If a boss is a bully to their employees then how would the communication be able to flow. No one is going to want to work for or communicate with someone that is constantly mean to them at work. As American's, we tend to spend a majority of our lives at work. Monday through Friday 8am-5pm is a typical workweek consisting of a standard 40 hours a week. The Impact of working with someone for 40 hours a week for 52 weeks a year puts the employees with their bullying for 2,080 hours a year. That is a huge number and a potentially huge impact on one person. The advantage the boss or manager has when they are a bully over the employee is that the bully does not have to worry about their job. The employee has the constant stress of possibly losing theirs.

As a victim of a workplace bully, the number one factor is the added stress from the workplace bully. You have typical life stressors but when you add the additional 2,080

hours of stress a year the toll is going to have an effect on anyone. The victim of bullying tends to allow the bullying to occur in fear of being reprimanded, humiliated, or even fired. One person might think that as an adult we would put the childish bullying behind us in the workforce, but it seems that bullying is a way some people hold onto control, power, domination over others. "In 72% of cases, bullies had controller the targets' livelihood and consequently used this leverage to inflict pain or to block transfers, thus forcing employees to quit or lose their jobs (Namie, 2007), In addition to having to leave a job or a profession of choice, other reported economic impacts imposed by bullies included the target being forced to transfer (13%), being discharged without reasonable cause (24%), and quitting to address a decline in health and sanity (40%)." (Namie, 2007) The fear alone in today's economy of losing a job would have a majority of Americans to endure the bullying just to ensure they bring home a paycheck. Unfortunately, the reward of a steady paycheck outweighs the risk of the potential side effects of being bullied.

The two instances that I feel I was involved with a workplace bullied would be while serving in the military. Just ten years ago bullying in the military was only seen as "hazing" or "breaking in the new guy". The instances took place years apart, but both had an impact on how I performed at my job and how I viewed the military and my job for the time I felt I was being bullied.

The first time I felt I was being bullied was in 2005, I just joined the military and did not fully know the ins and outs of my job. Being a brand new Airmen motivated to work and learn what I needed to, to do my best I felt my motivation was taking advantage of. My flight chief a Master Sergeant (MSgt) use to call me out in front of guard mount to

inspect my uniform and to knowledge check me. Being new, I was nervous but I ensure I had a pristine uniform, high starch, ironed, polished boots and I felt I knew the information that I should know at my level of expertise. Every time I would get called to the front I ensured my military customs and courtesy was exactly how I was taught at Lackland. While standing in front of a the flight (30-35 people) the MSgt would start to walk around me inspecting my uniform, hair, shaved face while he did this he would ask me questions. If I got the questions right it seemed the answers were not good enough for him so he would ask for a more in-depth answer. When I did not get more in-depth in my response or I got the answer wrong the whole flight would start laughing and start saying sly remarks of “idiot how do you not know that”. After guard mount we would be posted out, many times I was posted by myself, I would hope that my supervisor would do a post-check so I can figure out what I need to do in order to either get my flight chief to like me or just stop calling me out.

My supervisor only came every so often to the posts I was at, while there I would attempt to ask him questions to see how I could help my case with the flight chief but every time he was in a rush to get somewhere else. This was my first impression of the military. I hated it; I was miserable, I was in a foreign country with no friends, no family, and a flight chief that seem to have my number. This went on for four months until the MSgt has about a month left in Korea. Finally when he did one of his last post checks I asked him again, “why are you so hard on me especially in front of everyone” his response was that he saw me as a weak link on his flight and need to either get rid of me or toughen me up. I was dumbfounded by the response since I never had a chance to

show him if I was strong or weak. The overall impact of the four months I endure the stress has change my outlook on how I supervise my troops and how I treat people around me. No one should have to endure the emotional impacts that I had just because some perceives you to be a certain way.

That situation was a horrible way to enter the military. I figured that would be the end of my bullying from my Flight Chief. It seemed that after the MSgt had left Korea, I was in the clear of being bullied. Even though I was in the clear, I did what I can to ensure the new Airmen after me did not endure that treatment while I was around. The MSgt was using the tactics of “consciously undermining the position, status worth, value, and potential and singling out, treat one differently from other or ostracizing” these were exactly the steps he took when I was being bullied. Looking back I feel I should of spoke up sooner, I should have used outlets that are here in the military to prevent these situations from happening. Back then, being a new Airmen I did not want to seem weak or like a child telling on my flight chief for something that I thought was the norm. Now, being older and knowing more this type of bullying will never occur while I am around. I now know exactly how to handle situations to ensure the a new Airmen is not treated the way I was the first four months in the military.

The second time I felt I was bullied was in 2010, I just got reassigned to a new base. While being off duty playing softball with a lot of my co-workers I ended up break my ankle and my leg. This accident took me out of work for two months. The day following the accident I contacted my noncommissioned officer in charge (NCOIC) to inform him what the doctor had said and how long I would be out of work. I took care of

all the paperwork I needed to, to ensure I was put on leave. Everything was going fine for about three weeks, my NCOIC and a fellow noncommissioned officer (NCO) were starting to call me at home to ask when am I coming back to work. They were talking to my fellow workers telling them that I was faking and that there was no reason for me to be out of commission as long as I was. The NCOIC and this NCO were spreading rumors about me faking the injury and being a lazy employee. My fellows employees that were at the softball game where I broke my ankle and leg ensured them that I was not faking and that the injury did occur. These two individuals did not like the fact people were defending me. They continued to call two to three times a week to see if I was able to come in and work. This added stress that I was being seen as a lazy person and that I was trying to avoid work. I did not want to be seen this way at all. I was new to the base, I had a new start to meet people, meet leadership and make a name for myself and being lazy, getting out of work type of NCO was not the name I wanted to give myself. So, finally I went to work, boot and crutches. I was so miserable; I could not elevate my leg I had to keep moving from my computer to the printer and all around the shop. I was getting in people's way; I was just a mess. Finally, I ask the NCOIC if I could just go home because I am more of a distraction than a valuable asset at this point. He proceeded to tell me that he did not believe that I broke my leg and that I was going to make up for lost time. I informed him that the injury is real and that you could see the swelling and the incision from surgery. He did not like my answer, so he proceeded to tell me that I had to work, or I was getting paperwork. Knowing my options, I went straight to my first sergeant and informed him of the situation. I gathered witnesses to report what they heard and what the

saw. I felt nervous reporting it because this was my boss, and the repercussions could be severe. Once I gave the first sergeant all the information two weeks later, the NCOIC apologized for the way he treated me and he was relieved of his NCOIC post and reassigned to a different job in the unit.

Out of these two scenarios, I was more pleased with the outcome of the second one. I felt that as a seasoned military member noticing bullying going on I had the knowledge to stop it before it grew in bigger. I used my experiences from back in 2005 to see the signs, and I remember how I felt. Once I was able to be put into the NCOIC position of my shop, I initiated a non-bullying policy among my employees. I ensured that bullying will not occur, and I shared my stories with them so they could see different types of bullying. To prevent bullying, I implement weekly meetings to have an open discussion about anything during the week. Once a month myself and my employees would BBQ or do shop building activities to build a bond and trust of one another. I have also made it a point that if joking becomes too much for one person, the joking has to stop. Everyone has their limits and with us working together we do not need to push one of the co-workers over the edge. So far this has worked out for the people I have managed. I feel now I have benefited from my bullying scenarios because I know what to look for and how to respond. With both the MSgt and the NCOIC, I have seen ways not to treat people and ways to become a better leader myself as I promote through the ranks.

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