

## Manage Your Career

### Bullied at Work? Serious Steps to Fight a Serious Problem

Once again, this newsletter's topic was inspired by recent client stories about being bullied.

Perhaps schoolyard bullies turn into workplace bullies, but whether young or old, a bully relies on your shame and silence, and sometimes even denial, to succeed.

Recently a bullied (threatened) client finally asserted his rights with a visit to the Labour Board, and a meeting with his boss in which he cited the newly passed Occupational Health and Safety Act, Bill 168, Workplace Violence and Harassment. Only then did his employer address the situation with the serious attention it deserves. But does it always end positively? No, and that is what keeps many a bullied person living with this often degrading and always demoralizing situation.

Read on for interesting facts on this fascinating, if difficult, topic.

I hope you find something useful in this issue. And of course, do send this newsletter to anyone who may benefit from its information.

It helps to define what bullying is and what it is not. It is not a one-time only clash, it is not a character conflict, it is not about simple disagreements.

Bullying is far more sinister. It leads to more than trying to avoid someone; it leads to a serious impact on the victim's emotional and physical health. Bullying is persistent and pernicious; prolonged and purposeful. The bullying behaviour cannot be explained with logic. It cannot be dealt with through avoidance. The more you attempt to adjust your behaviour, blame yourself, or doubt your own perceptions, the more power you give the perpetrator, and the harder you make it to shake this person's jaw clamped in your hind side. Bullies do their dirty work when there are no witnesses, and are deceptive to the max. Clever liars, they deny with utmost conviction anything their victim asserts. And their "credibility" fosters your own self-doubt. A vicious cycle begins.

Bullying infringes on your human rights and attempts to attack your dignity. The abuse can lead to the victim suffering from depression and even post-traumatic stress syndrome.

The victim may find it difficult to find allies, quite simply because colleagues, at a deep level that they themselves would rather not admit to, are afraid of the bully and wish to spare themselves the same fate. Others, because they don't understand the level of conniving, secrecy, and maliciousness, "pooh-pooh" the experience, suggesting that it's all in the victim's imagination or somehow the victim's fault.

What then, can a victim, typically the quintessential "nice" person, do?

- If it is in early stages, consider asking the bully assertive questions, for example: "Why would you say that? What exactly do you mean by that?" Or suggest, "Let's take this discussion to the manager's office." You may nip it in the bud.
- Keep a diary. Courts take cumulative small incidents

seriously.

- If you've been visiting your doctor for treatment for depression, or seeing a counselor to cope, keep a record of these visits.
- With your diary and documented doctor's visits, go to your boss and ask for a transfer, have the bully transferred, or ask for a grievance hearing. Share how the bully's actions are seriously impeding your work, and are bringing the work unit into a situation for potential disrepute.

What then, is the bully's purpose? Usually it is to control, to hide his or her incompetence, or to project incompetence onto someone else. Most of us wouldn't begin to torture a colleague in this way, but bullies are not normal, average, or collegial colleagues. Experts agree: you are dealing with a sociopath or disordered personality, making it critical that you fight back by documenting the bully's actions, and assert your rights by involving management.

Bullies are opportunists: they look for an easy victim. Don't be one. Learn to stand tall, breathe deeply, make good and sustained eye contact, keep your voice in control, and refrain from responding to the bully's bait.

Oftentimes the victim is the first to leave. If management takes no action, after a year of suffering, the victim decides it's time to leave. See this not as a failure, but as a positive step, as one in which you will grow your career in a better direction.

For more suggestions visit  
<http://www.bullyonline.org/action/action.htm>

Please note that my email is now  
[newleafresumes@gmail.com](mailto:newleafresumes@gmail.com). As always your comments and suggestions are valued and welcome!