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About the Author

Stephen Dyson was the target of bullying and other mean tactics early in his working life.

Stephen said that was a very difficult time with after-effects which continued to hold him back and affect other parts of his life for a long while afterwards.

Stephen said, "I realized that bullying was a problem which affected thousands of people seriously and also reduced their ability to do their work.

It also often had a serious impact on their efforts to maintain their relationships at work as well as in their social activities and their family.

Stephen said, "I wanted to share the knowledge I gained from people that helped me and other people who shared their experiences and knowledge with me through the years."

He added, "Some people need professional help to deal with their experiences and get back on track. Some bullies do too!"

"But, I believe that this book can help people learn more about the multiple causes and effects of bullying."

"I know that many people feel they cannot do anything to improve the situation someone has them in because of the other person has some sort of power over them with their job or other important aspects of their lives."

"Just knowing more about what options have helped others can empower them to start working their way to a happier, bully-free future."

Introduction

This book was written because I suffered from bullying in the early part of my working life.

Remembering the effects of my experience with bullies was the reason to write this book.

I want to share what I’ve learned from research, discussion with other people who have been affected by bullying, and what I’ve learned about bullying in some of the places I’ve worked.

I also learned a lot from people who were wonderfully supportive of me during that time and the time since as I learned to cope better.

This book explains how we can deal with situations where people try to unfairly pressure us.

It is aimed at adults and focuses mainly on workplace situations. But, the tips and strategies will help readers in other situations as well.

This book can help you to recognize when bullying is occurring, some of the many ways that bullies operate, and some tactics for protecting yourself from them.

The sad truth is that all the attention and research into bullying has not found any way to stop it completely.

But, reading this book will show you some options which could help you to minimize the effects they have on you and those close to you.

Stephen Dyson

Protect Yourself from Work Bullies



The personal costs of being a target of a bully can be high and last for years.

Stress and trauma which result from prolonged bullying episodes may be factors in the development of serious medical and psychological conditions.

Working with a bully for a boss means that you cannot produce work to the standard you are actually capable of.

There will be little opportunity for professional growth.

You need to know what you can do to protect yourself from workplace bullies.

No tactics will work every time because bullies are not always rational in selecting their intended victims or the way they bully anyone.

Remain pleasant and calm if possible.

You need to think before you act and always show a professional attitude.

If you feel compelled to copy their rude or aggressive tactics, you will weaken your ability to win through.

When you discuss an episode where you were bullied, state your case as calmly and simply as possible.

Avoid any criticism of the bully that could be portrayed in any later review as you being the bully!

Just walking away is effective in some social situations but could be represented as insulting to another employee and insubordination if the other person is senior to you in the organization.

When the confrontation ends and you are alone, make careful notes of the incident.

Record any details which might be important.

- What was said by each person
- What questions were asked (they may have been inappropriate or unfair)
- What statements were made about you
- Who was there; those actively involved and any silent witnesses.
Also note any other people who may have seen or heard the details.

Remember at all times to maintain your positive attitude and respect for other people, including those who you believe are involved in the bullying.

If you lose your temper even once, you could be portrayed as a troublemaker!

Reasons for Bullying

Reading this book will give you a broad range of information about bullying at work and elsewhere.



I want to share some of the things which are believed to cause bullies to make someone their target.

This could help you avoid some trigger situations, but it is important to realize there is no way to avoid all possible incidents.

Knowing the background factors will help you be ready when you are in similar situations.

A lot of bullies feel insecure about their position.

They target people who are potential rivals or for many other reasons including those listed below.

They may try to target you when:

You're seen as a rival instead of a colleague.

They are your boss but not performing well themselves.

You won't do something which is underhanded or bad for someone else.

You report malpractice or bullying by them or someone they favor.

You help someone else they target.

You are not the same as most of the other workers. This particular type of targeting has been addressed with anti-discrimination laws in many countries. I'll cover some general points about this in another chapter.

To encourage you to leave so they can employ someone younger who will be cheaper to employ or is simply more favored by them.

I will give more detail about some of these in the relevant areas of this book.

What is Bullying?

This definition does not cover all forms of bullying. But it does include several of the most common actions which are recognized as bullying behaviors.



“Bullying is repeated unreasonable pressure on a person or group which is intended to cause distress, affect their confidence, or make them do anything which they don’t want to do and are not required to do as part of their employment or other commitments”.

You can find many attempts to define bullying, but there is none which is universally accepted. (That’s great for the lawyers!)

It’s easier to recognize bullying by particular actions, tactics, and effects it produces on the victims than look for a comprehensive definition.

As P.G. Wodehouse said about humor, “ I cannot define it but I believe I know it when I see it.”

Unfortunately, as lawmakers have started to draft more rules to curb bullying, those doing it have found ways to disguise their actions so they still look legitimate and may not be punishable under current laws.

Maintaining Your Attitude.

Bullying and harassment can affect even the strongest and most confident person.

One aim of these actions is to make the target become less confident and capable. As the pressure becomes greater the target will often start to feel less able to handle their work.

This can cause them to become less understanding and supportive with friends and even their family.

When these interactions are threatened or disrupted, the target needs help to restore their own sense of worth and strengthen their determination to overcome the problems.

If you feel you need a boost to your own self-image, there are plenty of systems and products which you can buy.

But, rather than try to self-medicate, please discuss this with your usual doctor as a first step. Self-medication with over the counter preparations can cause new problems or make those you already have much harder to overcome.

The best first step is to talk with your boss (if you are sure they are not part of the attack).

And, make time to have a serious, private talk with your partner to reassure them and clear any doubts either of you may have developed.

The next step should be to consult your doctor.

Ask Your Doctor



If you have a regular doctor or other medical professional, they can be a very helpful first point of call.

They have the training and knowledge from their experience of many patients and also have to keep updating their knowledge in

various fields which they can apply to your particular situation.

A thorough annual check is cheap insurance to catch any developing problem, whether physical or mental.

They will be able to advise you if you are thinking of consulting a specialist such as a psychiatrist.

I always check with our doctor even when considering trying some natural preparation which might affect me or the results I get from my prescribed medicines.

Whenever you put yourself in the care of a professional consultant, you need to first be sure that you are compatible with their methods and can communicate well with them.

The effects of bullying can be severe and targets can find that consulting a psychologist is more effective than trying other over the counter remedies.

Hypnotism

A medically qualified hypnotist can help some people. But, the results others get are less impressive. Because hypnotism can affect us in subtle but significant ways, I recommend that you get referrals and endorsements from people you trust that have used or referred their clients to the particular hypnotherapist you are considering before visiting them.

E.F.T. (Emotional Freedom Techniques) and Neuro-linguistic Programming

Alternative systems such as E.F.T. (Emotional Freedom Techniques) and Neuro-linguistic Programming have been helpful for some people. The results can take time to appear and you need to commit yourself to give whatever system you try a thorough test.

Switching between different systems can make you worse than you were before.

Meditation

Meditation is something I use myself and have got noticeable benefit from.

Some people avoid meditation because they think it involves studying particular religious beliefs or systems. But, you can use it as an exercise without involving anything like that.

I have used some simple meditation exercises to ease tension and become more focused which has benefited my social and business activities.

Meditation is widely used and does not require any alteration to your values or beliefs.

Proofing Yourself Against Bullying

Your own health and mindset are important factors in how well you can deal with the pressures of your work and additional stressors which come from bullying.

Learn what you can about bullying and mobbing so that you can recognize the tactics which are used and signs that someone may be using them or being subjected to them.

Keep yourself well-nourished, hydrated and calm.

Don't be tempted to use any tactics which you wouldn't like used against you or those close to you.

You may feel justified because someone used them against you, but your own self-image will be tarnished and the single mistake may be used in later proceedings or discussion to discredit you or your business.

Keep your standards high but don't talk about them.

Remember to thank people who support or help you or just make your work easier.

Getting Help

Our own ability to defend ourselves when targeted by bullies depends on our level of experience in the type of work, knowledge of company procedures and policies and how comfortable we feel about those we work with.

Here are some suggestions about getting help when you feel you may be under attack.

Your Boss



Unless you believe you are being targeted by your boss, you should arrange to discuss your concerns with them before taking the matter further.

Make sure that you have documented each episode which you are concerned about and be clear in your own mind about the details.

Include in your summaries the details of people who witnessed each event.

Talk to those people before you talk to your boss so that you are aware of their likely response to any later enquiries.

Your Union



If you are a member of the relevant Union, you should talk to the site representative or the Union office if there is no representative in your workplace.

Some are more helpful than others, of course. They may also

be able to give you suggestions about how to approach your boss or other levels of management if that becomes necessary.

Human Resources Department.

This section of your company may be focused on ensuring the safety and

well-being of the employees . Sometimes, people in these areas are more



focused on keeping management happy.

But, you should get a good hearing because any bullying in a company will affect morale and productivity which is likely to lead to extra costs and sick leave for the company.

Myths about Bullying

Despite a lot of research and public education campaigns about bullying and its effects, a lot of myths exist, such as:

1] People who are targeted by bullies contribute to the problem.

Bullies are likely to attack people who appear to be weak, but not always; they also attack people who are more effective employees, more popular, and possible rivals.

2] Bullying is a claim made by people that don't want to do any hard work.

This claim is made when someone questions whether a particular task is the best way to achieve a result and is attacked for not following an order. The targeted person may have been too bold in their response, but they are often only trying to save time and wasted effort.

3] Bullying is not a major problem.



Bullying has long-term negative effects on those targeted and also other people who are working in the same area. There's also plenty of research which shows the effect of the incidents on the long-term productivity of the whole workforce and the reputation of

the business. Bullying often affects the health of the people involved, and that costs everyone including the general community.

Over time, people will leave the workplace if possible rather than put up with the toxic atmosphere and ongoing conflict. That will put more pressure on the remaining staff and cost the company time and money to replace those who left to train the new people.

Bullying may just be a personal conflict which someone (usually they point at

the target, not the bully!) is unwilling to work with or under the direction of the other person.

Bullying has been a major factor in the suicide of many troubled individuals. For that reason alone, we should do everything we can to reduce its use and influence.

Cyber-bullying which involves the use of the Internet and “mobbing” which is the modern term for bullying of an individual by a group, are two major worries, especially, but not exclusively for children of all ages.

These scourges have caused untold misery to the targets and will continue to affect the lives of them and everyone they associate with for years to come.

So, I will explain some important points about them in the following chapters.

4] Children who are bullied become bullies when they are adults.

People that are bullied at school may bully some others when the opportunity arises later in their adult life but the research does not indicate this is very common.

Not just In your Workplace

Some people think that bullying is mostly a problem in the area of education.

But, it is a bigger problem in businesses, large and small.

In most countries, social and community groups also have their share of bullies.

Even military forces, which depend on the carefully instilled systems of mutual respect have serious problems with bullying from time to time.

The effects of a breakdown in discipline could be very severe!

Some investigations have discovered an ingrained culture of bullying which has operated for years.

This makes me believe that we will never erase the tendency to bully other people from our society completely. The best we can do is to help deal with any instances we encounter and give our kids the best information we can about all types of bullying so that they are better prepared than most of us were when we were starting out.

Let's look at the effects of cyber bullying and mobbing. They are raging sores on our society, so we need to prepare ourselves and our families to deal with them.

Cyber Bullying

Cyber bullying is a growing menace. Most publicity about it focuses on the effects on children in schools and colleges.

But, research shows that it is also a major problem in many workplaces.

The bullies feel empowered because they can post their threats and insults to the target and to colleagues or social media without being confronted by the target.

The formal policies of many organizations do not even mention cyber bullying so action from employers may be delayed and limited if it occurs at all.



The posts may have been copied and circulated more widely within minutes. But, the targeted person is often not aware of the posts on the original websites until days after they were put there.

Getting the posts removed can also be a frustrating, slow and expensive process.

And the damage to someone’s reputation, self-confidence and working relationships can be hard to repair.

Even when the sites are willing to remove the offending material, much of it could still be stored by search engines and other sites, private and public.

For instance, the Wayback Machine <https://www.archive.org/web> has been cataloging and storing web pages and other related material for years. It currently has over *435 billion web pages*, showing content which was on the web previously most of which are publicly accessible there.

Always remember that anything which is put on a web page cannot ever be assumed to be completely removed from the Internet.

Some actions which might be assumed to be cyber bullying include:

- Email or other messages of a threatening or harassing nature.
- Messages with offensive comments.
- Demeaning comments, private or false information about their targets.

But, some or all of these actions may not be covered by current laws in your country or your employer’s standard policies.

One form of harassment which is causing serious problems, including suicides of some of those targeted is the exposure of people’s private activities by hacking their web cameras and posting the material on line.

Sometimes, the pictures were distributed by the target to a small number of people they thought they could trust and someone decided to put the material on other sites.

But, a recent hack attack on thousands of webcams in several countries which collected private pictures and data, including names, addresses and passwords shows that many are not secure.

Mobbing

Mobbing is the bullying of an individual by a group in their workplace or other group situation.

It is not entirely new but has become a lot more common and damaging in the last few years.

Often, the employees or members of the group who take part in the mobbing use less obvious methods rather than direct insults or physical threats.

This may be intended to avoid the possibility of the target taking legal action or gathering evidence for later internal investigations.

It can also reduce the target’s ability to see they are being attacked!

Some strategies include:

Exclusion from casual gatherings at lunch and other social groups.

Ignoring the target if they do join the group anyway.

Nitpicking on the quality and other aspects of the target’s work and relevant knowledge or experience.

This is similar to behavior which occurs in schools where someone is excluded from further participation in a group.

The effects of mobbing can be dramatic.

The intent of those doing the mobbing is to get the target to leave or be sacked because of poor performance (because of the effects of the mobbing).

Targets who do not find ways of dealing with the mobbing may suffer even further with long-term psychological damage.

It has resulted in suicide as well.

Despite this, the tactic will continue to spread and hurt the innocent until legislators and courts catch up and make those who use it subject to realistic penalties.

It will probably be harder to prove mobbing is being used against someone because the individual actions often seem relatively minor and even innocent.

That also reduces the possibility that the target will complain about the mean treatment to senior staff as they feel the bosses could think they were making trouble over harmless actions.

But, the combined effects of those actions can cause people to leave secure jobs rather than deal with the daily torture!

What Does Bullying Cost?

The personal cost of bullying can be impaired work performance and health for the rest of the person’s life!

But, there is a much wider effect through the organization, the target’s family and their interaction with other people.

A few years ago, the Productivity Commission in Australia estimated that the cost to the economy of workplace bullying was between 6 and 36 billion dollars.

Even at the lower end of this range, it is obviously a significant problem and rain on the resources of the companies, people involved and the country’s total productivity.

Other reports and research strongly suggest that, despite efforts to discourage it, workplace bullying is now an even greater problem than it was when the report was released.

It’s likely that other countries have the problem at comparable or even greater levels.

Two major factors which seem to drive many of the attacks are when the bullies feel insecure about their place in the workforce.

As the Internet and rapid changes in technology increase the demands on employees to produce more for less, some resort to bullying to attack anyone they see as strong rivals.

There are also many instances when people that are having success and getting recognition are targeted by colleagues that are jealous of the rewards their efforts have got them.

Sometimes, the bully may be the target’s boss. Other times, they are a colleague who may still pretend to be friendly and supportive.

The target may not even realize for some time that they are under attack.

Dealing with a Bully

I've already shared some ideas about getting professional support for the effects of bullying if you are victimized at some time.

Keep them in mind while you read this section about dealing with a bully.

Now, we'll look at how you might be affected if someone started to bully you and give some suggestions how you might effectively respond.

When the bully starts attacking, he or she may do it occasionally, with some exchanges between you being like those you had before, pleasant and even friendly.

But, the intimidation and other pressure will build and you will start to feel that you are being targeted.

Your reaction may be shock or even disbelief because of your previous mutual respect acceptance.

You examine your own behavior to see if there was anything which might have led to their change of approach.

Then, you start to realize the effects of the attacks and how limited your ability to deal with it is in most circumstances.

Some people try to deny they are a target. But, they know subconsciously and their self-belief and confidence in their position starts to be affected.

At this point you need to start building your defenses and working out your options.

It's not too early to look at the possibility you might have to change jobs or take leave so you can rebuild your self-esteem and check other employment options.

But, you don't give up yet.

The checking is to reassure you and give you more options if things don't work out further along.

You start keeping a record of incidents and anything else which might have a

bearing on the matter if it is investigated or a subject of legal action.

You sound out your fellow employees. Have they noticed the attacks on you?

Would they confirm that if there is some sort of hearing?

Do they know of other attacks on anyone by this person?

You also should contact your Union and the Human Resources section of your company.

Some unions are more supportive than others.

You should discuss the matter with your union representative in the company and then with the relevant people at the union office.

Check that you are comfortable with the approach the union will make to the company. Some may be more militant than you want.

Human resource personnel may also be helpful, active and involved.

Or, they may be effectively an extension of the company hierarchy in everything but name.

Approaching senior management usually needs to be carefully planned.

Make sure that you have everything documented and details of witnesses etcetera.

Can I Just Ignore it?

When someone is subjected to any sort of bullying, one form of defense they might consider is to try to ride it out by ignoring the provocation.

But, the repeated assaults on them will cause physical and mental anguish.

It affects their relationships with family and friends and brings further problems when they become unable to perform their work and other responsibilities at the standard required.

Many targets start to blame themselves and their hurt is magnified as they are no longer confident about the contribution they make.

They may tell themselves that the pressure may likely worsen if they make a complaint.

Sometimes, they decide to stop focusing on the problem, thinking it will go away.

Unfortunately, the target is usually left with the stark choice of leaving their job to protect their health or making a formal complaint.

But, the conflict and the effects on them grow worse until the bully achieves their goal.

Witnesses, Rubbernecks and Mini-bullies

The actions or lack of them on the part of other people who see or know about bullying which is taking place is like what people do when they see a crime.

Some will tell all they can to the authorities and try to help the victim.

Some will avoid doing anything fearing that they will also be targeted or have their careers affected.

And, there are some who will add to the target’s suffering by supporting the bully.

Will the new Laws Stop it?

Laws are only as good as the people who write them.

Many are set up with good intentions but fail because of problems with their drafting or because the lawyers for the firms which are sued are more clever than others involved.

The main force for supporting targets and their families is the public with their votes and continued pushing for better laws and more support agencies.

Resources

U.S.A.

Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

This Commission has bullying in the Workplace as one of its areas.

<http://www.eeoc.gov/>

Australia

Harassment-and-Bullying Factsheet from Australian Govt.

<https://www.humanrights.gov.au/workplace-bullying-violence-harassment-and-bullying-fact-sheet>

There are Better Times Ahead!

Thanks for reading my book.

If it helps you defend yourself or helps you in learning how to support other targets, that's great.

I hope you are never targeted but you will now have some ideas on how to act if you are.

Good Luck and Good Health.

Stephen C. Dyson

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