



RESEARCH STUDIES

workplacebullying.org

The WBI Website 2011 Instant Polls

Gary Namie, PhD - Research Director

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Unions and Workplace Bullying

WBI 2011-A Instant Poll

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January 2011 WBI Instant Poll, $n = 313$

Employers have unchecked power over non-unionized employees. Whatever dribbles of democracy and employee participation that happen are determined unilaterally by the employer (the owner or highest-level executive). If sharing does not suit him or her, employees are told to hold on, shut up and be glad you have work at all.

Driving employer rights is the doctrine of “employment at will” adhered to in the U.S. as if the courts had ruled on it (they did not). Business sold this notion as if it were bidirectional. Employers can put you on the street for no cause. Employees can dump their employers and put themselves on the street. See, both have “free will.” Nonsense!

If you are prone to magical thinking, you might believe that all it takes to combat bullying (mistreatment by the employer or its agent, managers) is the collective effort by concerned co-workers who witness the events. Yes, in your dreams you see the heroic target in the boss’s threshold backed by throngs of agitated and supportive peers. In reality, chances are better that only a breeze will be behind our hero at the door when left to fight alone.

The abandonment of bullied targets is not fantasy. It is reality. We have surveyed targets and looked closely at the issue in our 2008 Coworker Study. In less than 1% of cases do co-workers provide support as solid and comprehensive in the above fantasy. There are many reasons to account for this lack of courage. Most explanations come from the field of social psychology. Just this month, there was an article describing the bystander non-intervention effect (research that followed the famous Queens, New York 1964 murder of Kitty Genovese). And I could lecture on several others. Suffice it to say, the “F” word drives it all. Fear of being the lone supporter, fear of botching the help, fear of being pushed away by the target whose shame makes him want to be left alone, fear of incurring the bully’s wrath and being next.

So, how do workers in the 21st century achieve some sort of power balance with employers? Are Unions still the ones to balance the power difference?

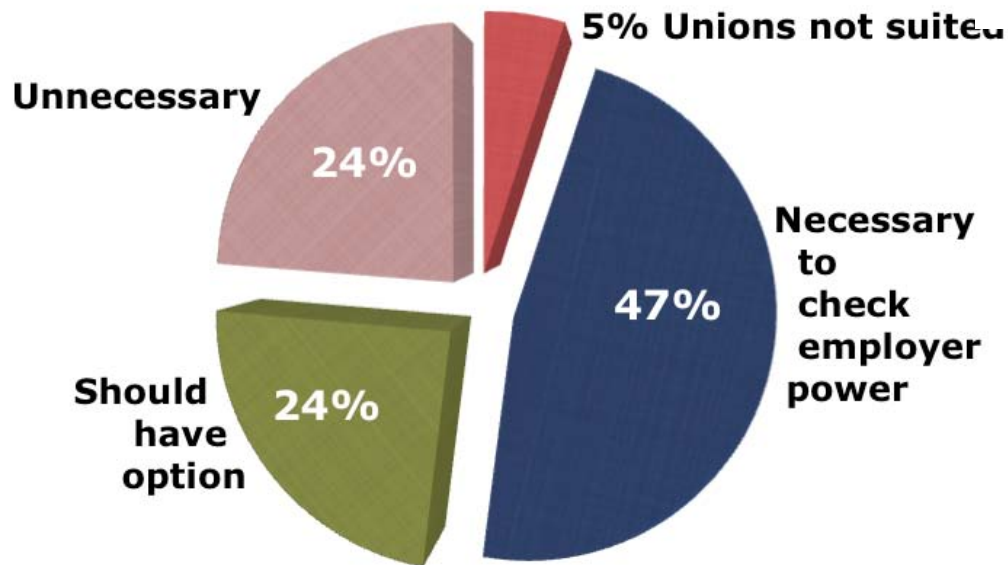
The question asked: *“Given the current assaults on workers by employers, what role, if any, do you see for unions to address workplace bullying?”*

The response choices and percentages:

- Unions are more necessary than ever to protect worker health and safety. Employers’ power must be checked. .4728
- Everyone should have the option to join a union if he or she wishes. .2396
- Unions are unnecessary. They are no more trustworthy than are employers. .2396
- The contemporary worker and workplace are rarely suited for unions. .04792

About three-quarters of targets still believe that unions have a positive role to play and want to have the option to join or not. With a new Congress that took power in 2011, it is unlikely that Federal legislation to make joining unions easier will ever pass into law.

However, another finding from this poll is that 24% of bullied targets do not trust their unions any more than their employers. This is the reality we hear from callers and what we see when we go on-site. I distinguish this distrust from a negative public stereotype about unions fostered by corporations and media (only 5% adopted that view). The distrust captured here is from people who have probably asked their unions for help with bullying situations and been rebuffed. Their unions did no more for them than HR. It is based on real experiences.



How could unions not play a central role in stopping workplace bullying?

Four principal explanations come to mind.

1) Unions officers rise in the ranks based on their ability to fight and be adversarial (good to win victories for the union's members) and do not want any curbs on their actions with anyone else, whether it is with management or with other members. In other words, they might be intimidators and want to stay that way without interference from a new company policy or a future law.

2) Unions are organizations, too. The bureaucratic mindset can take over. People get defensive for the organization and show less compassion for the people the organization is supposed to serve. Some unions have a low service threshold. They don't care about helping members.

3) Too many unions have been co-opted by "partnership" talk with employers. They want to get along and ignore their members' needs. This doesn't mean there is corruption in every instance. Unions have been forced into concessions by scheming, but cash-rich employers for years. Employers threaten to shutter the business and move it offshore if pensions aren't abandoned or health insurance co-pays aren't increased, etc. In other words, unions have been whipped into submission. Survival is the operating mode. Concern over quality of worklife issues seems unimportant.

4) Unions can be great when the bully is a non-member, typically a manager. But when bullying is member-on-member, most unions are paralyzed. They erroneously feel compelled to defend both the abusive and abused member. In reality, the responsibility is to represent, never to defend.

None of these reasons are to be used to defend ineffective unions. However, if unions are to regain trust of their members, each of the above four issues must be confronted honestly and reversed.

Our work has expanded to offer options for unions to serve their bullied members. We have had marvelous union officials attend WB University to take back to their unions new ways to deal with bullying. Unions need to do much more to help their bullied members.

Gary Namie, PhD
IP-2011-A

Post-Bullying Financial Woes for Bullied Targets

WBI 2011-B Instant Poll

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The question asked: *“For those who have ever lost a job to bullying, how did the next job compare financially?”*

Responses from 241 site visitors (a sample of individuals known to declare themselves to be targets of bullying at work) were:

26% — That job was never replaced – there was no next job

25% — Less money, but safer

13.7% — Less money, bullied again

11.6% — More money and safer

17% — More money, but bullied again

5.9% — Got another job, no change

Of those who did get another job, the financial status was:

LESS money earned — 52.8%

No change — 7.9%

MORE money earned — 39.3%

Thus, nearly 40% did come out ahead confirming the validity of our advice that there will be an eventual end to the bullying. And if you move along quickly enough without suffering severe health harm, you will have a new life. Getting out can be positive.

The fact that 53% did suffer an economic setback is probably based on the dwindling number of well paying jobs on the market to replace the job the target once loved. To those people, we emphasize the benefit to personal health and sanity of leaving the toxic workplace. You were too good for that place anyway.

The saddest fact is that over one-quarter of bullied targets were not able to replace their lost job. We know that bullying comes uninvited. No one asked to be intimidated or humiliated. Since the most veteran, competent workers are targeted, it is safe to assume that they once loved their jobs very much. They simply wanted to be left alone to do the work for which they were getting paid. But bullying displaced them and put them on the street involuntarily, regardless of whether they were fired or had to quit to preserve their health. This is the tragedy of workplace bullying.

Gary Namie, PhD
IP-2011-B

More Bullying When Bargaining Rights Are Lost

WBI 2011-C Instant Poll

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March 2011 WBI Instant Poll, $n = 217$

Site visitors were asked if rights for public sector unions were lost, would there be more or less workplace bullying in the future. More bullying was overwhelmingly predicted.

The question asked: *“If public-sector unions lose the right to bargain for working conditions, do you expect to see more bullying and abuse in your workplace in the future?”*

216 individuals completed the survey. 47% were members of a union; 53% were not.

The responses:

45.8% — I have no union — YES, I predict more bullying

6.9% — I have no union — NO, I do not predict more bullying

35.1% — I am a public-sector union member — YES, I predict more bullying

1% — I am a public-sector union member — NO, I do not predict more bullying

9.7% — I am a private-sector union member — YES, I predict more bullying

1.4% — I am a private-sector union member — NO, I predict more bullying

Here are the various ways that people predicted that YES there would be more bullying:

Overall: YES — 90.7% ; NO — 9.3%

Union members: YES — 95% ; NO — 5%

Non-union respondents: YES — 86.8%; NO — 13.2%

Gary Namie, PhD
IP-2011-C

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Mediation, Arbitration, and Workplace Bullying

WBI 2011-D Instant Poll

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April WBI Instant Poll, $n = 473$

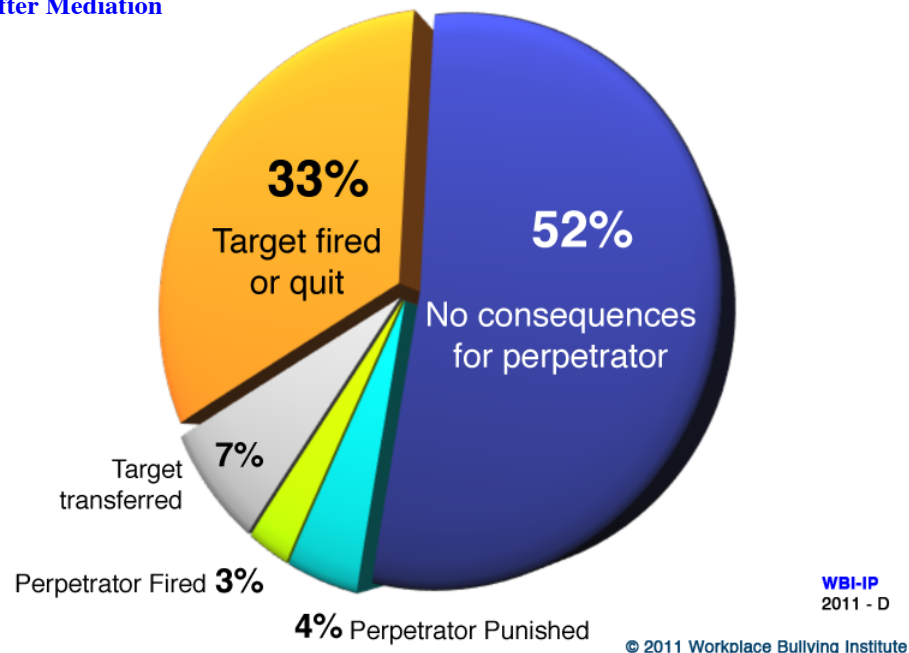
At WBI, we have always argued against the adoption of mediation or other alternative dispute resolution practices for bullying resolution. The source of our resistance is twofold: (1) often the bullied target who is already compromised and often emotionally wounded is mandated to participate, and (2) workplace bullying is a form of violence, non-physical and sub-lethal, but interpersonal violence nevertheless.

Violent relationships cannot be mediated. Mediation requires that both parties are rational and capable of gaining an empathic understanding of the needs and intellectual interests of the other party. In bullying, only one party is rational. The other's interest is tainted by her or his need to dominate the other party. There is no equal footing at the start. One does not mediate domestic violence. There is no halfway in the gulf between parties when one is under assault by the other.

The question asked: *"If your employer required you to engage in mediation and/or arbitration to address your workplace bullying situation, what was the outcome? Choose up to 2 responses."* [580 responses total]

Target was terminated 18.9%
 Target voluntarily left organization 14.5%
 Target was transferred to a different position within same organization 7.2%
 Harasser faced zero consequences 52%
 Harasser kept position and was punished 3.2%
 Harasser was transferred 1.2%
 Harasser was terminated 2.7%

Outcomes After Mediation



Overall, targets were displaced; they lost their jobs voluntarily or involuntarily, in 33.4% of cases.

Bullies suffered no consequences; they were able to act with impunity in 52% of cases.

Negative consequences for alleged offenders followed traditional dispute resolution procedures in only 7% of cases. Of those, termination resulted in only 3% of cases.

If chance alone were to predict an outcome between two parties, one could expect that each person would “win” 50% of the time. The actual outcome is far from chance. The aggressor (harasser, bully) “won” in mediation by any measure you choose. Bullies walk away with having to give up anything in compromise (52%). Negatives were not equivalent—for targets (33% if one counts a transfer to safety as a positive, or 50% if transfers also mean loss of a coveted job that had to be abandoned to get to safety) vs. for bullies (7%).

When targets are mandated to mediate, the targets’ loss of control over their work lives is reinforced by the employer. After the process, the outcomes strongly favor the bullies.

Employers should not mandate mediation or arbitration. (Arbitration is often a clause in modern employment contracts. It is the employer saying to employees that you may not sue them in civil court no matter how they mistreat you.)

In conclusion, the empirical data seem to support our position to tell bullied targets to avoid mediation.

Gary Namie, PhD

IP-2011-D

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Social Media and Workplace Bullying

WBI 2011-E Instant Poll

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April 2011 WBI Instant Poll, $n = 201$

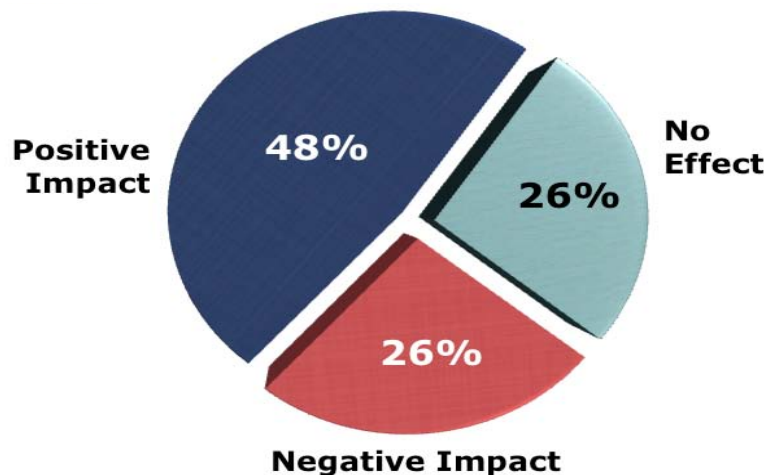
The presence of social media – Facebook, Twitter & others – has exploded exponentially recently. Because the internet is the method by which nearly everyone who gets help from WBI, we rely on our websites and related social media to reach individuals bullied at work.

Internet resources can help convince bullied targets that they are not alone. Places like the WBI Forum and Facebook pages facilitate interaction among consumers of information about workplace bullying. Heavy users risk having virtual relationships and contacts replace contact with real people in person. Heavy use can lead to social isolation. The darkest side of internet resourcing is that users, both adults and children, can be made vulnerable to real violence, not just the virtual variety, through cyberbullying.

The question asked: *“How do social media and the internet affect your workplace bullying experience?”*

Makes better through support groups .099
 Makes better through online resources .378
 Makes worse through social isolation .104
 Makes worse through Cyberbullying .154
 Has no effect .263

Positive impact .477
 No effect .263
 Negative impact .258



Gary Namie, PhD
 IP-2011-E

Workplace Bullying and Prior Experiences with Abuse

WBI 2011-F Instant Poll

WBI Instant Polls are online single-question surveys that rely upon self-selected samples of individuals bullied at work (typically 98% of any sample comprised of currently and formerly bullied individuals). No demographic data are collected, but IP respondent samples are typically 80% or higher female. Our non-scientific Instant Polls accurately depict the perceptions of workers targeted for bullying at work as contrasted with the views of all adult Americans in our scientific national surveys.

May 2011 WBI Instant Poll, $n = 246$

To distinguish the workplace bullying phenomenon from its less bothersome and disruptive cousins – incivility and rudeness – bullying is often described in its most severe forms. In those extreme cases, there are many stress-related physical health consequences supplemented by emotional or psychological injury. Severe bullying is abusive conduct. The health harm from prolonged exposure helps differentiate bullying from incivility.

Abuse in the workplace is the only form of traumatizing interpersonal abuse that has yet to be considered taboo in the U.S. Child abuse, domestic violence and bullying of students in the schoolyard have all been deemed unacceptable to society and addressed by laws. Workplace bullying, psychological violence, and a form of abuse stands alone as acceptable in the eyes of U.S. law.

Workplace bullying most closely resembles the domestic violence phenomenon. The abuser is on the payroll.

At WBI we know that having a prior experience with abuse before suffering workplace abuse can account for the swiftness and severity of the emotional impact for the targeted person. It easily re-traumatizes a person based on having the earlier wound. Prior abuse victims also can recognize bullying for what it is capable of doing to a person. Whereas an individual with no prior abuse history could wonder for months exactly what is happening to him or her.

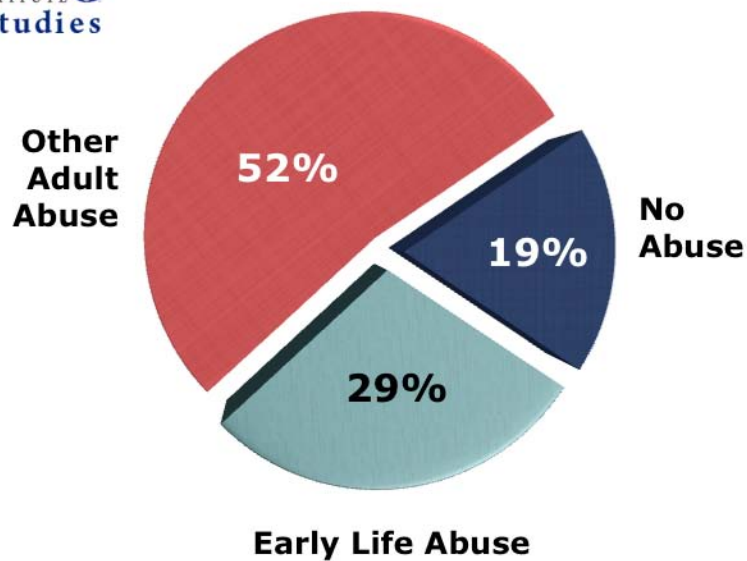
Despite the accelerative role for harm prior abuse represents to the bullied adult target, this does not mean that one's personal history signals a vulnerability to potential assailants. (Unless your bully is indeed a sociopath. Research shows that psychopaths have an innate ability to sense woundedness in others not perceived by properly socialized humans. The animalistic predators use it to hunt their prey.) In fact, if self-protection lessons were learned from prior abuse, the person may be able to thwart the (non-psychopathic) bully's initial attempts to dominate. Prior experience does not put a target on the person's back.

Remember, based on our prior online research, 98% of respondents in WBI surveys declare themselves targets of bullying at work.

The question asked: *“For bullied targets only: Please describe other experiences with abusive relationships you may have had.”*

Physical child abuse .170
 Sexual child abuse .118
 Prior domestic (spousal) violence .198
 Current domestic (spousal) violence .021
 Abuse from family or siblings .198 84/423
 Sexual assault or rape .106
 None .187

Experienced early life abuse .288
 Other abuse as an adult .523
 No abuse experience .187



Less than a third of bullied targets reported experiencing abuse as a child. Cycle of violence statistics suggest that about 30% of abused children grow up to be abusive adults. Perhaps early life abuse is a better predictor of who becomes bullies rather than who becomes targets.

The finding that half of bullied adult targets also experienced other forms of abuse, primarily domestic and familial violence, leads to speculation. Is bullying at work coincidental with partner violence? Or is the workplace abuse wearing down the defenses of the individual to the point that partners at home are able (and for some reason willing) to abuse them at home. The converse might also be true. Trouble at home wears the person down making her or him more susceptible to assaults at work.

The concurrence might also be explained by the target's interactive style. (This is much different than suggesting that a target actually believes she or he deserves to be humiliated and denigrated.) Perhaps the combination of a desire to seek the approval of others communicated by a high level of self-disclosure, a general openness toward others, the absence of guile, an inability to defend oneself when attacked, wanting to be "nice," and a cooperative approach to tasks is read by exploitative others who are attracted to people with those attributes as a "green light" to inflict harm.

From such a simple question without supplementary data about respondent circumstances, it is impossible to conclude why there is such a high co-occurrence of partner violence and workplace bullying. Causality cannot be determined.

Gary Namie, PhD
IP-2011-F

“Freedom” to Express Oneself as a Bullied Individual

WBI 2011-G Instant Poll

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July 2011 WBI Instant Poll, $n = 292$

Here is a poll posted mid-year during nationalistic celebrations proclaiming our many “freedoms.” In particular, we were interested in whether or not bullied targets felt free to say anything critical about employers, any employers, not just their own. Did respondents feel free from retaliation for expressing themselves?

The question asked: *“On these Canada and Independence Days, how likely is it that your employer would terminate or punish you for employer-critical statements or blogs/essays that could be traced backed to you?”*

It would never happen	.014
Only a slight possibility	.037
Not sure how likely it is	.089
It is very possible	.428
I'm completely certain I would be terminated	.428

The results were clear. Fear, rather than Freedom, prevails.

Five percent felt free to criticize employers. The percentage believing that their job could be lost for exercising their freedom of expression – 86% !!!

Employers have us cowed and cynical. What an estimate of employer dominance over the lives of non-owning employees, the working class.

Gary Namie, PhD
IP-2011-G

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Workplace Bullying Precludes “Vacations”

WBI 2011-H Instant Poll

WBI Instant Polls are online single-question surveys that rely upon self-selected samples of individuals bullied at work (typically 98% of any sample comprised of currently and formerly bullied individuals). No demographic data are collected, but IP respondent samples are typically 80% or higher female. Our non-scientific Instant Polls accurately depict the perceptions of workers targeted for bullying at work as contrasted with the views of all adult Americans in our scientific national surveys.

August 2011 WBI Instant Poll, $n = 563$

Workplace bullying certainly prevents living or working a normal life, one that was enjoyed before the bullying occurred. This poll was taken in the middle of summer.

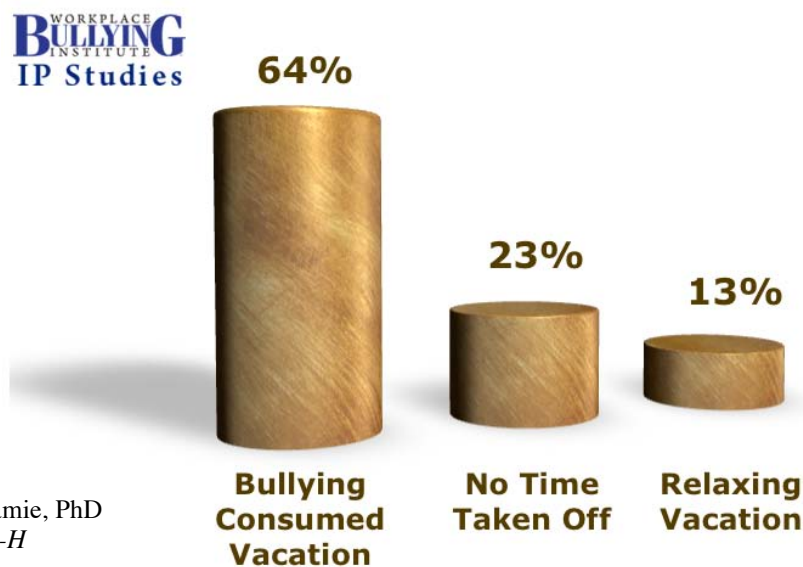
Vacation time is a necessary time set aside for restoral and recreation. The bullied target must take time off to stave off the risks associated with prolonged, unremitting exposure to distress. A host of stress-related health problems range from cardiovascular and gastrointestinal diseases to emotional problems – anxiety, clinical depression and posttraumatic stress. Vacations don't remove the stressor – the toxic work environment.

Failing to take time away from work, however, is certain to exacerbate stress. Bullying robs its victims of the chance to escape misery and to heal.

The question asked: “A break from work promotes a healthy balance in life. How did you use your vacation time?”

I spent it relaxing and now feel refreshed .129
 I spent it by strategizing a way out of my bullying situation .193
 I spent my vacation emotionally exhausted .343
 I was denied any vacation time .060
 I'm afraid to take my vacation time .171

People who truly vacationed .129
 Bullying consumed/obliterated the vacation .639
 No time was taken away from work .231



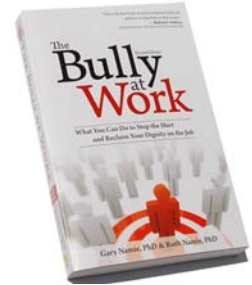
Types of Bullies

WBI 2011-I Instant Poll

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September 2011 WBI Instant Poll, $n = 942$

The question asked: "The Drs. Namie describe different bully types and how to deal with them in their book "The Bully at Work." Which type best describes your bully?"



Two-Headed Snake - Pretends to be nice while sabotaging you. Breaches confidentiality, steals credit for work, and puts on a rational "face" for others
36%

Constant Critic - Extremely negative behind closed doors, nitpicking and excessively criticizing work. Later lies about everything.
29%



Gatekeeper - Deliberately cuts you off from resources. Leaves you out of the communication loop, makes up new rules arbitrarily, and gives you insufficient time to complete projects.
26%

Screaming Mimi - Publicly yells, screams and curses. Emotionally out of control and threatening.
9%



As explained in the book, these aren't actually bully types. Rather, they are categories of tactics employed by bullies.

It is noteworthy that the stereotype of a bully – the screaming fool – is actually the rarest form.

Another important point to remember is that a skilled bully will employ all tactics, tailoring the choice of dehumanizing methods to the person accosted. The best of them can shift gears and vacillate among all four categories quickly. In the short space of an hour, a hidden camera might reveal that in a closed-door meeting, the bully attempts to redefine the personality of a target (Constant Critic), leave that room to scream at someone in the copy room for stacks of paper supplies out of perfect alignment (Screaming Mimi), next to meet with a supervisor for whom he denies training that all other supervisors have already received (Gatekeeper), and to wrap up the hour encounter his boss in the restroom where he squashes a pre-approved transfer of a long-term target from his unit to that of his boss because he lies that she is a disloyal worker waiting for the chance to sabotage the company (Snake). All of this destruction is part of the bullies campaign to destroy the careers of those who had the misfortune to fall under that bully's thumb.

Gary Namie, PhD
IP-2011-1

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Bullied Targets Define “Victory”

WBI 2011-J Instant Poll

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October 2011 WBI Instant Poll, $n = 317$

The question asked: *“As a bullied target, I define “victory” in my personal campaign against workplace bullying when which of the following happens?”*

How did bullied individuals define “victory” in their personal campaign against workplace bullying. This could mean winning. In a broader sense, it is the justice they seek, perhaps a restoration of the fairness denied them during their bullying months or years.

29% chose the option: “Bullying becomes illegal (a law is passed)”

28% chose the option: “The bully is punished or terminated”

13% chose the option: “The bully quits”

13% chose the option: “I’m out of the situation permanently under any circumstance”

11% chose the option: “I get separated from the stressful situation/location”

7% chose the option: “I get a severance/separation agreement to leave”

Note: the percentages do not total 100% because respondents could choose more than one option.

Interpretation

The two options tied as the most frequent were the delight from seeing the bully punished/terminated and finally having a law against workplace bullying passed. Both are possible, but difficult to accomplish. First, in only 3% of bullying cases are bullies terminated or even punished, according to a 2009 WBI online study. They bully with impunity, no personal accountability.

Second, we know that according to the 2010 WBI national survey, 64% of the public supports the passage of anti-bullying laws for the workplace. At the time of this Instant Poll, 11 states did have current bills. (Visit the Healthy Workplace Bill website to track progress and to see which state may become the first in the U.S. to pass the legislation.) It is heartening to see the level of support for a law from those with experience being bullied. They know more than others how much having a law might have helped them.

Targets, known to be 98% of the people who complete surveys on the WBI website, may be holding out for rare events before they allow themselves to say “I won.”

It is not surprising that targets, hungry for justice, define negative consequences for the bully as the standard for success in 41% of cases. Either the bully quits or is punished or terminated. Again, in the real workplace, these outcomes are rare.

About one-third (31%) considered getting away from the toxic, health-injuring situation a victory. Separation is the most likely ending of the bullying (66% of the time for women, 49% for men, according to the 2010 WBI national data) — whether voluntary or as the result of target termination or constructive discharge (being driven out against their will).

From our experience at WBI meeting and coaching thousands of bullied targets, we know that in order for people to move on to their personal post-bullying lives, they must give highest priority to their health. Employers do not want to provide the safety required to work in abuse-free environments. So, it is important for individuals to reclaim control over their safety. If that means getting out, it can be perceived as having “won.”

The most beneficial separation is one in which the employer sends you off with a severance agreement. Only 7% think this connotes “victory.” In our experience, this is often the best outcome ever possible. Perhaps targets are not even thinking they can ask for severance. But you always should. In fact, demand severance for your years of loyal, excellent service. You are not choosing to leave. Your productivity has been prevented by the bully. For this, the employer should pay.

Severances are larger when there is a component of illegal discrimination among the tactics. Even without a basis to threaten a lawsuit, you can still demand severance. Don’t leave without trying.

Conclusion

Bullied targets, the majority of whom lose their jobs, are waiting for rare adverse consequences for their bully before they feel that they can claim “victory.” A less attractive set of options, though much more likely to happen, involving separation ranked second. Targets chose separation with severance as the least likely way to define “victory,” despite the positive benefits it carries for targets. The survey findings suggest that targets are unnecessarily hard on themselves waiting on unlikely outcomes before they believe they have “won.”

Note: This survey was an online, non-scientific poll. Characteristics of respondents necessarily restrict extrapolation of results to only bullied targets and not to the general population.

Gary Namie, PhD
IP-2011-J

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Bullied Targets and the Occupy Movement

WBI 2011-K Instant Poll

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November 2011 WBI Instant Poll, $n = 230$

The question asked: “Do you support the Occupy movement that is expressing outrage over economic inequity?”

76% said Yes. We broke support and disagreement into sub-categories. See the results below.

Response options and their corresponding percentages were:

Yes I support and I agree with the tactics .50

Yes I support but I don't agree with the tactics .173

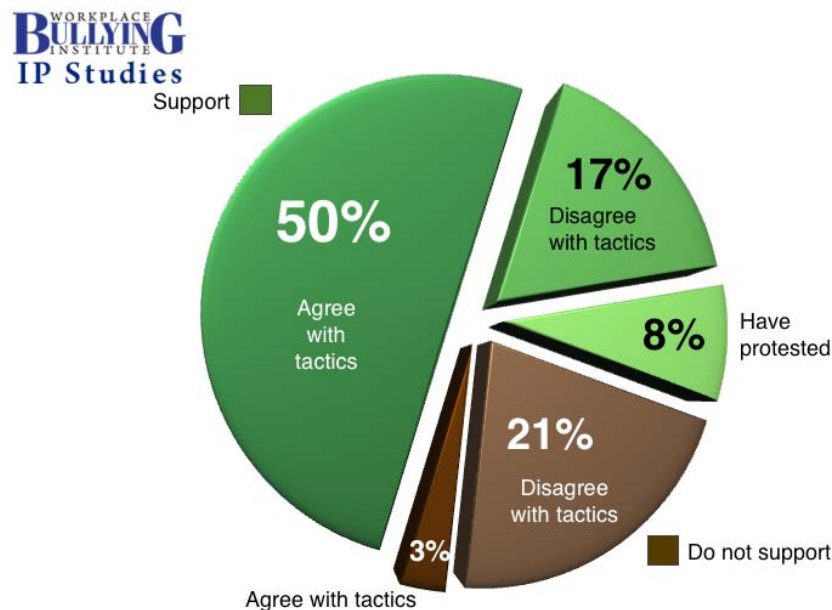
Yes and I have participated in the protest .082

No, disagree with message and tactics used .213

No – don't support message – but no problem with the tactics .030

Yes: .757

No: .243



Gary Namie, PhD
IP-2011-K

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Who Supports Bullied Individuals?

WBI 2011-L Instant Poll

WBI Instant Polls are online single-question surveys that rely upon self-selected samples of individuals bullied at work (typically 98% of any sample comprised of currently and formerly bullied individuals). No demographic data are collected, but IP respondent samples are typically 80% or higher female. Our non-scientific Instant Polls accurately depict the perceptions of workers targeted for bullying at work as contrasted with the views of all adult Americans in our scientific national surveys.

November 2011 WBI Instant Poll, $n = 528$

Bullying isolates bullied individuals, sometimes deliberately (“icing out”, ordered exclusion), sometimes inadvertently when coworkers fear for their own on-job status and stay away from their former friends.

The question asked: *“For targets of workplace bullying: who is your greatest supporter?”*

Respondents had to pick their major supporter, making only one choice from the following options.

Spouse/significant other, result = .318

Myself, result = .179

A coworker, result = .164

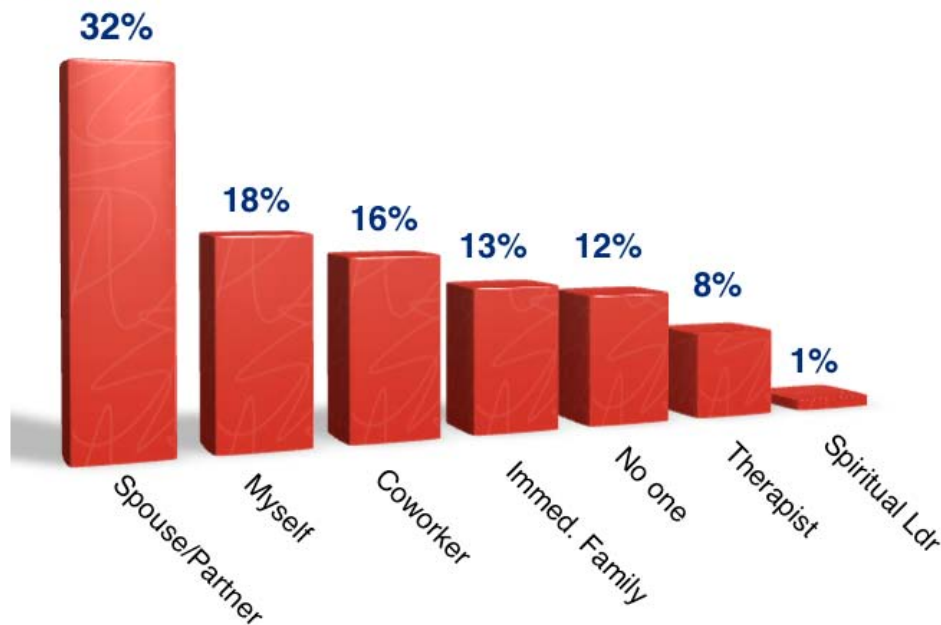
Immediate family (parent, sibling, child), result = .127

No one, result = .119

Therapist/medical professional, result = .077

Spiritual leader, result = .013

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Family — partners and immediate relatives — were credited as the prime source of support by 45% of respondents.

Interesting is that a voluntary reliance upon oneself is given the second highest rating (18%). This could be a healthy reliance, an introspective journey, one characterized by strength and deliberate purpose. Of course, this counters the vast anecdotal record of targets who call WBI for help and who overestimate their power to rectify their employer-generated problem.

The “No one” gives support option (chosen by 12%) suggests that those targets are involuntarily left alone to deal with the bullying situation that resulted from the combination of efforts by several do-nothing, intervention-averse people. They may have asked for help and been denied. Hence, they were isolated.

Families are present for targets in 45% of cases; while 30% of bullied targets are left to cope alone.

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