Definitions of Workplace Bullying

Workplace bullying refers to unreasonable actions of individuals (or a group) directed towards an employee (or a group of employees), which are intended to degrade, humiliate, intimidate, or undermine; or which create a risk of health or safety of employee(s). Bullying is a non-physical form of violence and this form of treatment can create emotional harm to any individual subjected to it. Bullying is not yet defined as illegal and this is one of the primary reasons why it occurs so frequently in the workplace. Bullying occurs four times more often than racial discrimination and sexual harassment in the workplace. ([Forensic Notes](https://www.forensicnotes.com/bullying-in-the-workplace))

Signs of Workplace Bullying

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| Subtle Signs ([ERC](https://www.yourerc.com/blog/post/20-Subtle-Signs-of-Workplace-Bullying.aspx)) | Not-So-Subtle Signs([ERC](https://www.yourerc.com/blog/post/20-Subtle-Signs-of-Workplace-Bullying.aspx)) | [The Street](https://www.thestreet.com/story/12693866/1/7-signs-you-are-a-victim-of-workplace-bullying.html) |
| 1. **Isolation/exclusion.** Intentionally excluding someone or making them feel socially or physically isolated from a group; purposefully excluding someone from decisions, conversations, and work-related events | 1. **Aggression.** Yelling or shouting at an employee; exhibiting anger or aggression verbally or non-verbally (e.g. pounding a desk) | Sign #1: **Ignoring, isolation and exclusion**  This form of abuse could involve the perpetrator:  Deliberately ignoring or avoiding a target;  Purposefully excluding someone from group meetings, discussions or decisions;  Or intentionally making someone feel isolated from the team |
| 1. **Ignoring.** Purposefully ignoring, avoiding, or not paying attention to someone; “forgetting” to invite someone to a meeting; selectively greeting or interacting with others besides a victim | 1. **Intrusion.** Tampering with someone’s personal belongings; intruding on someone by unnecessarily lurking around their desk; stalking, spying, or pestering someone | Sign #2: **Minimization**  This form of abuse could involve the perpetrator:  Discounting or diminishing someone else's views or concerns;  Making someone else feel useless or underused;  Or only delegating the worst of tasks or responsibilities. |
| 1. **Intimidation**. Overt or veiled threats; fear-inducing communication and behavior | 1. **Coercion.** Aggressively forcing or persuading someone to say or do things against their will or better judgment | Sign #3: **Creating hostility among colleagues**  This form of abuse could involve the perpetrator:  Purposefully causing hostile competition between employees;  Intentionally creating conflict;  Fostering a hostile team environment;  Encouraging backstabbing;  Or publicly ranking employees. |
| 1. **Deceit.** Repeatedly lying, not telling the truth, concealing the truth, deceiving others to get one’s way, and creating false hopes with no plans to fulfill them | 1. **Punishment.** Undeservedly punishing an employee with physical discipline, psychologically through passive aggression, or emotionally through isolation | Sign #4: **Undue criticism**  This form of abuse could involve the perpetrator:  Constantly giving unreasonable or non-constructive criticisms;  Fostering feelings of shame or guilt in employees;  Or making employees feel as though their work is unworthy or inadequate. |
| 1. **Rationalization.** Constantly justifying or defending behavior or making excuses for acting in a particular manner | 1. **Belittling.** Persistently disparaging someone or their opinions, ideas, work, or personal circumstances in an undeserving manner | Sign #5: **Projection of blame, taking credit**  This form of abuse could involve the perpetrator:  Using an employee as a scapegoat for work mistakes;  Blaming others for their own mistakes or faults;  Or assuming credit for work that is not their own. |
| 1. **Minimization**. Minimizing, discounting, or failing to address someone’s legitimate concerns or feelings | 1. **Embarrassment.** Embarrassing, degrading, or humiliating an employee publicly in front of others | Sign #6: **Deception**  This form of abuse could involve the perpetrator:  Lying or deceiving employees;  Omitting information;  Or willfully giving incorrect information |
| 1. **Diversion**. Dodging issues, acting oblivious or playing dumb, changing the subject to distract away from the issue, canceling meetings, and avoiding people | 1. **Revenge.** Acting vindictive towards someone; seeking unfair revenge when a mistake happens; retaliating against an employee | Sign #7: **Manipulation of employees' roles**  This form of abuse could involve the perpetrator:  Purposefully blocking progress of work;  Falsely promising projects or career progression;  Removing responsibilities without justification;  Or shifting expectations or guidelines without cause. |
| 1. **Shame and guilt**. Making an employee constantly feel that they are the problem, shaming them for no real wrongdoing, or making them feel inadequate and unworthy | 1. **Threats.** Threatening unwarranted punishment, discipline, termination, and/or physical, emotional, or psychological abuse |  |
| 1. **Undermining work**. Deliberately delaying and blocking an employee’s work, progress on a project or assignment, or success; repeated betrayal; promising them projects and then giving them to others; alternating supportive and undermining behavior | 1. **Offensive communication**. Communicating offensively by using profanity, demeaning jokes, untrue rumors or gossip, or harassment |  |
| 1. **Pitting employees against each other**. Unnecessarily and deliberately pitting employees against one another to drive competition, create conflict, or establish winners and losers; encouraging employees to turn against one another | 1. **Campaigning**. Launching an overt or underhanded campaign to “oust” a person out of their job or the organization |  |
| 1. **Removal of responsibility**. Removing someone’s responsibilities, changing their role, or replacing aspects of their job without cause | 1. **Blocking advancement or growth.** Impeding an employee’s progression, growth, and/or advancement in the organization unfairly |  |
| 1. **Impossible or changing expectations**. Setting nearly impossible expectations and work guidelines; changing those expectations to set up employees to fail |  |  |
| 1. **Constant change and inconsistency.** Constantly changing expectations, guidelines, and scope of assignments; constant inconsistency of word and action (e.g. not following through on things said) |  |  |
| 1. **Mood swings**. Frequently changing moods and emotions; sharp and sudden shifts in emotions |  |  |
| 1. **Criticism**. Constantly criticizing someone's work or behavior, usually for unwarranted reasons |  |  |
| 1. **Withholding information**. Intentionally withholding information from someone or giving them the wrong information |  |  |
| 1. **Projection of blame**. Shifting blame to others and using them as a scapegoat; not taking responsibility for problems or issues |  |  |
| 1. **Taking credit.** Taking or stealing credit for other people’s ideas and contributions without acknowledging them |  |  |
| 1. **Seduction**. Using excessive flattery and compliments to get people to trust them, lower their defenses, and be more responsive to manipulative behavior |  |  |
| 1. **Creating a feeling of uselessness**. Making an employee feel underused; intentionally rarely delegating or communicating with the employee about their work or progress; persistently giving employees unfavorable duties and responsibilities |  |  |

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| [Workplace Bullying Institute](http://www.workplacebullying.org/individuals/problem/early-signs/) – Experiences at Work |  |  |
| 1. You attempt the obviously impossible task of doing a new job without training or time to learn new skills, but that work is never good enough for the boss |  |  |
| 1. Surprise meetings are called by your boss with no results other than further humiliation |  |  |
| 1. Everything your tormenter does to you is arbitrary and capricious, working a personal agenda that undermines the employer's legitimate business interests |  |  |
| 1. Others at work have been told to stop working, talking, or socializing with you |  |  |
| 1. You are constantly feeling agitated and anxious, experiencing a sense of doom, waiting for bad things to happen |  |  |
| 1. No matter what you do, you are never left alone to do your job without interference |  |  |
| 1. People feel justified screaming or yelling at you in front of others, but you are punished if you scream back |  |  |
| 1. HR tells you that your harassment isn't illegal, that you have to "work it out between yourselves" |  |  |
| 1. You finally, firmly confront your tormentor to stop the abusive conduct and you are accused of harassment |  |  |
| 1. You are shocked when accused of incompetence, despite a history of objective excellence, typically by someone who cannot do your job |  |  |
| 1. Everyone -- co-workers, senior bosses, HR -- agrees (in person and orally) that your tormentor is a jerk, but there is nothing they will do about it (and later, when you ask for their support, they deny having agreed with you) |  |  |
| 1. Your request to transfer to an open position under another boss is mysteriously denied |  |  |