

Information Sheet - Institute of Welfare

Bullying

Why is everybody always picking on me?
Are you being bullied? Help is at hand!

Claire's story

"You could say I was the life and soul of the party, I'd be the one who was always first to sing at karaoke and the one that made everyone laugh. I'd be the one who friends turned to for support and I was always able to stick up for them. I was oozing with confidence and was very popular.

Things started to change when a new manager took over the section. I thought she liked me at first but she began to pick holes in my work. It seemed that everything I did was wrong, and to make matters worse she piled extra work on me and set tight deadlines for completion of tasks. She regularly commented that the organisation was looking to make cuts and that everybody would have to fight for their jobs. She then began to criticise me in front of my colleagues.

I didn't realise what was happening at first, but the constant picking was slowly grinding me down. I began to doubt my ability to do the job; a job I had been successful at for over twenty years. My confidence had vanished and I found myself making clumsy mistakes and was turning into the person she had been accusing me of being. My friends tried to support me but I could tell that they were just grateful that it wasn't them, and soon enough they began to avoid me, some even became hostile towards me as they were fighting for their own survival. I felt so isolated."

Practical steps to free yourself from bullying

Recognise and acknowledge what is happening

The process of bullying is sometimes progressive. Slowly wearing the target down, the bully's actions appear trivial in isolation which makes the target feel weak when complaining. This is why it is recommended that keeping a diary of incidents is a good idea in helping to build a full picture.

Understand why people bully and how they choose their targets

Most bullies bully to hide their own inadequacies. Behind every bully is an insecure person who lacks control in some part of their life. The target of a bully is either someone who is in the wrong place at the wrong time or someone who possesses the qualities that the bully lacks. By understanding this, the target of bullying begins to reverse the position of weakness to a position of strength.

Seek the support of others

Many targets of bullying feel too ashamed to seek help from bullying because they fear that they will be seen as weak. Understanding that it is the bully, who is the weak one, empowers the target to seek help from a position of strength. If the target belongs to a trade union or professional body, it is recommended that they seek help there. Talking to a supportive friend can also help.

Take responsibility for your own feelings

Make a decision that no bully (weak, inadequate person) is going to control the way you feel. If you continue to hold the bully responsible for how you feel you are handing your power over to them.

Refuse to see yourself as a victim

You were just in the wrong place at the wrong time or you possess some qualities that the bully lacks.

Seek assertiveness training if necessary

If you feel that you are being picked on or given extra work because you find it difficult to say no or stand up for yourself, then you may benefit from assertiveness training.

Look after yourself

Making the decision to take care of yourself can give an enormous boost to your self confidence. Take regular exercise (check with your doctor first if you have not exercised for a while) and make sure you are eating properly.

Useful website addresses.

www.thesite.org

www.bullyonline.org

www.crazycolour.com

www.tuc.org.uk

Institute of Welfare, PO Box 5570, Stourbridge, DY8 9BA.

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