

## TIPS FOR HOW TO CONFRONT A WORKPLACE BULLY

1. **Reverse your thinking.** Most of us suffer in silence because all we consider are the risks of speaking up. Those who speak up and hold others accountable tend to do the opposite. They think first about the risks of NOT speaking up. Then they give thought to the risks of speaking up. Changing the order of the risk assessment makes you much more likely to take action.
2. **Facts first.** Present your information, as if talking to a jury. Stick with the detailed facts. Strip out any judgmental or provocative language and be specific.
3. **Validate concerns.** Often the bullying behavior was triggered by some legitimate concern. Be sure to validate that need—while demonstrating an unwillingness to tolerate the way it was handled.
4. **Share natural consequences.** Let them know what the consequences are of this way of handling their concerns—to you, others, customers, work projects, etc.
5. **Hold boundaries.** Let them know how you expect to be treated in the future. Ask for their commitment. And let them know what your next step will be if there is a recurrence.

**ABOUT THE RESEARCH.** The study collected responses via an online survey of 2,283 individuals in May 2014. Margin of error is approximately 3%.

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**INFOGRAPHIC.** To view an infographic on the study, visit: <http://www.crucialskills.com/2014/06/how-to-confront-the-workplace-bully/>

According to our study of 2,283 people, **96 percent of respondents say they have experienced workplace bullying.** Eighty-nine percent of those bullies have been at it for more than a year; 54 percent for more than five years. In some cases, the survey found, bullies have continued in the same job for 30-plus years.

Bullying can't persist unless there is a complete breakdown in all four systems of accountability—personal accountability (the victim himself or herself), peer (others who witness the behavior), supervisory accountability (hierarchical leaders), and formal discipline (HR)—according to our research. It was surprising in this survey to see in how many organizations not just one, but all four of these systems were terribly weak. As a result, the person most likely to remain in his or her job was the bully.

Equally surprising was the widespread effect of bullying. It was rare that the alleged bully picked a single target. In fact, 80 percent of respondents said the bully affected five or more people.

So, how do you stop a bully? The study showed that the most effective deterrent is the skillful verbal intervention of the person being targeted. Next most effective is informal peer accountability. While in high-accountability organizations all four must be strong—personal, peer, boss and formal discipline—the study showed that the first breakdown is the first. When individuals and peers who experience or see bullying say nothing, the bully gets emboldened. And the more who join in the silence, the more evidence the bully has that the behavior is sustainable.

A lack of formal policies similarly enables bullying. Only 51 percent say their company has a policy for dealing with bullies, and only 7 percent know of anyone who has ever used that policy. (Six percent say the policy did work to stop a bully.)

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## KEY RESULTS

**62%** saw sabotaging of others' work or reputations

**52%** saw browbeating, threats, or intimidation

**4%** saw physical intimidation or assault