

The Successful SUPERVISOR

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Tips from  LifeSolutions

With increasing frequency, LifeSolutions receives calls from supervisors, HR consultants, and employees requesting support to resolve situations that can best be described as some variation of workplace bullying or intimidation. This is the fourth in a 6-part series in which The Successful Supervisor will provide suggestions for recognizing and managing these behaviors in the workplace. The focus this month will be on leadership's role in moving the workplace in the direction of civility and respect.

*Material is adapted from Namie, G., Namie, Ruth. *The Bully at Work*, Naperville, IL, Sourcebooks, Inc., 2000, 2003. Materials also adapted from Sutton, Robert, *The No Asshole Rule – Building a Civilized Workplace and Surviving One That Isn't*. NY, Boston: Warner Business, 2007, and from SHARP, Department of Labor and Industry, Olympia, WA. We are interested in your feedback to the Successful Supervisor. Email your questions and comments to the EAP at ask@lifesolutionsforyou.com.*

Debra Messer, MA, CEAP, LifeSolutions

As awareness of bullying grows and the workplace recognizes its impact on employees and productivity, it is natural to seek a solution. What *are* the logical steps to take and how can leadership promote civility and respect? Should we intervene on a case-by-case basis or provide training in the hope that education will foster better behavior? Is it wise to start with a “quick fix,” which is often a *reactive* response either to an isolated event or to an ongoing situation?

Gary Namie, PhD, and Ruth Namie, PhD, experts in this area, recommend against it. What works, they propose, is a systematic approach that includes education and policy instituted across the board and faithfully enforced at all levels within the organization. Quick fixes overlook the fact that bullying occurs within the context of workplace culture and that the cultural issues fostering bullying must be addressed before specific interventions will be effective.

Research indicates leaders play a significant role in the creation and maintenance of workplace culture, and leaders are the ones who can guide employees toward change.

In addition to becoming more skilled at identifying bullying, leaders must learn how to convey expectations for civil behavior to their employees and how to consistently and fairly respond to incidences. **Most importantly**, leaders must do a thorough and honest assessment of the workplace culture, policies, and expectations of staff (both formal and informal), as well as their own management styles.

Questions leaders need to ask themselves include:

- ◆ Do I send the message that each employee is valued, respected, and appreciated, *or* do employees feel dismissed, expendable, or unheard? How is this conveyed?
- ◆ What is my management style? Do I use the carrot or the stick? Do I see my employees as inherently lazy, unreliable, or untrustworthy and use fear and threats to motivate them? Or do I view them as intelligent, motivated individuals who have good intentions and rely on encouragement and rewards to motivate them?
- ◆ Do employees feel they can come to me when they are overloaded or stressed? Or are unreasonable expectations placed on employees and

are those who complain met with disapproval, ignored, or viewed as “problem employees”?

- ◆ Is my communication *downward* given with little input from employees, or do employees have a voice in decisions that affect them?
- ◆ As a manager or supervisor, do I ever find myself engaging in any of the bullying behaviors cited in the September Issue?
- ◆ Do I sometimes find myself saying, “I don’t know any other way to manage”, “I feel I have to be tough”, “This isn’t a popularity contest”, or “This is how I was managed!”?

These are not easy questions. The reality is that bullying can become entrenched in a work culture and quietly accepted. Research indicates 80% of bullying is done by supervisors. Viewed as “strong management,” bullying can be overlooked or even condoned.

A manager may be highly competent, a key player, or have a long history with the organization, and the company may be reluctant to address the bullying behaviors. The reality is, a company cannot promote a culture of civility or respect unless leadership exemplifies those qualities. Behaviors or management styles that do not support civility and respect need to be addressed immediately. Only then can a fully invested and committed leadership staff move forward to promote policy, education of staff, and effective interventions for bullying.

Tune in next month for the steps committed managers take to promote civility. In the meantime, call LifeSolutions or your HR Consultant with any questions.

Online Leadership Support



As leaders, what we do and say can have significant impact on those around us. *LifeSolutions* offers a series of self-guided online courses specifically developed to equip managers and supervisors with the appropriate tools to help make a positive impact in the workplace.

In keeping with the theme of this month's The Successful Supervisor, we offer the following Skill Builder courses:

Conflict Intervention

Defuse a potentially morale-draining work environment through successful conflict intervention.

In this course you will learn:

- ◆ How to assess the climate of a conflict
- ◆ Methods to help set the stage for a positive outcome
- ◆ Techniques to broker a resolution and follow-up advice

Managing Disagreement

As an effective leader, you can set the stage for individuals to handle their differences over workplace issues and decisions.

In this course you will learn:

- ◆ Principles and styles
- ◆ How to apply a four-phase process
- ◆ Ways to refine your skills

Emotional Intelligence in the Workplace

Emotional intelligence is a set of skills that enables leaders to understand, anticipate, and deal with people's automatic reactions in the workplace.

In this course you will learn:

- ◆ Intelligent thinking about emotions
- ◆ The keys to behaving wisely
- ◆ Techniques for fostering emotional intelligence in others

Follow the steps below to learn more and to get started:

- ◆ Access www.lifesolutionsforyou.com.
- ◆ Click on *WorkLife* login at the top right.
- ◆ Enter your company code. If you do not know your code, call 1.800.647.3327.
- ◆ Locate *Working Smarter* on left-side menu.
- ◆ Click on *Effective Manager*.
- ◆ Click on *Skill Builder*.
- ◆ Click on title that interests you and review highlights of each course.
- ◆ You will be able to click on link at bottom (within the Skill Builder highlight) to get started.

If you have questions, please call **1.800.647.3327**
