

Surviving a Bully Boss

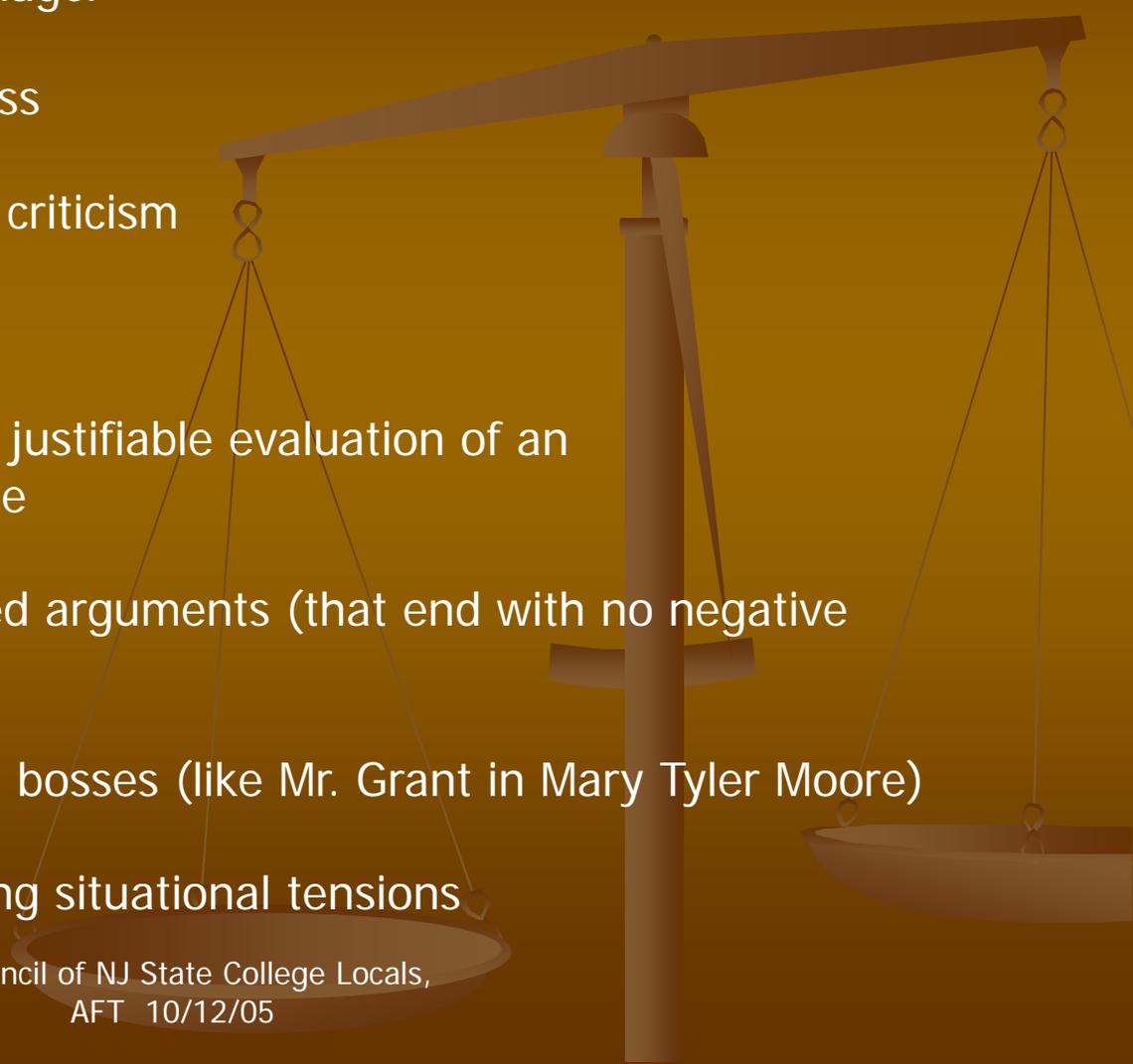
When your supervisor is a bully

Bullying Versus Aggression



Difficult work situations versus Workplace Bullying

- ❑ Incompetent or bad manager
- ❑ "Hard" or demanding boss
- ❑ Reasonable, constructive criticism
- ❑ High expectations
- ❑ Giving a fair, honest and justifiable evaluation of an underperforming employee
- ❑ Occasional loud or heated arguments (that end with no negative repercussions)
- ❑ Gruff vis-à-vis easygoing bosses (like Mr. Grant in Mary Tyler Moore)
- ❑ Under-resourced - causing situational tensions



Definition of Workplace Bullying

“a sub-lethal form of workplace violence”

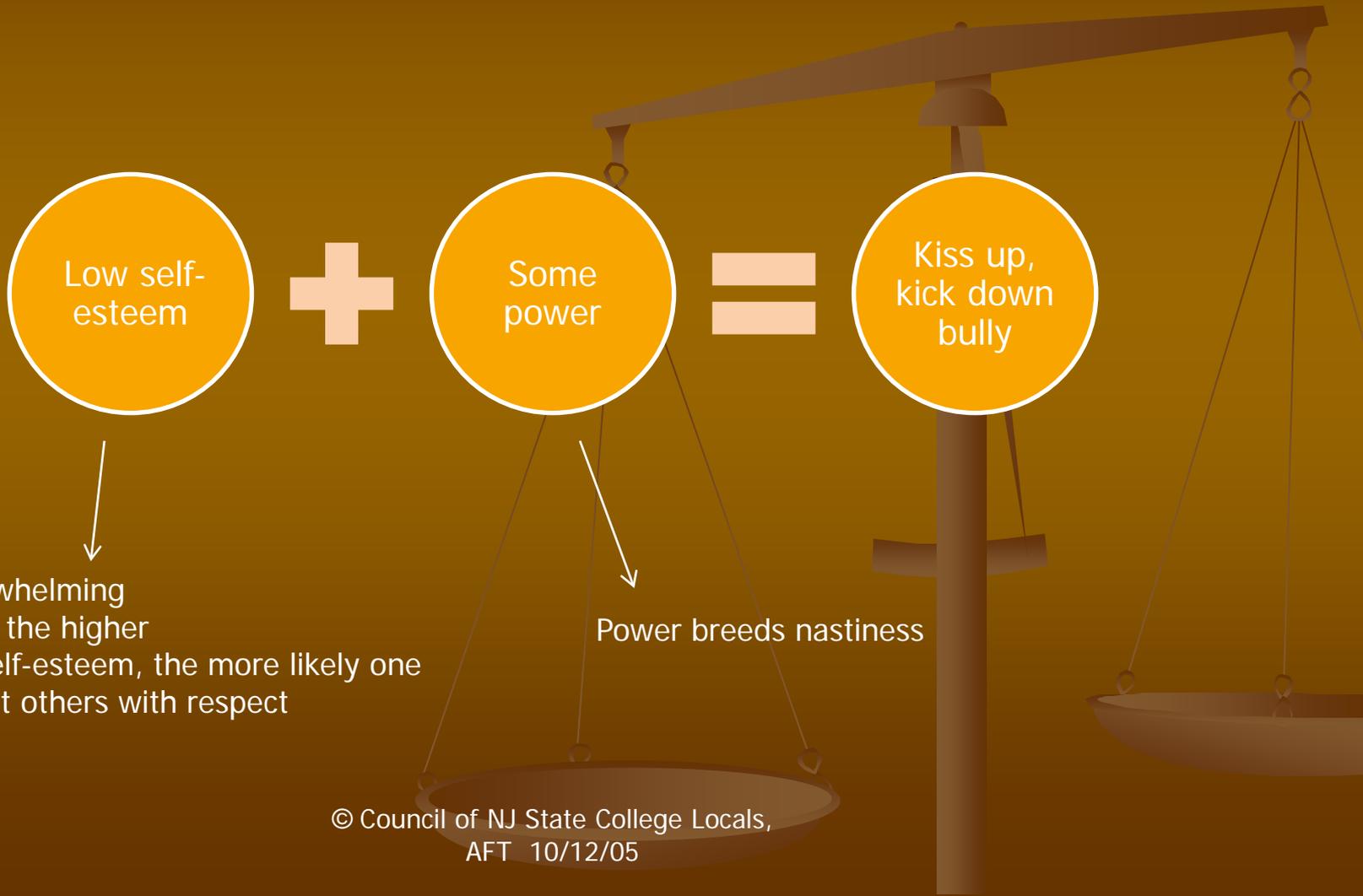
- ❑ Workplace bullying refers to repeated, unreasonable actions of individuals directed towards an employee (or a group), which is intended to intimidate and creates a risk to the health, safety and even job security of the affected employee (s).

Types of bullying/bully



- ❑ Mobbing the “target”
- ❑ Serial bullies
- ❑ Stealth bullies
- ❑ The ‘victim’ bully

Why do people bully at work?



Bullies and the Academic Workplace – perfect together?

- ❑ Decentralized structure of colleges and universities
- ❑ Deans and directors are at the top of the organizational hierarchy much like in a small business
- ❑ Huge organizational divide between senior management and lower level management.
- ❑ Most 'managers' — often former academics — are, as bosses, unsuited to their roles

Factors That Increase the Risk for Bullying Behavior

- ❑ Significant organization change (the boss may be in over her/his head with the change)
- ❑ Worker characteristics (protected classes)
- ❑ Workplace relationships (e.g. inadequate information flow within institution and lack of employee participation in decisions)
- ❑ Work systems (on this one we have no lack of policies in public sector)- staff shortages, interpersonal conflict organizational constraints, role ambiguity and conflict

Why does upper management tolerate them?

- ❑ Bully bosses are often smart and make significant contributions to the institution.
- ❑ Bullies tend to ingratiate themselves to their bosses while intimidating subordinates (Kiss up-kick down)
- ❑ Bully bosses can operate with impunity because employees are often uncomfortable reporting them to upper management.

Do Bullies Act Alone?

- ❑ No- there is a “communal character of workplace bullying”
- ❑ There are passive accomplices or abettors to bullying
- ❑ We tend to blame victims for their fates

Is Bullying Illegal?

- ❑ No, unfortunately it is not generally illegal in the United States
- ❑ In order for 'bullying to be illegal' it must involve harassment based on one of the protected classes
- ❑ Assemblywoman Linda Greenstein sponsored legislation called the "Healthy Workplace Act" (A-673) – status: stuck in Committee

What happens when institutions tolerate bully bosses?

Harms to the “TARGET”

Emotional – Psychological

Stress, PTSD, insomnia,
mood swings, feelings of
shame

According to *Psychology
Today*, bully bosses
perpetuate “a state of
psychological emergency.”

Social

Isolation,
inattentive to
family and
friends

Economic

Discipline,
non-reappointment

Physical

Headaches, high blood
pressure, cardio-vascular
illness, impaired immune
function, digestive
problems, weight loss.

DEATH

So, how do you deal with a bully boss? Get into survival mode!

- ❑ Recognize the behavior and name it early on
- ❑ Keep detailed records, e.g. a work diary of who, what, when and where
- ❑ A list of witnesses
- ❑ Document (keep a folder of paper trails)
- ❑ Collective negotiations
- ❑ Change the environment with individual and collective actions
- ❑ Constructive responses to the bully (use your union brothers and sisters to rehearse)

- ❑ GET RID OF THEM
- ❑ Legislative action
- ❑ Leave them – 25%-40% of the “targets” and 20% of witnesses leave the bullied workplace

- ❑ SURVIVE
- ❑ Reframe: change how you see things
- ❑ Hope for better, expect the worst
- ❑ Develop indifference and emotional detachment
- ❑ Look for small wins -
- ❑ Limit your exposure
- ❑ Build pockets of sanity, safety and support
- ❑ SEEK PROFESSIONAL HELP

Nip it in the bud scenarios

- ❑ If your boss insults you or puts you down, Susan Futterman, author of "When You Work for a Bully" and the founder of MyToxicBoss.com, suggests responding with something like, "In what way does calling me a moron or an idiot solve the problem? I think that there's a better way to deal with this."
- ❑ If you find out that your boss is bad-mouthing you to higher-ups in the company, confront them directly and professionally. Get the evidence in writing from your source if you can. Then, ask him or her what is causing them to do this.
- ❑ If your boss is a control freak who's breathing down your neck, you should address it. Say, "I can't function effectively if you're going to be micromanaging me and looking over my shoulder all the time. If I'm doing something fundamentally wrong, let's talk about it. But this isn't working."
- ❑ If someone screams at you, don't be a doormat. If you've made a mistake, acknowledge it. But let your boss know that they're creating a difficult work environment. Even if you haven't made a mistake, you may want to calmly ask what they're upset about and if you can address it.

Union Intervention

- ❑ The union can investigate
- ❑ It can help establish conflict resolution/mediation teams to work with the employer on behalf of the targeted employee
- ❑ Negotiate an enforceable respect clause in contract language
- ❑ Lobby for changes to public employment laws, rules and regulations to make bullying and mobbing in the workforce illegal AND to provide a consequence
- ❑ Your union can create and publish a campus survey to 'educate' management

At Your Wits End?

- Above all, try to maintain your dignity when dealing with a bully boss.
- If you feel like you need to vent, call your local Union or Council representative.

Propose New Contract Language

Non-Hostile Work Environment

The college/university and the union agree that the working environment shall be characterized by mutual respect for the common dignity to which all individuals are entitled. It is therefore agreed that verbal harassment of an employee or a supervisor is inappropriate and unacceptable.

Any claims of a violation of this provision by employees covered by this agreement shall be the subject of a labor management conference. A full and fair investigation into any alleged violations of this provision shall be the sole and exclusive duty of the college/university administration.

The Labor Management Conference (LMC) shall be presided over by the Office of Human Resources and attended by the affected employee, a representative or representatives of the union, a representative of the department associated with the alleged violation. Any mutual agreements reached at a Labor Management Conference at which representatives of the Office of Human Resources are present will be reduced to writing. Such agreement shall be binding on the parties to the agreement.

Should a particular supervisor/manager be the subject of more than one allegation under this Article and should the parties at a LMC agree that responsive action by the college/university is warranted to address a claimed violation of this Article in more than one such instance, then repeated or continuing behavior by the same supervisor may be grieved pursuant to Article VII

*based on Rutgers University Union of Rutgers Professionals contract language

Dear Management:

Did you know that it's easier to prevent bullying than it is to intervene after an event or mediate during established patterns of bullying?

That is why we are making you aware that there is a bully (supervisor, dean, VP) on your payroll.

Bullying harms the institution as well as individuals. There are high levels of absenteeism and a breakdown of collegiality and work relationships.

The university will suffer from poor public image in terms of being a difficult place to work – word DOES get around the other State colleges and universities.

Upper management will see reduced efficiency and productivity that inevitably will have a negative impact on students.

There will be increased costs associated with workers' compensation claims, inability to recruit staff and the training of new staff.

And of course, there is the potential litigation by employees' survivors if the worst should happen-wrongful death.

What should management do?

- ❑ Develop a culture of support
- ❑ Create a policy in consultation with the local union and at least one employee from the affected area
- ❑ Develop complaint handling and investigation procedures
- ❑ Provide anti-bully training for all university/college employees
- ❑ Appoint a contact person trained in conflict resolution
- ❑ Monitor the effectiveness of any action taken in response to bullying behavior

Resources

Davenport, Noa, Ph.D., Ruth Distler Schwartz, Gail Pursell Elliott. MOBBING Emotional Abuse in the American Workplace. Civil Society Publishing: Collins, IA, 2005 (3rd printing).

Namie, Gary, Ph.D. and Ruth Namie, Ph.D. The Bully at Work What You Can Do To Stop the Hurt and Reclaim Your Dignity on the Job. (2nd edition) Sourcebooks, Inc.: Naperville, IL, 2009.

Sutton, David, Ph.D. The No Asshole Rule: Building a Civilized Workplace and Surviving One That Isn't. Business Plus: New York, Boston, 2007.

www.workplacebullying.org

njbullybusters-owners@yahoo.com

http://www.academicleadership.org/emprical_research/The_Bullying_Boss_printer.shtml

<http://bulliedacademics.blogspot.com/2006/12/dealing-with-bullies-in-academia.html>

<http://www.bullyonline.org>

http://www.worktrauma.org/survive_bully/survive_bully_index.htm

<http://mytoxicboss.com/>

<http://newworkplace.wordpress.com/>

The Bully Boss



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