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**Intellectual Output 1**



**HEALTH & SAFETY AT WORKPLACE:**

**BULLYING**

**INTRODUCTION**

From this unit you will learn: what bullying at workplace is, whether bullying is the same as mobbing, and how to deal with it.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

Can you recall any incidents of bullying at your previous stages of education ? How did you and your schoolmates react ? Were school authorities involved in the incident ?

**READING**

According to Wikipedia, “bullying is the use of force, [coercion](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coercion), hurtful [teasing](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Teasing) or threat, to [abuse](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abuse), aggressively [dominate](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/domination) or intimidate”. The behaviour is often repeated and habitual and it is obviously intended to hurt another individual - either physically or mentally, not to mention emotionally. Bullying is a subcategory of aggressive behaviour characterized by the following three criteria: hostile intent, imbalance of physical or social power, and repetition over a certain period of time. This imbalance distinguishes bullying from conflicts which are natural phenomena in any group of people, therefore in a company as well. An essential prerequisite of bullying is the perception (by the bully or by others) of this imbalance of physical or [social](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Power_(social_and_political)) power.

At workplace bullying usually means verbal comments or acts which psychologically or socially hurt a person. It involves repeated incidents, or a pattern of behaviour intended to offend, degrade, or humiliate a victim. It is always aimed at isolating the victim from the co-workers so that no support or help will be granted. The examples of bullying include: violating somebody’s privacy, tampering with personal belongings and work equipment, making offensive jokes, spreading malicious rumours or innuendos.

Mobbing looks the same as bullying, but instead of a single harasser, the victim is targeted by a group – a mob. One or two bullies encourage their co-workers to gang up on the victim because of their race, ethnicity, gender, age, sexuality, religion or – the cruellest thing – their disability.

However, bullying or mobbing is not always a case of picking on the weak and vulnerable. The reasons might also be career related. A mob leader might be jealous of a new project manager if he/she was hoping for the promotion. Somebody might want to impress the executive board at the expense of the colleagues whose performance he/she undermines. Mobbing can be performed in retaliation as well. For instance, a bully might want to punish a female co-worker after she has submitted a harassment report against him.

Overall, mobbing seems to be more harmful than bullying as there are more people to gossip, spread rumour, exclude the victim not only from the formal correspondence and meetings but also from the social life – casual office small talk, lunch outings and post-work drinks.

Another reason for bullying might be fear. Sometimes somebody’s strengths make the bully feel threatened by the rising competitor. For instance, an experienced elderly manager might undermine younger ambitious wannabes aiming at the reorganization of the department. So the thing is that managers might also be bullies. As the saying goes – power corrupts, although bullies holding managerial positions act probably in a more subtle manner. Still because of the obvious imbalance, they may easily overload people with work, set impossible deadlines, change work duties or guidelines, or undermine employees’ performance by unmerited criticism. A malicious boss is ready to withhold essential information so as to guarantee somebody’s failure or block possibilities of their promotion, extra training and even leave. In the most extreme cases, bullying may lead to physical abuse or threatening.

Regardless of the reasons, all the victims of any kind of bullying or mobbing suffer from shock, anger and frustration. They lose confidence, feel vulnerable and have low self-esteem. The mob’s gossip and slander might ruin not only the victim’s professional reputation but their health, too. The victim might experience depression or anxiety and even manifest physical symptoms, such as trouble sleeping, compromised immune system, loss of appetite, headaches, and stomach pains.

It is worth noting that mobbing is harmful to the whole workplace community and the company itself. It creates a toxic work environment for all the employees. Even the ones who aren’t personally involved still witness the mobbing patterns and live in fear of such indecencies happening to them. They are stressed, distracted, their productivity and morale are declining. Mobbing might lead to absenteeism as people do not enjoy working in the environment where the law of a stronger one prevails. The whole organization is in danger as some valuable workers may even consider quitting if a workplace lets bullying slide.

That is why, from the management’s point of view it is a vital issue not to sweep the problem under the rug. Victims and witnesses of mobbing should react. Sometimes the easiest way is simply talking to the bullies – maybe their behaviour is not deliberate and the perpetrators do not realise how their words or actions affect others. If you do not feel like doing it yourself, have someone else to handle the problem. The people who should deal with mobbing are your bosses, the company’s human resources department, the trade union officials. In some companies there are so-called “harassment advisers” – specially trained staff to help with bullying and harassment problems. One can always make a formal complaint following the company’s grievance procedure. The last resort is legal action, e.g. going to an employment tribunal.

READING TASK**:** Match the highlighted phrases from the text with their definitions:

**1.to** accept standards that are lower than is desirable **- compromise**

2.persistent, customary – habitual

3.a person who carries out a harmful, illegal, or immoral act **- perpetrator**

4.necessary condition – prerequisite

5.to change something especially in a way that causes damage or harm somebody - tamper with

6.frighten or overawe somebody in order to make them do what one wants - intimidate

7.revenge - retaliation

8.harming a person's reputation by telling other people something that is untrue and damaging - **slander**

9.prove more powerful or superior **- prevail**

10.an allusive or oblique remark or hint, typically a suggestive or disparaging one - innuendo

**11.not adequately earned or deserved** - unmerited

12.constraint, pressure, force - coercion

13.an official statement of a complaint over something believed to be wrong or unfair **- grievance**

14.the practice of regularly staying away from work or school without good reason - **absenteeism**

15.showing or feeling opposition, dislike - hostile

**VOCABULARY PRACTICE**

1. A person’s race, ethnicity, gender, age, sexuality, religion or disability might be the reasons for bullying. Put the following words into the proper categories. Make sure you understand all of them.

*Caucasian, deaf, Jewish, Slav, LGBT, male, transgender, Muslim, Mongoloid, blind, gay, mentally challenged, Hindu, Latino, female, Australoid, elderly, Buddhist, Negroid, twentysomething, mute, Catholic, atheist*

Race – Caucasian, Mongoloid, Australoid, Negroid

Ethnicity – Jewish, Slav, Latino, Hindu

Gender- male, female

Age – elderly, twentysomething

Sexuality – LGBT, gay, transgender

Religion – Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Catholic

Disability – deaf, blind, mute, mentally challenged

1. Do the online research to answer the 2 following questions.

What does **LGBT** stand for?

LGBT is shorthand for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender.

What is the difference between **race** and **ethnicity**?

They are two concepts related to human ancestry. Race is [defined](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/race) as a category of humankind that shares certain distinctive physical traits such as skin colour or hair texture. The term ethnicities is more broadly [defined](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/ethnic) as large groups of people classed according to common racial, national, tribal, religious, linguistic, or cultural origin or background. Race is usually associated with biology and linked with physical characteristics. Ethnicity is linked with cultural expression and identification. However, both are [social constructs used to categorize and characterize seemingly distinct populations](http://science.sciencemag.org/content/351/6273/564).

**FURTHER PRACTICE**

Watch the TEDx talk by a psychotherapist Glenn Rolfsen who specializes in the psychosocial work environment in enterprises. As corporate counsel and leadership consultant, he works daily to improve working life quality for employees. The talk is about what contributes to a toxic work environment and what the significant factors are that determine our working life quality. His approach addresses how to achieve a permanent end to slander and bullying among adults in the workplace.

[How to start changing an unhealthy work environment | Glenn D. Rolfsen | TEDxOslo - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eYLb7WUtYt8)

Answer the questions:

**1.What types of professional help is offered to heal an unhealthy work environment? Name 4 techniques. Are those techniques successful?**

Conflict resolutions, group discussions, individual interviews, leadership counselling

NO

**2. Backbiting is one of the core elements of bullying. What is backbiting?**

Talking negatively about a third person who is not present.

**3. Socrates is assumed to be an author of the triple-filter test: TGU. Retell the story. What are the 3 questions.**

Socrates meets an acquaintance in the street. He offers to tell the philosopher some news about his friend. Socrates asks him to answer three questions BEFORE he decides to pass this news. The questions are: 1. Is it TRUE what you are going to tell me about my friend? 2. Is it anything GOOD you’re going to tell me about my friend? 3. Is it USEFUL? If the answers are NO, why bother.

**4. Why do people backbite? Give 2 reasons.**

For the feeling of elevating yourself while talking other people down. To look interesting in the eyes of the other people because of some juicy information they have and the others don’t.

**5. The solution to backbiting may seem simple and naïve. What does “Project 2016” consist in?**

You gather a group and explain what backbiting is. Then you ask 2 questions: “Do you think backbiting takes place here?”, “Would you like to work in a place where there is no backbiting going on?”. If the answers are mostly YES, you take an old-fashioned flipboard and write the title PROJECT and the current year (the talk was given in 2016). You get people join in by signing their names. Then you frame the paper and hang it on the wall. For the next six months every week you ask the people “How are we doing with the project?’.

**6. The concept of the PROJECT works. What is the proof?**

Over 250 CEOs in different companies have used it for 10 years.

**7. What are the 3 benefits of the PROJECT?**

Absenteeism, sick leave goes down. Fractionation is minimized. Productivity is increasing.

**8. What does the phrase “NEW CONSCIOUSNESS COMMITS” mean?**

In everyday life you stop talking about the people who are not present, applying the triple-filter test. And if you commit yourself to refraining from backbiting, you spread this new feature of yours among the people you know and across different areas of your life.