

Compass

Be aware of—and act against—bullying

We now know more than ever about the devastating long-term effects that bullying can have on victims—whether the bullying happens at school, in the workplace or online.

Children, teens and adults can all be the victims of abusive behavior. Regardless of their age, they often suffer with long-lasting stress, anxiety, depression, and a range of uncomfortable physical symptoms. Bullying can lead to avoidance of school or work. It can also lead to retaliation violence, and sometimes even to suicide.

Awareness of bullying has increased in recent years, and more institutions are adopting anti-bullying policies. However, not all organizations are as responsive as they should be to this widespread problem. Whatever the setting for the bullying, its victims often feel isolated and may not know what they can do to stop the abusive behavior.

This edition of *Compass* provides introductory tips on how to deal with a bullying situation:

- What to do if your child could be a victim of bullying.
- Steps to take if you've been the target of abusive behavior at work.
- Ways to stop cyberbullying (bullies using technology).

Log on and learn! Look for *Bullying Awareness* in the Magellan member website under the Library/In the Spotlight section. No one should have to endure bullying; confidential counseling is available at any time.

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More Information!**



If your child might be a victim

If you suspect that your child might be struggling with a bully-related issue:

Look for behavior changes in your child. Be alert for dramatic changes such as appearing depressed or withdrawn, or avoiding previously enjoyed activities.

Keep the dialogue open. Ask your child each day about peer relations. Bullied children are often too embarrassed to report abuse, so it's vital to listen closely.

Develop a safety strategy. Teach nonviolent ways to deal with bullies, like walking away or talking out issues.

Take the situation seriously. Promptly inform the school that your child has been bullied. Insist on a no-tolerance policy for bullying at school.

Build resilience and confidence. If a child is struggling with the effects of bullying, a mental health professional such as a psychologist or social worker can help them build resilience and confidence. Contact your program for confidential assistance.

Can there really be a bully at work?

Bullying is common in the workplace. National studies have shown that approximately 25 – 35 percent of U.S. workers have had direct experience with abusive conduct at some point.

Bullying is behavior meant to frighten, control, offend or humiliate another person. While bullies may be peers, they are often bosses or people of higher seniority than the victims. If not addressed, bullying behavior can lead to a decline in employee morale and productivity. It can also cause great psychological and physical distress to the victim.

Examples of workplace bullying

- Spreading hurtful rumors or gossip
- Excluding or isolating someone
- Undermining or sabotaging a person's work
- Threatening physical abuse
- Assigning unreasonable deadlines or workloads
- Intruding on a person's privacy by pestering, spying or stalking (this can include communications such as email, text messages and social media)
- Yelling or using profanity.

Steps to combat bullying

- Don't allow yourself to be an easy target. Either in person or by email, firmly tell the offender that his or her behavior must stop.
- Document every instance of bullying behavior. Keep a written journal with the date, time and event description. Include names of any witnesses; multiple witnesses to bullying can strengthen your case when reported to HR and management.
- Keep copies of any inappropriate memos, emails, or texts received from the person.
- Do not retaliate. Yelling back at a bully could complicate and escalate the situation. Try to remain calm and professional.
- Report the harassment to your supervisor or Human Resources. If your concerns are brushed off, don't hesitate to go to the next level of management.

Combating online bullying

To help young people combat cyberbullying:

Tell them not to get drawn in.

Children should not respond if someone sends a mean or threatening message, or posts something offensive.

Save evidence. A child should not erase bullying messages, posts or pictures. They should be saved as evidence and shared with a trusted adult or authority.

Encourage children to report online threats. If they can identify the bully, consider contacting his/her parents and the school as appropriate.

Reward the reporting. Don't threaten to withdraw phone access or otherwise punish a child who has reported cyberbullying. Instead, praise him or her.

File a complaint. Inappropriate posts may violate the terms and conditions of communications providers and social networking sites. Notify them with copies of the offensive posts.

Sources: Workplace Bullying Institute, National Crime Prevention Council.

