

Can You Recognize a Workplace Bully?



Workplace bullying is a serious problem in many workplaces. But recognizing bullying behaviour or bullies isn't always easy. For example, many people confuse a tough, demanding boss with a bullying tyrant.

The Public Services Health and Safety Association in Ontario has released a very useful [handbook](#) on bullying in the workplace. The handbook defines bullying as repeated, persistent, continuous behaviour. It notes that bullying shouldn't be confused with tough management styles'it's negative and persistent abuse.

Here are some examples of workplace bullying behaviours:

- Social isolation (such as the 'silent treatment')
- Rumours
- Personal attacks on a person's private life and/or personal attributes, such as their appearance
- Excessive or unjustified criticism
- Over-monitoring of work
- Verbal aggression
- Withholding information or job responsibility
- Trivial fault finding
- Replacing proper work with demeaning jobs
- Setting unrealistic goals or deadlines.

Although bullying is usually seen as acts or comments that could 'mentally' hurt or isolate a worker, it can also involve

negative physical contact, such as pushing or throwing objects.

Bullies may also use body language to intimidate. Here are some physical signs to look for:

- **Eyes:** narrowed or very wide. Some people report they can see 'coldness' in the eyes of a hostile person.
- **Eye contact:** little or none. You may notice that bullies maintain eye contact with others but not with you, which is a sign that you're not important to them or that they want to make sure you know you're not important/worthy of notice.
- **Mouth:** a sneer or a cocky smile. A person who values others shows sincerity in their smile.
- **Arms:** crossed over chest. This gesture says, 'I'm closed to anything you have to say.'
- **Body:** turned away from you. A person who's giving you his full attention turns his body toward you.
- **Gestures:** aggressive. Is the bully stabbing the air to make a point, turning away from you before you finish, pointing at you or pounding the desk'

Not sure if you're the victim of a workplace bully' Use this [questionnaire](#) to find out.

And for more information and tools to help you deal with bullying in the workplace, go to the OHS Insider's [Workplace Violence Compliance Centre](#).