

COMMUNICATION TIP | Dealing With Bullies

by Joan Craven | www.joancraven.com

Are you dealing with someone who delights in making your life difficult? Do you 'talk on eggshells' because you never know what might trigger a tirade? Are you happier when you are not around this person?

Welcome to the bully club. Bullies are people who abuse the rights of others in order to control the situation and the individuals involved. The September 07 issue of Maclean's magazine says that bullying is three times more common than sexual harassment and women and men are equally likely to bully.

Why don't companies or boards do anything? Many times these bullies drive up profits and shares so those who could protect workers turn a blind eye. What boards don't consider is the cost to the company in long-term health leaves or staff turnover.

It's important to differentiate between people who are difficult on occasion and bullies who are difficult on purpose. Once you decide that you are dealing with a bully there are some communication tactics to adopt that could help.

First adopt the 'you.' If you use the word 'I' you will come across as whiny and your reaction will become the focus. 'I don't like it when you yell.' The bully says 'get a tough, don't be so wimpy.'

Bullies need to be held accountable so statements like 'you need to speak to me with respect or this conversation is over.' If the verbal badgering continues, walk away. Always follow through on the consequence you lay out.

Use the universal hand 'stop' signal, palm toward the person, and say in a strong voice 'no more!' and then walk away.

Bullies target people pleasers because they can count on you to go along with them. As long as you do everything in your power to win their approval they will continue to pull your strings. Bullies want control.

My son and I were talking about bullies and he wisely said 'Mom you have to teach people how to treat you and if you let them away with put downs and don't hold them accountable, it's your own fault.'

How true. Let the bully know in private what is acceptable, and then hold him or her to it. "In the past I have let you _____. It's my fault I let you do this. From now on when you _____ I will _____. Don't test me on this, I have absolute clarity."

For more practical tips a good resource is the book **Take the Bully By the Horns** by Sam Horn.

Joan Craven offers workshops and seminars on a variety of communication topics including **Take the Bully By the Horns®**.

Joan Craven, communications coach, offers workshops, seminars and one-on-one coaching, and can be reached at joancraven@shaw.ca or (403) 286-7721 or toll free 1-888-376-4386 (US and Canada).
www.joancraven.com