



5 THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT WORKPLACE BULLYING & 5 RESOURCES OFFERED TO HELP

1. What is the comprehensive definition of bullying?

Workplace bullying is a persistent pattern of mistreatment from others, including peers, managers/supervisors and/or boards in the workplace that cause either physical, mental or emotional harm. Workplace bullying can include aggressive tactics such as verbal or physical abuse, or more commonly, passive aggressive nonverbal, psychological abuse, workplace sabotage and/or humiliation. Bullying is not constructive criticism, or single episodes of social aggression, nastiness or spite. (NCAB)

2. Who gets bullied and who does the bullying?

Anyone can bully anyone regardless of age, race, gender identity, job title or type of job.

According to research from the Workplace Bullying Institute in 2017:

- 61% of bullying comes from managers or supervisors. 33% comes from co-workers.
- 6% comes from people at lower employment levels who bully others above them.
- 70% of bullies are male, 30% are female and both male/female bullies are more likely to target women. (Healthline)

3. What environments may breed bullying?

Bullying may occur more frequently in work environments that have unclear policies about employee conduct, no HR department to mitigate issues, have poor communication, heavy workloads, are stressful, change frequently or have employees that are unmotivated or worried about job security.

It is no surprise then that given the high demands, multiple hat wearing and arguably low job security, especially post-COVID-19, museums may be natural breeding grounds for bullying. This is not justification for being complicit with bullying rather grounds for understanding, raising awareness and taking actionable steps towards more humane workspaces if your physical or remote work environment falls into any/ all of these categories.

4. How does bullying affect the workplace?

Bullying affects overall staff morale, trust and loyalty to the workplace and financial loss to the workplace due to decrease in overall productivity and high staff turnover. (Center for Workplace Mental Health)

5. How does bullying affect you and your health?

Psychological effects of bullying may include: worrying about work constantly; worrying about sabotage of your job performance; needing time off to recover from stress and anxiety due to bullying; dreading going to work each day; increased risk for depression and/or suicidal thoughts; low-self-esteem; and self-doubt in wondering if you are imagining or overreacting to the bullying with fear of



retaliation. Physical effects include feeling sick or anxious before/during/after work or when thinking about work; digestive issues, high blood pressure, poor sleep, headaches and/or decreased appetite. (Center for Workplace Mental Health)

RESOURCES OFFERED TO HELP

1. What to do if you're being bullied?

A. Document

Keep a log, in a safe place, that details the date, time, and ways in which you are being bullied. If there is tangible evidence such as threatening notes, overly harsh criticism, menacing emails, text messages and the like, save them.

B. Speak-Up

Understandably easier said than done, but one of the only ways to prevent bullying.

- If you feel comfortable, talk to the bully-Bring a trusted witness and speak calmly and courteously despite feeling upset.
- Report the bullying: If possible, talk about the bullying with your supervisor, or someone higher up than your supervisor if he/she/they is doing the bullying. If the bully happens to be in the highest chain of command, consider reaching out to colleagues at neighboring institutions, trusted mentors and/or resources listed below.

C. Review any/all existing office policies

These may guide you on how you can proceed to file a formal complaint, or may outline action steps or policies against bullying. Review any local state or federal policies about the form of bullying you are experiencing.

2. What are your legal rights?

Unfortunately, to date, neither federal law nor the law of any state prohibits workplace bullying outright in the United States. However, The Healthy Workplace Bill, first introduced in 2001, aims to help prevent/reduce workplace bullying and its negative effects by offering protections to those who experience bullying. (Healthline)

3. What resources exist to help with bullying?

- The Workplace Bullying Institute: <https://workplacebullying.org>
- Crisis Prevention Institute: <https://www.crisisprevention.com/Blog/Workplace-Bullying-Resources-and-References>
- American Psychiatric Association Center for Workplace Mental Health: <http://workplacementalhealth.org/Mental-Health-Topics/Bullying>
- Stop Bullying.gov: <https://www.stopbullying.gov/resources/get-help-now>



4. How can you help if you are a witness of workplace bullying at your museum?

- **Offer support:** This can mean actively listening or accompanying your colleague to a higher-up who can help.
- **Report the incident:** As daunting or intimidating as it may be, your account of what happened could prevent you and others from repeat bullying and could alert museum leadership to realize there's a work culture problem.

5. Who do you reach out to if you do not feel anyone in museum leadership at your museum will take your case seriously?

If the bully is museum leadership, consider reaching out to one of the resources provided above, a trusted partner institution with policies and procedures already in place, or your regional museum organization. A list of regional museum organizations can be found here:

<http://www.museummarket.com/AssocList.htm>

Bibliography

Center for Workplace Mental Health. *Bullying*, <https://workplacementalhealth.org/Mental-Health-Topics/Bullying>.

Healthline. *How to Identify and Manage Workplace Bullying*, <https://www.healthline.com/health/workplace-bullying>.

NCAB. "Definition of Bullying." <https://www.ncab.org.au/bullying-advice/bullying-for-parents/definition-of-bullying/>.

Find GEMM on Facebook! Use #GEMMuseum to talk about GEMM or tag us on Twitter @The_GEMMuseums.

www.genderequitymuseums.com | ©GEMM: Gender Equity in Museums Movement