

Dealing with Bullies

"My school days were the happiest days of my life; which should give you some indication of the misery I've endured over the past twenty-five years."

- Paul Merton

Here are some things that you can do to deal with bullies, in or outside of work:

See their inadequacy: Bullies are often weak, fearful, inadequate individuals who seek to pick on others in order to hide their own failings and insecurity. It helps to realise that this is more about them and their inadequacies than you.



Ignore them: Bullies thrive on the reaction they get, and if you walk away, or ignore hurtful emails or verbal abuse you're telling the bully that you just don't care.

Hold your anger: Bullies want to know they have control over your emotions; don't give them the pleasure! If you can't walk away with poise, use humour, it can throw the bully off guard. Work out your anger in another way (see below).

Be assertive: In your actions, body language and verbal responses; refer to some of the other tools in this series to help you to build your assertion and confidence.

Rehearse your responses: Practice and rehearse ways to respond to the bully verbally and through your behaviour. Practice feeling good about yourself, even if you have to fake it at first; walk tall and hold your head high. Using this type of body language sends a message that you're not vulnerable.

Stand up for yourself: Give open direct feedback to the bully; tell them how their behaviour makes you feel and that you will not tolerate being spoken to or treated in that way. Yes, you can and should do this even if this person is your boss.

Talk to others: Talk to a partner, friend or close colleague - anyone who can give you support; talking can be cathartic. Talk to someone who might have been a former target, particularly if this person has successfully stood up to the bully in the past; what can you learn from them that might help you in dealing with this tyrant?

Take charge of your life: You can't control other people's actions, but you can control your own. Think about ways to feel your best, and strongest, such as exercise which is also a great mood lifter. Joining a class or club is a great way to make new friends and feel great about yourself. The confidence you gain will help you ignore the bully, and put your life into a wider, more positive perspective.

Talk to HR: If all else fails, speak to HR; there are formal channels and procedures to deal with workplace bullies. Remember, you're not alone, if this is a problem for you, it may be for others, and it's a problem for the wider organisation.