

What Can I Do if I Am Being Bullied?

If you or someone you know is being bullied, these tips can help:

- **Put your health before anything else**
 - However strong your personality, no one is immune from mental health problems. Unexpressed anger and fear can lead to depression in "normal" people. If you're reading this in time, take evasive action before it gets that bad.
 - Be aware of and monitor your stress levels. Try not to allow your stress to get so serious that you become bogged down with it, mindful that it is difficult to recognise the extent of the problem yourself. Ask family, friends and doctor to help as appropriate.
 - Avoid having one-to-one meetings with the bully if you have already complained about the bullying.
- **Document everything**
 - Maintain contemporaneous notes of what you said and did, and what others said and did.
 - Keep memos, emails and other documents that are evidential of bullying.
 - Especially if you get bullied in private, consider using a pocket voice recorder (smartphone) to obtain a verbatim transcript.
- **Think and operate strategically**

- Remember there are things in life you can control, things you can influence, and things you cannot do anything about. Ultimately, the only thing you can control is you. Attempting to persuade your employer to act responsibly can be pointless and thus painful, but it is in your interests to try not to fret about it if it does not work. Focus your attention on what you can do and are doing.
- There is a risk that any mistakes you make as a result of being bullied, any sickness absence, and any illness will be used by a bully to discredit you. Most of what a bully throws at you is designed to provoke a response that can be used against you.
- Understand this and avoid responding directly to such provocations;
- Always act reasonably and in doing so, a contrast will emerge between your behaviour and the bully's;
- Accept that this probably is not enough to make it stop;
- Remember that there is more to you than your job, and try not to take it too seriously;
- Remember that once you decide to resist the bullying, you may be in it for the "long haul";
- **Seek but do not depend on support from other managers or trade union.**
 - If they give tell-tale signs that they do not believe you or do not support you, do not keep hoping that they will support you.
 - Seek independent support from neutral third parties.
 - Get some help, but think about the interests and personal agendas of the people you hope to trust;
 - Consider who is or might be facilitating the bullying, and avoid confiding in them.
- **Equip yourself with your employer's policies and procedures, and make sure that YOU follow them, and encourage others to do the same;**
 - Be 100% fair and reasonable, even when standing your ground;
 - Always maintain your dignity and be polite, even in the face of rudeness;
 - If you can, have a trusted companion with you as a witness in any meeting to discuss bullying. If you don't have a companion you can trust, make sure you have an audio recorder;
 - Remember that everything you write, say and do might one day be discussed in a court or tribunal, so make sure your actions are beyond reproach and justifiable. Don't do or say anything that you would not wish to repeat in public;

Notes of formal and semi formal meetings often contain omissions or note-takers' conflicting perceptions of what was said, leading to disputes over the accuracy of the minutes. Eliminate the possibility of such disputes by making audio recordings of meetings about the bullying, even if there is a note taker present. You do not need permission to make accurate notes, and it is very telling when someone who hopes to create a record of the meeting they want, rather than the meeting they had, objects to you making an audio recording. If there are objections, record the meeting one way or another.

Keep any recordings and notes strictly confidential and use them only for legitimate purposes. A covert recording of a confidential meeting could be perceived by an employer as a breach of trust, leading to disciplinary action. A court or tribunal might only consider covert recording as legitimate conduct where the recording discloses a more significant breach of trust by someone else.

- **If you have tried the above and it is not working out, seriously consider changing jobs.**
 - Even though it is unfair that you should have to leave, it is better to do so on your terms, when you choose, with your mental health, disciplinary record and sickness absence record intact, than to stick it out, battling an insuperable force, and being dismissed on some specious misconduct charge after exhausting your entitlement to paid sick leave, suffering from depression.
 - If you are considering leaving, consider your legal options as well - you may have recourse through the legal system **but remember to put your health and well-being before any other consideration.**

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