



Clarity on Bullying is Essential to Positive Change

Research does not tell us that targets of bullying are weak or unskilled. Research does not show us that this is an inability to stand up for oneself. Research does inform us that many targets of bullying are skilled, loyal, dedicated, and hard working.

When addressing workplace bullying we must refer to the consistent message within each definition *world wide*. This is about '**repeated abuse, over a period of time**'. Over time, any form of abuse over time will eventually wear a person down. Especially when their environment does not protect or support them. Many of my clients are for example: teachers, nurses, policemen, psychologists, and social workers. This abuse is 'insidious' and affects all professions.

Too often we hear it said that targets are overly sensitive. Being sensitive is not a negative, in fact, many of us are hired because we are sensitive. This is a skill that allows for empathy, understanding, and creativity. Our clients appreciate these skills. After all those we provide services to are the number one focus. Labelling targets as 'too sensitive' sends the message that this abuse would be otherwise acceptable for those who are not, as they say, 'too sensitive'.

This insensitive label usually comes after the abuse has taken its toll, and the effects and symptoms of bullying become more obvious. For example, a target of bullying may become emotional, fatigued, physically ill, dishevelled, reactive, defensive, and/or forgetful. Similar to spouses or children of domestic violence, or the children of parents with addictions: the family members who are abused often look worse than the abusers. It seems easier to blame the targets.

“Targets of bullying are not too sensitive, perpetrators of bullying are too abusive.”

Linda Crockett

We do see changes occurring and we feel hopeful for future anti-bullying policies and legislation. We have a great deal of work to do. Those of us committed to this movement will continue to work towards that change and to making a difference. No matter where you find yourself as a target, bystander, observer, or curious reader, you can take a step to help create change in this area. We need you. Share what you learn, start discussions that will break the silence enabling this abuse to continue. Join an anti-bullying project or start one. Have someone come to your workplace, schools, or community centre/league, to build awareness, offer tools, and most importantly, hope to those still suffering in isolation.

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