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OD Strategies and Workplace Bullying

Approaches for Prevention, Existing Issues, and Post-Event Understanding

By Debra Orr and
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Workplace bullying costs organizations an estimated $250 million a year in direct expenses related to absenteeism and lost productivity (Bartlett & Bartlett, 2011; Baillien, Neyens, De Witte, & De Cuyper, 2009). Other issues for organizations, beyond the financial, as a result of workplace bullying include: increasing workplace errors (Paice & Smith, 2009), loss of creative potential (MacIntosh, 2005), turnover, retraining and litigation (Grim, 2015; Kivimaki, Elovainio & Vahtera, 2000; Namie, 2007; Ayoko, Callan, & Hartel, 2003; Von Bergen et al., 2006). Poor customer relationships are also prevalent among organizations with higher incidents of workplace bullying (Johnson, 2009; MacIntosh, 2005; Namie, 2003, 2007).

Furthermore, workplace bullying was reported to negatively affect the target's relationship with peers and supervisors (Glaso, Nielsen, & Einarsen, 2009; MacIntosh, 2005), lower teamwork (Baillien et al., 2009; Gardner & Johnson, 2001), reduced morale (Namie, 2003), and decrease organizational commitment (Gardner & Johnson, 2001), all of which have significant implications for the organization's culture.

The harms caused by workplace bullying do not end with the financial issues or the impact on organizational productivity. Many targets of workplace bullying suffer serious health problems as a result of their experiences (Einarsen, 2000). Targets of workplace bullying often have lasting issues with post-traumatic stress disorder, symptoms of low self-esteem, anxiety, sleep disturbance, recurrent nightmares, somatic problems, concentration difficulties, irritability, depression, distress, and feelings of self-hatred (Mikkelsen & Einarsen, 2002; Bjorkvist, Osterman, & Hjelt Back, 1994) as well as shame (Felblinger, 2008) and often require counseling (MacIntosh, 2005). There are even allegations and a resulting lawsuit that severe harassment has resulted in a compromised immune system and accelerated a target's death (Balsamini, 2019).

Despite the widespread nature of workplace bullying and deep harms that this behavior creates, many organizations do not take a proactive stance to manage this workplace issue that affects approximately 65 million workers in the United States (Grim, 2015). Most organizations have a poor response and an inability to handle these negative interpersonal interactions, incivility, and bullying (Hodges, 2014). In fact, as recently as 2017, the literature has not revealed a demonstrated successful pattern for handling workplace bullying (Einarsen, Mykletun, Einsarsen, Skogstad, & Salin, 2017).

Organization Development strategies are appropriate for addressing workplace bullying. OD has a deep history of promoting humanistic values. OD focuses on creating healthy organizational cultures that value learning, open communication and a combination of individual and organizational growth. The ability of OD to work in and between multiple levels within organizations, including the individual, group and organizational levels, make OD well suited to address both individualistic

issues, group problems, and organization-wide dysfunction. OD has four main categories of interventions, each with application to workplace bullying:

» **Human relations interventions** are those which focus on how individuals interact, resolve conflict, and develop emotional intelligence which are key to working with individual issues in workplace bullying situations, (Cummings and Worley, 2015).

» **Human resources interventions** are those which create role clarification, diversity initiatives which specifically address some of the root causes of bullying. Role confusion, diversity issues, and anxiety around change are chief causes of workplace bullying (Cummings and Worley, 2015).

» **Techno-structural interventions** are those which address organizational structure, reporting relationships, and work design. Reporting relationships are a confounding issue in workplace bullying and organizational structural issues contribute to the challenge (Cummings and Worley, 2015).

» **Strategic interventions** are those which address large-scale ways that organizations address problem, such as culture change. Some organizational cultures would not tolerate workplace bullying where in other cultures the practice might be quite common (Cummings and Worley, 2015).

This article provides research-supported Organization Development strategies that can assist in prevention, work toward favorable resolutions of current issues, and address post-event resolution are explored.

Defining Bullying

What is actually meant by bullying? Bullying is different than being impolite or making a one-time joke at someone else's expense. That form of negative interaction would be termed incivility. Incivility is inappropriate behavior that is minor in nature and it is not meant to harm others (Pearson and Porath, 2004). Bartlett and Bartlett (2018) articulate that "workplace bullying is viewed as repeated,
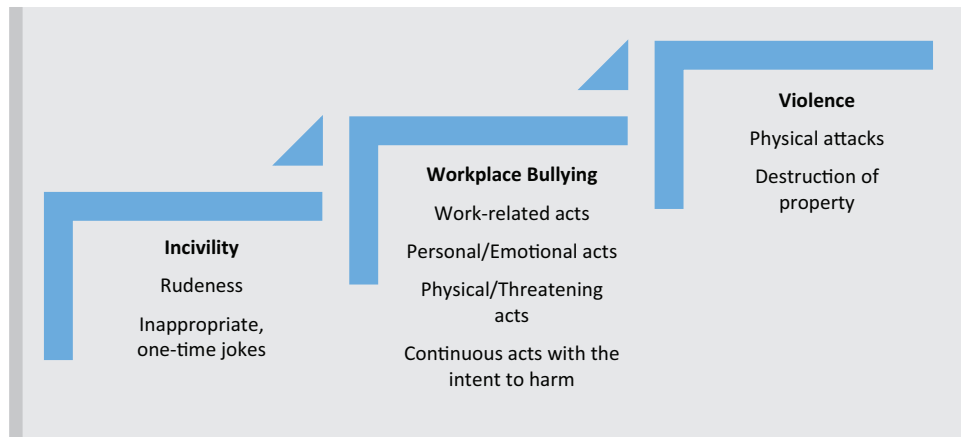

Figure 1. Types of Workplace Bullying

unwelcomed negative act or acts (physical, verbal, or psychological intimidation), that can involve criticism and humiliation, intended to cause fear, distress, or harm to the target from one or more individuals in any source of power with the target of the bullying having difficulties defending himself or herself." (Rodríguez-Muñoz, Mirko Sanz-Vergel, 2017; Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf & Cooper, 2011). In workplace-bullying literature, the bully is referred to as the "instigator" and the person being bullied is called the "target" (Harvey, Treadway, and Heames, 2007).

There is sometimes confusion between what is considered bullying versus what is considered harassment under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Age Discrimination Act of 1967 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the distinguishing feature between harassment and bullying is the status of a protected class and any *quid pro quo* for the continuation of employment. Bullying does not require that the behavior be perpetrated based on a protected status or that there be some form of exchange in order to remain employed, while the legal definition of harassment does.

Namie (2003) created a continuum to classify hostile acts in the workplace. It begins with the idea of incivility progressing to bullying and concludes with violence. Acts of workplace bullying by the instigator tend to be categorized into three main areas: work related acts, personal/emotional acts, and physical or threatening acts.

Work-related acts include creating work goals or amount of work that are unrealistic, relentless criticizing, and conflicting directives.

This email stated the directive to continue the process in question without any revisions. It went on to say that it was irresponsible of me to even question this process and it showed a lack of work ethic.

I knew I had never seen this email. I had never received this email. To say I was in a state of shock would have been an understatement. But it gets worse. Next a piece of paper was placed in front of me and I was told to sign the document. It was an official write up which would be filed with the Human Resource department and placed in my personnel file. At this point I had been employed with this institution for 15 years, working in a different department for a different VP. I had never been written up and had "exceeds expectations" on all employee reviews.

The next day I asked two high-level members of our IT department to look at this supposed email directive. Each person pointed out several ways they could tell this was not an actual email sent to me. It was forged, a fake, a copy of a document he created and did a cut and paste to make it look like an authentic email.

Personal and emotional acts include name calling of an individual target and being excluded from group activities, conversations, and decisions.

They would corner me at the copier, calling me a snitch. (They would) walk past my classroom when I was teaching and yell, "I smell a rat!" They would throw trash in my classroom after school. When I asked my principal to do something since my classroom was between

theirs, she just said she could move my classroom.

Physical and threatening physical acts of violence, attempting to physically hurt another person by inducing illness and destruction of property in a manner that denotes a threat.

She invited herself over to my home for a glass of wine since we had a "seminar" out that way. When I poured the wine I went into my kitchen and saw what horrified me in the reflection of my china cabinet. She took a sip of her wine and spit it back into her glass and then POURED HER GLASS INTO MINE! (emphasis from the research participant) I had known via our office that she had mono, so now apparently she was looking to spread it to me to get rid of me at the office. I poured my wine out in front of her.

Stats on Prevalence

There are numerous statistics which detail the extent and impact of workplace bullying. *Table 1* summarizes this data.

Less than 20% of organizations take steps to stop workplace bullying tending instead to rationalize, minimize, or deny it is occurring (Namie, 2014). Bystanders to the bullying tend to mitigate the issue to a somewhat greater degree than the formal organization does with roughly 38% of bystanders aiding the target privately or publicly, while another 38% of bystanders do nothing (Namie, 2014). According to Gardner and Johnson (2001) wrongful discharge lawsuits are a legal issue of workplace bullying for organizations to consider when addressing this issue.

Outcomes to individuals are viewed in terms of impacting work, health (physical and emotional), and affective domains such as motivation. Negative organizational impacts of workplace bullying are classified in terms of cost, productivity, reputation, legal issues, and organizational culture." One target explained, *"It became okay to be mean. No one wanted to intervene; they were scared. The whole team was bullied. He was being protected by someone higher in the organization. It was the middle of the recession*

Table 1: *Summary of Statistics on Workplace Bullying (Namie, 2014)*

Number of employed people who have been or currently are bullied	27%	37 million people
Number of people affected by workplace bullying (as a target or bystander)		65.6 million people
Gender breakdown of instigators	69% male	31% female
Gender breakdown of targets	Male instigators select female targets 57% of the time and male targets 45% of the time.	Female instigators select female targets 68% of the time and male targets 32% of the time.
Most common outcomes of workplace bullying	82% of the time the target loses his/her job.	18% of the time the instigator loses his/her job.
Role of the instigator versus the role of the target	56% of workplace bullying instigators are the boss of the target.	44% of instigators are not the boss of the target.

and I quit without another job." This target's experience is underscored by Gardner & Johnson's 2001 study that "when those at the top adopt bullying tactics, they send a green light to everyone else in the organization to behave likewise," (p. 23). This underscores how an organization's culture can become toxic through a workplace bullying incidents.

Potential Solutions

Successful mechanisms to address workplace bullying have been difficult to identify due to the nature of the issue, the unlikelihood that it will be formally addressed, as well as the opportunity for researchers to fully engage this sensitive question. Evidence for research-supported approaches are difficult to find (Gillen, et al, 2017). This section creates an initial research-supported guide, gathered from the peer-reviewed literature, which identifies for OD practitioners interventions that are appropriate to address the issues of workplace bullying. Strategies are presented for organizational level interventions, target-based interventions, instigator-based interventions, and bystander-based interventions.

Organizational Level Interventions
Strategies for prevention of workplace bullying are most effective at the

organizational level of intervention (Gillen, et al, 2017). There are several situations that are especially ripe for the development of workplace bullying. Bullying is more likely to happen if there is an implicit approval granted by the organization's culture. Negative behaviors spiral into bullying and a toxic organizational culture develops because of leadership's unwillingness to address the issue (Harvey, Treadway, and Heames, 2007; Brodsky, 1976). Culture is evidence of an organization's decision-making and its values structure. Cultures evolve as a result of leadership and how the organization's values are animated. Organizations that experience widespread bullying should look at culture, leadership, and values as a way to understand the source of the behavior, assessing whether the organization's values and leadership encourage a culture of feedback and standing up for oneself.

Poor conflict management skills have been cited as a cause of workplace bullying (Baillien, Neyens, De Witte, & De Cuyper, 2009; Einarsen, 1999; Vartia, 1996; Zapf & Gross, 2001). It stands to reason then that augmenting the skills of managers and co-workers in this area can help to address workplace bullying frequency, severity, and repercussions.

Other organizational level variables that contribute to bullying include growing

diversity, increasing geographic dispersion, inexperienced managers, those situations where role clarity is lacking, and when the organization is undergoing significant change or consolidation are prime openings for instigators to begin bullying (Harvey, Treadway and Heames, 2007). Addressing these scenarios as a preventative strategy yields the strongest results. As OD practitioners, it is especially important

explaining this policy. However, only 6% of employers in the United States have such a policy and enforce it despite it being one of the most successful mechanisms to address workplace bullying (Namie, 2014). Updating an organization's harassment policy to include bullying can be a first step.

Creating appropriate on-boarding processes where organizational policies rele-

leaders need to let go of their way of doing the tasks and allow their team to develop its own norms. New managers may bully their team into conducting work as they did prior to promotion. This is why appropriate supervisory professional development is helpful in preventing this dynamic. Further, organizations that create training opportunities for, and use, an authentic leadership model have a greater chance of reducing incivility and enhancing trust (Read & Spence Laschinger, 2015). Embedding an authentic leadership model in soft skill courses offered to individual contributor and all levels of leadership reinforces the organization's culture.

.. . . it is reasonable to assume that some new supervisory employees use their promotion as an opportunity to exercise their power in ways to belittle and control others. Attending a course targeted at employees transitioning into leadership for the first time can help re-frame their mindset into that of a leader, moving from doing the task to managing the person. New leaders need to let go of their way of doing the tasks and allow their team to develop its own norms. New managers may bully their team into conducting work as they did prior to promotion.

that we be aware that stressful situations such as those listed above can produce negative behaviors in individuals.

In this example, the Instigators viewed the "reporting" teacher as monitoring their work and behavior which was very threatening and creating an issue of role clarity.

In May of 2006, while teaching 4th grade, I witnessed two of my team members bullying several other teachers. They were purposely and maliciously trying to get them in trouble and/or keep them off-balance with their antics. I couldn't stand it anymore. I went to speak to my principal in a closed-door meeting. Apparently, one of them was outside (the principal's) door listening to my conversation. (The instigator) started knocking on the door. When my principal didn't answer, she walked right in screaming at me. From that moment on, I was the new target.

Organizations looking to address workplace bullying should develop a policy prohibiting it, creating mechanisms for grievance should it occur, and thoroughly

vant to civility can be clearly discussed with new employees, addressing both what to do if an individual should become a target or if he or she should witness workplace bullying (Klein & Polin, 2012).

Supervisory transitions and the addition of new employees are also likely situations for the developing of workplace bullying. Implementing leadership courses targeted at employees who are currently a manager of others or transitioning to the next organizational level of leadership, can introduce soft skills needed to assimilate new members to the team. Additionally, providing a mentor or preceptor to a new employee can help reveal unspoken organizational culture issues and may help avoid vulnerable new employees becoming targets. Further, it is reasonable to assume that some new supervisory employees use their promotion as an opportunity to exercise their power in ways to belittle and control others. Attending a course targeted at employees transitioning into leadership for the first time can help re-frame their mindset into that of a leader, moving from doing the task to managing the person. New

Civility, Respect and Engagement in the Workplace (CREW) interventions launched through Department of Veteran's Affairs (VA) in the United States transformed the culture enough to produce a small, quantifiable increase in civility. CREW interventions are not consistent between sites of the VA, but typically involve trained facilitators working with groups of individuals while encouraging communication, assisting with problem solving, and creating an environment for mutual respect (Gillen, Sinclair, Kernohan, Begley & Luvben, 2017).

One study has indicated (Balducci, Cecchin and Fraccaroli, 2012) that one of the primary reasons that an instigator chooses a target in the workplace is a misunderstanding of roles. While there is no research that directly supports role clarification exercises as the most effective interventions in workplace bullying situations, the nature of the intervention directly addresses the stated problem. It may be wise to conduct a role clarification exercise with the parties in separate rooms or at staggered times. Instigators should be subject to disciplinary action should any organizational policies be broken, including transfer to a new unit or separation from the organization.

Another study by Baillien, Griep, Vander Elst & De Witte (2018) shows that the pressure of organizational change may trigger bullying episodes by creating added pressure or breaching a psychological contract with the instigator. Mounting stress about job security, expectations of the

organization, or the disruption of change can trigger an individual to lash out at others and workplace bullying can readily develop out of these pressure-cooker atmospheres. Developing an intervention that addresses how to navigate oneself through change can mitigate the stress associated with the disruption of change, potentially alleviating the pressure associated with the stress and anxiety of organization change.

Lastly, in assessing leadership at the organizational level may result in the need to implement the use of an authentic leadership style that can help prevent bullying (Laschinger, Wong, & Grau, 2012; Read and Laschinger, 2015).

Third-Party Intervention/Conflict resolution interventions for reconciliation with target and OD practitioner. This step should only be undertaken if the target desires. If the instigator has been separated from the company, there may be lingering resentment against management, bystanders or departments, such as Human Resources, which the target may believe should have intervened.

Provide a safe way of raising concerns and gaining support and include process for doing so in stated policies. Encourage employees to address the issue directly if comfortable to do so. Employees may speak with their manager, Human Resources, or employers can provide a confidential phone number by which an employee can file a complaint.

A culture of zero tolerance is needed, i.e., challenging bullying behavior must become everyone's responsibility, not just that of the target (Paice and Smith, 2009). Employers can include expectations within policies regarding what bystander intervention actions and steps to take in order to mitigate a bullying situation (Klein & Polin, 2012).

Conduct a post-event assessment to determine what can be learned and incorporated into subsequent action and policies. This assessment may uncover that the instigator was enabled by the culture of the department in which they worked, which may warrant further investigation of the department's leadership team. Often these investigations may reveal the need to upskill the leader, provide feedback on the

Table 2. *Organizational Level Interventions*

	Prevention	In-Process	Post-Event
Organizational Level Interventions	Develop a policy statement about workplace bullying, including "speak up". Create a formal mentorship program to help orient new employees to the organizational norms. Create a formal supervisory professional development program to explain appropriate uses of supervisory control, including the use of authentic leadership practices. Prepare for the potential of workplace bullying episodes during organizational change processes. CREW Supporting the use of Authentic Leadership Practices, the growth of Emotional intelligence and the development of interpersonal skills. Augment the conflict management skills of employees through a robust training program.	Conducing a role clarification exercise with the target and the instigator. Third-Party Intervention/ Conflict resolution. Supporting the use of Authentic Leadership Practices.	Conduct a post event assessment to determine what can be learned and incorporated into subsequent action and policies. Third party intervention for reconciliation with target and instigator. Conduct a cultural analysis to determine what factors in the culture allowed bullying to occur. Investigate the values of the organization to understand if or how they are enacted. Determine how leadership style may have influenced the events associated with workplace bullying.

Table 3. *Target Level Interventions*

	Prevention	In-Process	Post-Event
Target Level Interventions	Explain bullying policy during onboarding which provides resources and appropriate steps to manage the issue. Assign mentors to acclimate new hires to the organization and provide a sense of psychological safety.	Conducing a role clarification exercise with the instigator and OD. Third-Party Intervention/ Conflict resolution. Create dyads of support for the target and non-involved bystanders. Augment the target's conflict management skills through a robust training program.	Consideration of affective/ emotional issues and how these issues may affect emotional well-being, continuing motivation and retention. Third party intervention for reconciliation with target and OD practitioner.

leader's style, the culture they are enabling within the team which allowed workplace bullying to occur.

Target Level Interventions

Target-level knowledge of what the organizational policies are, as well as the kinds of remediation available to managers and targets, can work toward reducing the perpetration of workplace bullying. By ensuring that all employees have an idea of what the policies and procedures are relevant to workplace bullying and managing a problem such as this one (Klein & Polin, 2012). Implementing an annual refresh intervention can reinforce not only the policies but also the remediation available.

Providing an experienced mentor to a new hire can help that individual become more aware of the organizational culture and thus less likely to become a target of workplace bullying. In addition to having multiple organizational benefits for development, assigning new hires a mentor can help insulate them from workplace incivility and increase retention (Frederick, 2014).

Consideration of affective/emotional issues that have impacted the target throughout the bullying and how these issues may affect emotional well-being and continuing motivation for workplace goals. In addition, the target may have residual anger toward those in a position to have stopped or addressed the bullying situation but did not do so. Addressing these unresolved issues might involve reconciliation activities (McCoullough, Pedersen, Tabak & Carter, 2014).

As many bullying issues are predicated on a misunderstanding of roles, conducting a separated role clarification exercise with the target, instigator, and OD may help create some clearer boundaries and delineate what each individual is responsible to do (Balducci, Cecchin and Fraccaroli, 2012). This could take the form of a formal role clarification exercise or even a third-party intervention or conflict resolution exercise. Since 56% of instigators are potentially the boss of the target, assessing their skill level may reveal the reason for the misunderstanding.

Table 4. *Instigator Level Interventions*

	Prevention	In-Process	Post-Event
Instigator Level Interventions	Explain bullying policy during onboarding. Delineate expectations for supervisory behavior at on-boarding or at promotion, promote strong interpersonal skill development through the use of a leadership training program.	Conducing a role clarification exercise with the target and OD. Third-party intervention/ conflict resolution. Expressive writing. Disciplinary action. Provide multiple sources of feedback so the instigator may be able to recognize his/her behavior as bullying and provide coaching as necessary. Remove the instigator from positions of control over the target and resources. Augment the instigator's conflict management skills through a robust training program.	Consideration of triggers for future episodes. Consider a unit transfer for the instigator. Consider separation for the instigator. Third party intervention for reconciliation with OD practitioner and instigator. Consider engaging in self-awareness raising activities to better identify triggers for bullying behavior.

Instigator Level

Strategies for managing bullying while it is in process requires tremendous tact. While some bullying is based on a confusion about roles, some about stress regarding organizational change, and still others is about power and control.

Ensure that the bullying policy is explained during the on-boarding period so that the expectations are set up front about how to treat one another in the workplace (Klein & Polin, 2012).

Create expectations for how supervisors and coworkers should treat one another and promote the practice of authentic leadership. Authentic Leadership focuses on:

» **Self Awareness:** To what degree is the leader aware of his or her strengths, limitations, how others see him or her, and how the leader impacts others?
» **Transparency:** To what degree does the leader reinforce a level of openness with others that provides them with an opportunity to be forthcoming with their ideas, challenges, and opinions?
» **Ethical/Moral:** To what degree does the leader set a high standard for moral and ethical conduct?

» **Balanced Processing:** To what degree does the leader solicit sufficient opinions and viewpoints prior to making important decisions?

There are individual development assessments, such as the Leadership Practices Inventory Emotional Intelligence frameworks and Authentic Leadership approaches can help individuals to develop their softer interpersonal skills and thus prevent bullying (Meirs, 2018; Spence Laschinger & Fida, 2014; Bowles & Bowles, 2000). However, the suggestion that perpetrators simply need training on emotional self-regulation is viewed with well-deserved skepticism by several researchers (Jensen & Raver, 2018). They imply that an individual who is engaging in bullying behaviors is unlikely to change them in response to a training seminar (Cortina, Rabelo, and Holland, 2018; Jensen and Raver, 2018).

In many workplace bullying situations, the instigator uses the balance of power or resources to control the target (Bartlett and Bartlett, 2017). Encourage the idea of standing up for oneself and others through use of a feedback model as well as removing the instigator from positions of control

over the target (Paice and Smith, 2009). Removing the instigator could take the form of a unit transfer or separation for the instigator for violation the policies surrounding bullying.

A successful intervention for instigators of bullying has been noted as expressive writing. However, there was not a reciprocal benefit for the target of bullying using expressive writing (Gillen, et al, 2017). Expressive writing is a daily commitment to write about your emotional state and feelings without the writer concerning his or herself with proper format, punctuation, and usage. The purpose is simply to express an inner emotional state. Interestingly, while expressive writing, which focuses on the expression of inner emotional states, has produced some reduction in instigators perpetrating bullying, cognitive behavioral interventions have not produced similar results (Gillen, et al, 2017). While not directly an OD intervention, expressive writing seems to help with self-regulation within the construct of emotional intelligence and thus is a recommendation that builds emotional intelligence and thus reduces workplace bullying.

Paice and Smith (2009) recommend that multiple sources of feedback be given to the instigator to help him/her recognize their behaviors as bullying and then receive coaching for modifying their behavior. Having multiple sources for behavioral feedback increases its perceived validity and may drive motivation for change.

As this article addresses post-event reconciliation, it should be noted that reconciliation does not mean encouraging contact, re-connection, or a relationship between the instigator and target. Reconciliation, in its broadest sense is about creating a sense of acknowledgement, validation, justice, and fairness so that both parties may move forward in a positive direction (McCollough, Pedersen, Tabak & Carter, 2014). though, very likely, quite separately.

Further, in an effort for an instigator to understand his/her environmental triggers around bullying behavior it might be wise for him/her to engage in some level of introspection and self-awareness activities. This could include expressive writing

Table 5. *Bystander Level Interventions*

Bystander Level Interventions	Prevention	In-Process	Post-Event
	Explain bullying policy during onboarding. Encourage individuals to speak up should they see inappropriate conduct.	Offer the target support in group settings. Through organizational policies, empower bystanders to speak up in situations where there is injustice. Provide pre-prepared responses to bullying episodes that bystanders may witness. A.R.T. Create dyads of support with the target and non-involved bystanders.	Congratulate bystanders who stood up to an instigator.

as discussed or other self-awareness raising types of activities.

Bystander Level Interventions
Bystanders who witness bullying episodes can be encouraged to intervene with comments such as, "I don't believe that is appropriate," as a mechanism to diffuse and re-direct the instigator (McNamara, 2012). Paice and Smith (2009) encourage bystanders to challenge bullying behavior as a part of a zero-tolerance culture. Implementing expectations regarding the regular use of feedback, and the need for employees to speak up can support.

A.R.T., while created as an Anti-racism Response Training Program, has much potential to address workplace bullying behaviors as well as other anti-social behaviors like racist behavior. A.R.T. is a mechanism to heighten people's awareness, behavioral awareness of others, and ethical commitment (Ishiyama, 2000). The A.R.T. approach uses a skills-training format to enhance readiness to respond to anti-social, racist situations cognitively and behaviorally and to empower otherwise passive bystanders to become more active and vocal. This approach is readily adaptable to workplace bullying. A.R.T. has four stages of witnessing:
» dis-witnessing, characterized by denial and avoidance

» passive witnessing, characterized by silently acknowledging that what is happening is wrong, but no outward stance is taken
» active witnessing, and expressing non-support and objections to the instigator and demonstrates support for the target
» ethical witnessing with social action, characterized by moving beyond the immediate issues that were witnessed and action is focused toward the larger organizational or institutional problem at hand.

Encourage bystanders to actively witness bullying behavior that they see in others. According to California Department of Fair Employment and Housing, an employer may also provide bystander intervention training that includes information and practical guidance on how to enable bystanders to recognize potentially problematic behaviors and to motivate bystanders to take action when they observe problematic behaviors such as workplace bullying, but can also extend to other sorts of negative interactions, such as harassment and racial issues. The training and education may include exercises to provide bystanders with the skills and confidence to intervene as appropriate and to provide bystanders with resources they can call upon that support their intervention.

Finally, offer congratulations and recognition to bystanders who stood up to an instigator

Workplace bullying, is a complex and intractable issue, however it can be mitigated by using some of the tactics presented in this article. While not exhaustive and further research needs to be done on specific interventions to address workplace bullying, this article represents one of the first compilations of OD research-supported approaches to managing this all-too-frequent problem.

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