SPEAK UP:
HOW TO TELL YOUR STORY IF YOU ARE A TARGET OF BULLYING

The strategies suggested here are adapted from *How to Bust the Office Bully: Eight Tactics for Explaining Workplace Abuse to Decision Makers*, by Dr. Sarah J. Tracey, Dr. Jess K. Alberts, and Kendra Dyanne Rivera.

1. **BE RATIONAL**
   - Tell the story in a linear fashion (beginning – middle – end).
   - Write out the story before meeting with your supervisor.
   - Identify 3-5 critical incidents to share.
   - Practice telling the story to someone you trust.
   - Make an outline and bring it to the meeting with your supervisor.

2. **EXPRESS EMOTIONS APPROPRIATELY**
   - Create a vivid verbal image of the abuse, but avoid becoming distraught or emotionally out of control.
   - To help manage your emotions, envision that the abuse happened to someone else and you are describing what occurred.
   - Practice telling the story multiple times using a calm voice and confident body language.
   - While telling the story, if necessary, pause and take several deep breaths to regain your composure.
3. PROVIDE CONSISTENT DETAILS
   - To the extent possible, document the details of the abuse as it occurs.
   - If you have not kept a log, sit down with a calendar and piece together your memories with as much detail of each incident as possible.
   - If co-workers witnessed the incident, utilize their memories of what occurred.
   - To help ensure consistency, write down when and what you reported to supervisors and refer back to this when making future reports.

4. OFFER A PLAUSIBLE STORY
   - Reference published reports and research that verify the reality of workplace bullying (see Resources for more information).
   - Keep your stories as clear and simple as possible.
   - Don’t dwell on the more outrageous incidents that others may easily disbelieve.

5. BE RELEVANT
   - Do not include extraneous or exaggerated details or events.
   - Focus on the bully’s behaviors and actions that were inappropriate.
   - Discuss your situation with other abused employees first and provide a “united front” to your supervisor.
   - Encourage your supervisor to talk with other employees who have been targets of the bully.
6. **EMPHASIZE YOUR OWN COMPETENCE**
   - Highlight your career successes and your performance reviews.
   - Discuss your own efforts to stop the abuse by the bully.
   - Explain how workplace performance is negatively impacted by the bully’s behavior.
   - Do not agree with the bully’s negative characterizations.

7. **SHOW CONSIDERATION FOR OTHERS’ PERSPECTIVES**
   - Indicate that you realize that the events you are reporting may be hard to believe.
   - Acknowledge that the bully may not realize the impact his/her actions have on you and others in the department.
   - Explain the negative effects of the bullying on others and the work of the department.

8. **BE SPECIFIC**
   - Use specific, concrete language.
   - Identify the bully and explain his/her problematic behavior.
   - Offer specific dates, locations, times, and people.
   - Ask if the listener has questions or needs clarification.