

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.