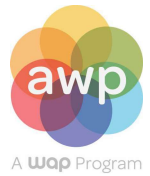


Balanced Living

March 2024



Bullying in the Workplace

Often when people hear the word "bullying," they think of children on the playground or high schoolers getting teased by their classmates. You might think that as people get older, rates of bullying decline due to developing brains and emotions. However, this is not the case.

The prevalence of workplace bullying is significant. According to a 2017 national survey by the Workplace Bullying Institute, about 20% of U.S. workers have experienced bullying in the workplace and over 60 million workers have been affected by bullying.

Workplace Bullying Defined

Workplace bullying is defined by aggressive behavior with the intent to intimidate, humiliate, sabotage, or degrade. It involves deliberate, hurtful, and repeated mistreatment of employees fueled by a desire to control.

Bullying behavior can exist at any level of an organization; bullies can be, and often are, managers or supervisors, as well as coworkers.

Identifying a Bully

It's important to be aware of the signs of bullying in order to identify when it is occurring.

Bullying can take many forms: covert and subtle or blatant and obvious. Many signs of workplace bullying are subtle, such as the person who always takes credit for work that others clearly contributed to or someone who often critiques another's work with the intent of negatively affecting their reputation.

Examples of bullying:

- Being shouted at or humiliated
- Unwarranted or invalid criticism
- Being the target of practical jokes
- Being excluded or socially isolated
- Verbal intimidation (name calling, teasing, gossiping)
- Excessive scrutiny or micro-management
- Purposely withholding information or necessary resources
- Cyber bullying (via text, email, social media)

It's equally important to be aware of what bullying is not. There will always be healthy conflict in any workplace—colleagues with diverse backgrounds and personalities should be able to work together in a mutually respectful manner while speaking openly about matters, asking difficult questions, and challenging ideas.

Bullying is not:

- Expressing differences of opinion
- Offering constructive feedback
- Making a legitimate complaint about another worker's conduct
- Reasonable management action, including decisions about job duties or discipline

Common Characteristics of Bullies and Their Targets

Bullies seek out people who are vulnerable and unlikely to confront or report them. Bullies typically have dominant personalities and are quick tempered and opinionated. Bullies are often insecure themselves, and bullying helps them create the impression they are in control.

On the other hand, their targets tend to be compliant in relationships—wanting to be a people pleaser—and are often shy, quiet, and non-confrontational. Victims are often seen as competition by the bully due to their competence. They might also be new to the workplace.

The Effects of Bullying

When organizations ignore workplace bullying behavior, it can cost the business significantly due to:

- Loss of productivity
- Increased absenteeism due to manifestation of illness
- Increased accidents on the job and healthcare payouts
- High rate of employee turnover

Steps to Stop Workplace Bullying

When a person is being bullied in the workplace, they often experience disbelief and shame, making it difficult for them to report the behavior. Often when the target does report it, the employer is in denial and makes excuses, which enables the behavior. In the majority of bullying cases, the bullying only stops when the target quits, is fired, or is forced to leave.

Employers lead by example and should:

- Know what constitutes bullying behavior
- Focus on job performance and ensure feedback is constructive
- Promote a positive workplace culture
- Establish an anti-bullying zero tolerance policy
- Establish processes for reporting, investigating, and resolving complaints

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Try 'Microbreaks' for a Real Workday Boost

If you're feeling tired at work, a "microbreak" could help restore your pep, a new study claims.

Microbreaks are short, unplanned timeouts that include activities such as having a snack, chatting with a workmate, stretching or doing a crossword puzzle, the researchers explained.

"A microbreak is, by definition, short," said study co-author Sophia Cho, an assistant professor of psychology at North Carolina State University.

"But a five-minute break can be golden if you take it at the right time," she said in a university news release. "Our study shows that it is in a company's best interest to give employees autonomy in terms of taking microbreaks when they are needed -- it helps employees effectively manage their energy and engage in their work throughout the day."

Cho and her colleagues found that microbreaks appear to help tired employees bounce back from morning fatigue and work better over the course of the day.

The findings are based on two papers that included hundreds of employees in the United States and South Korea and examined how they increased or maintained their energy levels on the job when they began the workday exhausted.

On days that employees were already fatigued when they started work, they tended to take microbreaks more frequently. Taking microbreaks helped them maintain their energy level, which improved their productivity, the researchers said.

"Basically, microbreaks help you manage your energy resources over the course of the day -- and that's particularly beneficial on days when you're tired," Cho said.

The researchers also found that workers were more likely to take microbreaks if they felt their employer cared about the health and well-being of employees.

"When people think their employer cares about their health, they feel more empowered to freely make decisions about when to take microbreaks and what type of microbreaks to take," Cho said. "And that is ultimately good for both the employer and the employee."

The study was published recently in the *Journal of Applied Psychology*.

More information

The U.S. Department of Labor has more on [breaks and meals](#).

SOURCE: North Carolina State University, news release, March 16, 2021

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Deep Cleaning Your Life

Every so often a deep cleaning may be warranted and can improve not only your physical living space, but your mental space as well. A cluttered, messy physical space can contribute to anxiety, stress, and an overall feeling of disarray. Here are some tips to help you through the process of cleaning your environment for a clear head.

Donate Items You No Longer Use

Items you don't use contribute to clutter and collect dust, but they could be useful to someone else. If you no longer need or use something, it's time to pass it on. Drop off the items in the box to a local charity or thrift store once a month or whenever a box gets full. Decluttering your physical space not only makes it easier to keep the space clean, but you'll also notice the positive impact the process can have on your mental state as well.

Clean Out Your Closet on a Regular Basis

At least once or twice a year, go through your closet and donate any clothes you haven't worn in a while. This frees up space and creates less indecision about what to wear. After a proper clean out, you might notice clothing items you had forgotten about or find that you have more storage space for items that you'd rather tuck out of sight.

Develop a Cleaning Routine

Keep track of household chores that need to be done on a regular basis, such as dishes, laundry, vacuuming, mopping, and dusting. Develop a daily, weekly, monthly, and even yearly routine. Assign jobs to roommates or family members so everyone pitches in. Prioritize what needs to get done, such as doing the dishes and a load of laundry.

Clean Up Your Emotional Space

Once you've tidied up your physical space, evaluate the state of your emotional space as well. If you tend to hyperfocus or dwell on the negative in situations, reorient yourself to be grateful for the good things in your life. Both meditation and exercise are effective tools to help clear your mind and make room for more positive mental energy.

Don't let your mind become like a browser with too many tabs open. By prioritizing, learning to let things go, and realizing you can only control so much, you can lighten your mental load and enjoy each day more thoroughly.

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Webinar Now Available:

Bullying: Awareness and Effective Response

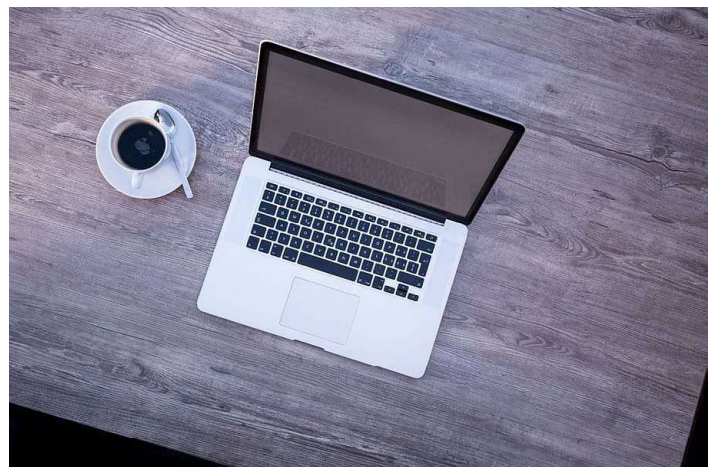
This training will cover three key areas: Bring awareness of bullying in both the workplace and schools through identifying the signs and behavior; discuss the negative impact and effects; introduce strategies & steps to combat and prevent bullying. We will discuss: the characteristics of bullies, typical characteristics of targets, characteristics and responsibilities of bystanders, recognizing the signs of a child who has been bullied, kinds and motivations of bullying, and how to prevent bullying.

[Log-in](#) any time this month to watch the webinar!

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The Wellness News

Tips and resources for living well

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Multiple Sclerosis Education Month

Every year, Multiple Sclerosis (MS) Education Month serves as a beacon of hope, shedding light on a condition that affects millions worldwide. This month-long observance is not just about spreading awareness; it's about empowering individuals, fostering community support, and advancing research in the fight against MS.

What is Multiple Sclerosis?

Multiple Sclerosis is a chronic neurological disorder where the immune system mistakenly attacks the protective sheath (myelin) that covers nerve fibers, causing communication problems between the brain and the rest of the body. Symptoms vary widely and can include fatigue, mobility issues, vision problems, and cognitive challenges. The cause of MS is not fully understood, and there is currently no cure, making education and research crucial.

The Goals of MS Education Month

The primary goal of MS Education Month is to educate the public about the realities of living with MS. It's a time to dispel myths, share accurate information, and highlight the latest advancements in treatment and management. This observance also aims to amplify the voices of those affected by MS, allowing them to share their stories and experiences.

MS Education Month is critical in supporting ongoing research. It encourages fundraising for new studies and treatments, which could lead to breakthroughs in managing the disease. Advocacy is another key aspect, as it pushes for policy changes to improve the quality of life for those with MS, such as access to healthcare and disability services.

Building a Community of Support

One of the most profound impacts of this month is the sense of community it fosters. By bringing together patients, families, healthcare professionals, and advocates, MS Education Month creates a support network. This community not only shares in the challenges but also in the triumphs and advancements in MS care.

Multiple Sclerosis Education Month is a vital time for increasing awareness, supporting research, and building a supportive community. Its significance extends far beyond the month itself, as it continues to impact the lives of those with MS and the broader society. Through education and advocacy, we can all play a part in making a positive difference in the lives of individuals affected by this complex condition.

Source: <https://mymsaa.org/ms-information/overview/>



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Training for Longevity

Who doesn't want to live longer and enjoy a great quality of life along the way?

While many factors affect one's life expectancy and quality of life, exercise is something that you can control. Research shows that physical activity can increase life expectancy by reducing disease risks and improving overall health.

According to the NIH, the optimal amount of exercise remains unknown and probably differs among individuals. Current studies suggest that 2.5 to 5 hours/week of moderate or vigorous physical activity will confer maximal benefits.

The recommended amount is 150 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise each week, which can add about seven years to your life. Harvard University researchers recently noted that as little as 15 minutes of physical activity daily can boost your life span by three years.

While all types of exercise are important, including cardio, muscle conditioning, stretching, and balance exercise, Dr. Robert Schreiber, physician-in-chief at Hebrew Senior Life and an instructor in medicine at Harvard Medical School, states that "Unless you are doing strength training, you will become weaker and less functional." Research suggests that about 30-60 minutes of resistance training per week is associated with the most significant risk reduction for all-cause mortality.

Flexibility and mobility are also both important in ensuring proper movement and balance later in life. Both are important to prevent falls as we get older, which helps maintain independence and quality of life. So be sure to include stretching and balance exercises in your regular routine.

The good news is that it is never too late to begin. Start reducing sitting time and moving more throughout the day. Then add intentional exercise starting with 30 minutes and building slowly to 45 minutes, then to an hour. Before beginning any exercise program, it is important to discuss it with your doctor.

Source: <https://www.thenationshealth.org/content/48/7/16>

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What is Anti-Aging? ... And Why This Message Can Be Harmful

The term "anti-aging" has become ubiquitous in the beauty and wellness industries, referring to the myriad of products, treatments, and regimens designed to delay or diminish the signs of aging. However, the language and ideology surrounding "anti-aging" are not merely about maintaining a youthful appearance but are deeply entrenched in societal standards that often value youth over experience and wisdom.

Critics argue that the relentless focus on anti-aging can perpetuate ageism, setting unrealistic expectations about what it means to age gracefully. It suggests a need to "combat" or "fight" aging, as if it's a condition to be cured rather than a natural, inevitable process. This not only affects self-esteem and body image but also overlooks the beauty and dignity of growing older.

Moreover, the anti-aging narrative predominantly targets women, reinforcing gendered notions of beauty and worth. It pressures individuals to spend significant amounts of money and time on products and procedures, many of which offer questionable results.

Shifting the conversation from anti-aging to aging well or embracing "pro-aging" can foster a healthier, more inclusive approach. This perspective encourages taking care of oneself at any age, focusing on overall wellbeing, vitality, and embracing the natural physical changes that come with time.

Educational resources, like Well+Good's discussion on the changing tides of anti-aging language, are instrumental in understanding and redefining personal perceptions of aging. They advocate for a language shift that celebrates aging as a privilege and an opportunity for continued growth and self-discovery.

In embracing a positive aging mindset, society can move towards a more supportive and empowering view of growing older, recognizing the beauty in every stage of life. This shift not only benefits individual wellbeing but also challenges the deep-seated cultural narratives that equate aging with decline.

Source: <https://www.wellandgood.com/anti-aging-language/>





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One-Pan Chicken & Asparagus Bake

Ingredients

- 2 8-ounce boneless, skinless chicken breasts
- 12 ounces baby Yukon Gold potatoes
- 8 ounces carrots, sliced into 1-inch pieces
- 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, divided
- 2 teaspoons ground coriander, divided
- $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon salt, divided
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon ground pepper, divided
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- 2 tablespoons chopped shallot
- 1 tablespoon whole-grain Dijon mustard
- 2 teaspoons honey
- 1 pound fresh asparagus, trimmed
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh dill
- Lemon wedges

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 375°F. Place chicken on a clean work surface and cover with plastic wrap. Add stock to Dutch oven; increase heat to high and bring stock to boil. Add orzo and cook, uncovered, until al dente (about 6 min.)
2. Pound chicken pieces to an even 1/2-inch thickness, then arrange on half of a large rimmed baking sheet.
3. Arrange potatoes & carrots in single layer on half of pan.
4. Drizzle chicken and vegetables with 1 tablespoon oil; 1 teaspoon coriander, 1/2 teaspoon salt and 1/4 teaspoon pepper. Bake for 15 minutes.
5. Whisk lemon juice, shallot, mustard, honey with the remaining oil, coriander, salt and pepper in a small bowl.
6. Remove the pan from the oven; switch the oven to broil.
7. Stir the potato-carrot mixture; arrange asparagus in the center of the pan; spoon the lemon juice-shallot mixture evenly over the chicken and vegetables.
8. Broil about 10 minutes until chicken and vegetables are lightly browned, asparagus is tender-crisp and chicken registers 165°F
9. Remove from oven; sprinkle evenly with parsley and dill. Serve with lemon wedges.

Nutrition

Per Serving:

Calories: 352 | Protein: 28g | Carbohydrates: 31g | Dietary Fiber: 6g | Fat: 14g | Saturated Fat: 2g | Sugar: 8g | Sodium: 599mg

Source: [One-Pan Chicken & Asparagus Bake \(eatingwell.com\)](https://eatingwell.com/recipes/one-pan-chicken-asparagus-bake/)



Mental Health Tip for Customer Service Reps

Learn how to develop emotional resilience if you are new to customer service. It's vital if you will be dealing with difficult customers. Emotional resilience is your ability to adapt and bounce back from stressful interactions. How can you develop emotional resilience? Practice recognizing your emotions, triggers, and stress responses to customers. Do this for a few weeks. Keep a small diary of these discoveries. Doing so will help you develop keen self-awareness that allows you to spot early signs of emotional distress and empower your ability to intervene and manage this state of mind. You will also be able to appropriately detach from emotionally charged situations and enjoy your job more. In turn, this will boost empathy skills—your ability to understand, connect with, calm, and serve your customers with winning service.

Use Anticipatory Joy to Manage Work Stress

Looking forward to something enjoyable that's coming up soon can create a positive emotional state to help you manage stress better. Biology is key in this stress management technique known as "anticipatory joy" or "positive anticipation." The anticipation of an enjoyable experience releases dopamine, a neurotransmitter that produces a sense of pleasure and reward. This uplifts your mood and counteracts stress hormones. Try it. Focus on a soon-to-be-experienced activity—plan one now—that will bring joy and excitement. See if this strategy shifts your attention away from stressors and creates positive thinking. The payoffs are reduced anxiety, improved mood, increased motivation, and a sense of purpose.

Revisiting Icebreakers for Increased Productivity

Icebreakers aren't just for off-site conferences where everyone is a stranger. More accurately, icebreakers help set a positive tone for any sort of meeting, and they can encourage team bonding and help your group experience a more relaxed and inclusive atmosphere that boosts productivity. Rather than diving into your next same-old routine or unchanging meeting, try an icebreaker. Then, try a new one periodically. And yes, they work for remote meetings, too! Try this one guaranteed to shake things up and have everyone laughing before getting down to business: Each team member shares three statements about themselves—two truths and one lie. The rest of the team tries to guess which one statement is the lie. This activity encourages sharing personal information in a fun and engaging way. Resource book: "50 Remote-Friendly Icebreakers: Quick and Easy Warmups and Energizers for Better Meeting Mojo" by Ben Caruthers;

Best Way to Utilize a To-Do List

To improve the effectiveness of to-do lists, consider these valuable tips. 1) Write down all tasks in "mind dump fashion" and prioritize later. 2) Break up any big tasks into small doable steps. 3) Do not make your to-do list too long because if one glance at the list causes you to feel overwhelmed, you may become demotivated, put it aside, and not complete it. Identify urgent versus important tasks—not hardest first and easiest later. 4) Add deadlines to each item because your to-do list is an action plan, not just a memory jogger.

Stress Tips from the Field: Job Stress Versus Job Strain

Job strain refers to heightened levels of stress in the workplace that surpass typical levels, potentially leading to severe health consequences if not adequately addressed. You will find job strain occurs when high demands of a job are coupled with low control over the duties. Strain increases with the inability to know how long engaging with demands will last and a feeling of powerlessness to control decisions that might reduce strain. Positions with job strain can be found in fast-paced healthcare settings like emergency rooms, teaching jobs in under-resourced schools, dangerous military occupations, and even some highly demanding home health aide jobs. Get help and support, and learn how to manage job strain if you identify some of the following: 1) consistently feeling overwhelmed by the amount of work; 2) frequently working long hours or taking work home to meet deadlines; 3) frequently dealing with emotionally challenging clients, patients, or customers; 4) needing to suppress emotions to remain calm in stressful situations; 5) feeling emotionally drained or exhausted after work; 6) having little or no control over work duties, including the methods and pace; 7) finding decisions about the job are being made by someone else or being micromanaged with no autonomy; 8) receiving no support from others when facing work challenges; 9) frequent isolation on the job; 10) receiving little or no training for the position; and 11) performing repetitive or physically demanding tasks.

Avoid the Stress of Last-Minute Income Tax Preparation

Avoid the distress of rushing and last-minute tax preparation this year by dedicating time now if you are still procrastinating. Break up the task into bite-sized pieces by creating a schedule or timeline for each task—gathering documents, organizing receipts, adding things up, filling out forms. Stick to a schedule using your smartphone by setting reminders and gentle nudges so you stay on track. Consider potential obstacles or distractions and develop strategies now to avoid them. Remind yourself of the benefits of completing your taxes early—it helps. And make one of these benefits a big reward for yourself for avoiding the rush this year!

Spring Break Safety: Tips for Parents

If you are nerve-wracked over an adult child visiting distant spring break destinations and the safety, responsibility, and substance issues you've heard so much about, have a discussion now about these concerns. Make some agreements—the most important are reaching out to you while away for any reason and setting expectations for regular check-ins. Read and discuss any safety/advisory literature offered by your child's college or university. Talk about substance abuse, responsible drinking, and your expectations. (Research shows it does make a difference in reducing risk and abuse.) Remind them about safety in social gatherings, not accepting drinks from strangers, making smart choices, trusting their instincts, and avoiding risky situations. Make sure your young adult has copies of their identification and important documents, such as their passport or driver's license. Also, encourage them to keep these documents safe while traveling. Checklist for discussion: <https://www.collegeparentsmatter.org/spring-break>

Mindfulness on the Go

Mindfulness is the practice of paying attention to your thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, and what's going on around you, and doing so while being fully present without distractions or critiquing your thoughts. This reduces tension and can revitalize you during the workday. Nothing special is required to practice mindfulness. A popular example is deep breathing: Focus only on your breath, inhale slowly, hold your breath for a few seconds, and exhale slowly. Repeating the process produces calmness. Another is "mindful walking," where you take a short walk outside and focus only on the sensations of walking, your feet on the ground, and the movement of your body. Don't wait to get home to manage stress. Do it on the go with mindfulness. Learn more: positivepsychology.com/mindfulness-exercises-techniques-activities.

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