

NEXT MONTH IN CLUB



SANDRA BULLOCK
THIS SIDE OF GOLD

SOCCER BABES
BLOW THE WHISTLE

DIETING PITFALLS
HEALTH EXPERTS TO THE RESCUE

HELLO HOLLYWOOD!
LOCALS MAKING THEIR MARK

SELF HELP

OFFICE BULLY

BEING VICTIMISED IN THE WORKPLACE IS EXHAUSTING AND DEGRADING. HERE'S HOW TO PUT A STOP TO IT

WHAT IS IT?

Research done by the Workplace Bullying Institute in America found that 41% of bullying victims become depressed, 76% report suffering from severe anxiety, 84% experience sleep disruption, and 40% eventually leave their jobs because of health-related issues. So what is the sufferer subjected to?

Dr Susan Steinman*, head of the Workplace Dignity Institute and director of The People Bottomline in Roodepoort, Gauteng, explains that bullying in the workplace is not a single conflicting event with a colleague or boss, neither is it a just admonition.

'Bullying is unfair, degrading, mean and condemnatory, and aimed at hurting the victim. It is continuous, stretched out over a long time period and has effects on the physical and emotional well-being of the victim,' she says.

AGGRESSIVE vs ASSERTIVE

There is, however, a definite difference between a bully and someone who is assertive, warns Caroline Roberts in an article on www.life123.com. While a bully regularly picks on peers or those he/she supervises, they'll never let their own supervisors see such behaviour. An assertive person, who is passionate about his/her job, will behave consistently across the board. And while an assertive person is focused on company performance, a bully has little or no regard for the collective effort at all. What the bully cares about is you, and anyone else he/she can get away with belittling.

*Susan is the author of *Don't Take Sh*t from Hyenas in the Workplace*. It can be purchased from her webstore at www.worktrauma.org/susanstore.htm

HANDLE IT

So how do you cope with the office bully and avoid becoming a victim? Susan suggests the following:

- Look after yourself, exercise and get enough rest. It won't get the bully out of the office, but it will help you get through the day.
- Keep a diary. You will have to take on the bully eventually, and if it leads to a complaints procedure or disciplinary hearing, you will need to have your facts straight.
- Confront the bully. Act firmly and defend your self-worth. Calmly make it clear that you will no longer stand for such treatment. Find a trustworthy witness to observe any confrontation. Make it clear that you will take the issue further if necessary.
- Speak to the bully's boss. Don't be secretive and ask that the bully not be informed of the conversation. Make your intentions clear: either you want to be transferred or the bully must be transferred, or a complaints procedure must be followed. Keep a paper trail: put your complaints in writing and ensure the boss gets a copy.
- Follow the correct complaints procedure. Top management often has limited knowledge of what goes on in the office and if the bully is in a senior position, may take their side. The complaints procedure is an alternative to consider before moving on to more drastic measures.
- Keep medical records. They may be relevant if you need to see a doctor or psychologist about stress-related illnesses such as depression. The employer must ensure a healthy work environment.
- Finally, remember you are worthy of being treated with respect. ■