

BULLETIN

## Code Pink

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HSA MEMBERS ARE PROTECTING CO-WORKERS FROM BULLYING

**IMAGINE A WORKPLACE** where all employees feel valued and respected by an employer who cares about their wellbeing. An inclusive environment where ideas are openly expressed and differences honored. A world of teamwork, clear communication, and harmony.

If that doesn't sound like your workplace, statistics say you aren't alone.

Bullying and psychological harassment in the workplace are affecting the health, morale and productivity of employees in every workplace. The issue is gaining mainstream attention and HSA members are taking bold steps to make a difference.

-Those being bullied at work feel more than overworked and under appreciated," writes Gary Namie, author of "The Bully at Work. -The fear, shame, humiliation and loss of dignity that originate at work can creep into every aspect of life."

Ironically, the targets of bullying are often workers who are good at their jobs, popular with co-workers and who speak out about non ethical behavior and hypocrisy ... the very type of employee who should be valued most by those who want to create a safe and functioning workplace. Meanwhile, the bullies themselves are frequently compensating for their own inadequacies.

-A bully's inappropriate behavior results from his or her own inadequacies and insecurities," observes Jacinta Kitt, author of "Mobbing. -Their actions are dysfunctional means of dealing with their own problems of low self esteem."

But for most employees, standing up to a bully isn't an option because of the real or perceived power differential. They just can't do it on their own.

The most effective tool against workplace bullying lies in the hands of the bystanders who generally don't speak out about what they witness, even though it leaves them uncomfortable.

That's why employees at some workplaces developed Code Pink.

It is as simple as a bystander politely pointing out hurtful gossip or shunning of a co-worker. In some instances it's challenging inappropriate statements about others. It's especially effective at defusing direct confrontation; if a manager starts yelling at an employee, her co-workers drop everything and come stand beside her, gently discouraging abuse by their very presence. In all cases, it's about standing up for each other, because bullying only happens when individuals are excluded and targeted.

In one workplace a Code Pink is called for any disciplinary meeting where harassment appears to be the motivating factor. Imagine a large group of your peers escorting you to the door of such a meeting. That show

of support that is impossible for management to ignore.

Code Pink empowers workers and reminds bystanders that they hold the power to change the culture of the workplace.

Together we can not be bullied. Together we can create that harmonious work environment and a culture of respect and safety in each and every workplace. And as a strong union we have the basis to do it together. 

*This article was penned by a group of HSA members to avoid any retaliation in the workplace.*

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