



From Our Irregular Correspondent

Dealing with very difficult colleagues – The hidden menace in the workplace –

Responses

Background

In September 2009 we published our paper, *Dealing with very difficult colleagues*. We were inundated for requests for copies (over 100 in the first week) and there have been numerous downloads (over 300 to date) from our web site: www.healthcarealliances.co.uk/?Articles. This document contains some of the responses from people who have had difficulties with their work colleagues.

Response 1

Your paper will be enlightening and reassuring to many. I have worked in the NHS for many years and whilst I have been aware of this problem I had just about managed to keep it at arm's length until recently. However, your paper quite simply describes my current situation as it is.

Reading the paper made me think of my own journey over the last few years. It's like a bereavement process - first of all you can't quite believe it - it's impossible, this isn't happening; a numbness and feeling of impotence; fear and isolation; depression; feeling a failure for not coping; wondering is it my fault. I have also felt abused. The feeling of impotence is impossible to describe only through clichés - catch 22, double bind and such like.

I could go on. I don't need to as you have captured it so well in your paper.

Each time I manage to climb out of the inevitable abyss which each 'incident' finds me in. But each time I feel more eroded, more burnt out. I have many years experience of working in the NHS. I have managed teams and worked clinically with distressed and disturbed individuals; have achieved many things through project and development work. I feel offended and have a strong sense of injustice about the whole situation. I like the list 'things you can do yourself' I can tick some of them already - but there's new ones there to add to my own list.

It would be great if I could find the feelings again of looking forward to going to work, satisfaction at finishing that or the other job off, a sense of achievement, a sense of excitement about some new development. They all feel in the distant past. This has been a slowly eroding and damaging process. I don't want to end my career on this note nor to egg this day on. I want to go to work and do what I get paid to do without paying such a personal price for it.

Your paper has given me a whole new sense of insight. I will be looking out - and looking forward - for your next paper!

Thanks again

Response 2

I read this article with a lot of interest and have found it very beneficial especially as I too am feeling, bullied, harassed and undermined. This is the first (and hopefully last) time this has happened to me since working in the NHS.

Most, if not all, the experiences and character types mentioned I have experienced over the last few years and hopefully the situation will resolve itself over the new transition period. I too have:

- Talked to the boss – I got a letter explaining the policies
- Looked at the policies – they support the organisation not the individual
- Have been shouted at, overlooked for any type of training, excluded
- Felt intimidated and worthless
- Sought the help of HR who were unfortunately very unhelpful; indeed one of them was actually knowingly supporting the perpetrator!

Have now re-read some of the tactics and will be deploying them if I feel able to.

Many thanks

Response 3

I thought the paper was excellent and wish I had read it several years ago when I (and several colleagues) were being bullied.

I think the problem is at the beginning bullying can be very subtle and insidious and is not always recognised as such and you do start acting exactly as you describe. It was another colleague who pointed it out to me, by which time a lot of evidence is missed. Of course bullies can be very clever and manipulative - not putting anything in writing and denying anything verbal

In my case it was clear that the 'difficult person' was well aware of her behaviour, as was HR, occupational health and the union, but her objective was to remove any staff that were likely to oppose her opinions....several experienced and senior staff quit ...which is exactly what she wanted.

Looking back I wish I had taken the case to employment tribunal, but like my colleagues I was so worn down by the whole thing that I was just happy to leave. I was too scared to go to my GP for fear of being diagnosed as depressed (which I clearly was) for fear that it would just fuel their campaign.

Thank you for listeningand for providing this service for others.

Response 4

I thought your article was excellent and have felt the same, having been involved in a situation with my previous manager which caused me to prematurely retire. The bullying was appalling and the worse thing is that it is still going on.

I was off sick with work related stress for six months. My GP was amazing – no pills – she saw me on a regular basis

I also went to occupational health. Because of the situation, mediation was arranged. I was foolish to agree to a mediation session with my line manager and the HR manager for the service where I worked – because they could not find an independent mediator in the organisation I felt that there was no-one in authority to talk to. It is a big step to report your line manager. It's only since leaving that post I can admit to being bullied as I know "he can do nothing to me now".

It is a pity that managers are allowed to get away with such behaviour. It's awful to see ex-colleagues going through the same extreme difficulties as I faced.

To end on a good point, I am now working where I am appreciated. The people I work for are brilliant as is my line manager.

We Can Provide Help and Support

We are available every Monday in Cowbridge, to talk through your issues. It is completely free of charge – except the price of a cup of coffee and possibly a sandwich. Totally unconditional and absolutely confidential.

There are two time slots available every Monday – 10 am and 2 pm. It's first come, first served.

We look forward to hearing from you – see the contact details below.

We would like to thank all the people we have worked with us over the years for sharing their time with us. We would also like to thank our friends and colleagues who commented on early drafts of this paper – for obvious reasons of confidentiality we cannot name you, but you know who you are.

We welcome comments on this paper which:

- disagree with us
- agree with us
- amplify the points we make
- give a different perspective

Please send your comments to:

correspondent@healthcarealliances.co.uk

All *From Our Irregular Correspondent* papers and comments can be accessed directly by [clicking here](#), or by following the links to information services from the home page of our website: www.healthcarealliances.co.uk