

# Participant's Workbook



**Workplace Bullying Awareness**

Presented by:



Great-West Life  
Centre for  
Mental Health  
in the Workplace

[www.workplacestrategiesformentalhealth.com](http://www.workplacestrategiesformentalhealth.com)

## Slide 2 - What is workplace bullying?

**What is workplace bullying?**

Bullying is usually seen as acts or verbal comments that could "mentally" hurt or isolate a person in the workplace.

Bullying usually involves repeated incidents or a pattern of behaviour intended to intimidate, offend, degrade or humiliate.

Employers have a general duty to protect employees from risks at work.

Adapted from the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety

www.workplacestrategiesformentalhealth.com All facts and resources are available to anyone at any time, free of charge.

The Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety\* (CCOHS) offers this information related to workplace bullying.

\*Source: [www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/psychosocial/bullying.html](http://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/psychosocial/bullying.html)

## Slide 3 - Creating awareness about bullying

According to the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety\*, it **“is sometimes hard to know if bullying is happening at the workplace. Many studies acknowledge that there is a ‘fine line’ between strong management and bullying.”**

Many workplace bullies, including those in management or union roles, aren't aware that their behaviour may have been experienced as harmful by co-workers or direct reports.

One approach to create awareness is to ask ourselves questions that help prompt us to think about our own behaviour and how it might be experienced by others. The goal in asking these questions is to consider our own role in enabling or eliminating workplace bullying and ultimately to develop norms where everyone can work together safely.

Most of you would never intend to bully or invite someone to bully you, but be open to the idea that we may do it on a subconscious level. Be as objective and honest about your answers as you can be. You only need to share what you are comfortable sharing. The rest is just for your own reflection.

**Please do not judge the answers of others who may be understanding how they impact others for the first time.**

\*Source: [www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/psychosocial/bullying.html](http://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/psychosocial/bullying.html)



**Creating awareness about bullying**

Bullying behaviour = Perception vs Intention

Targets of bullying = Checking Assumptions

Bystander influence = Moral Courage

Agreement document = developing norms

## Slide 4 - But I never meant it that way... PERCEPTION VS INTENTION

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Our first area of exploration is the difference between our almost always good intentions and the sometimes unexpected perceptions of others.

With each question, try to answer as if you were an objective observer of your own behaviour – what you actually would see or hear if you were observing – and don't dwell on the thoughts or emotions you might be experiencing at the same time.

## Slide 5 - Perception vs Intention

Write out your answer to these two questions. Avoid writing or discussing how you *feel* or *think* while frustrated. **We want to focus on what others would see or hear.**

Once everyone has finished writing, compare your answers with others at your table.

### Perception vs Intention

How do you interact with others when you are frustrated at work?  
What would they see or hear?

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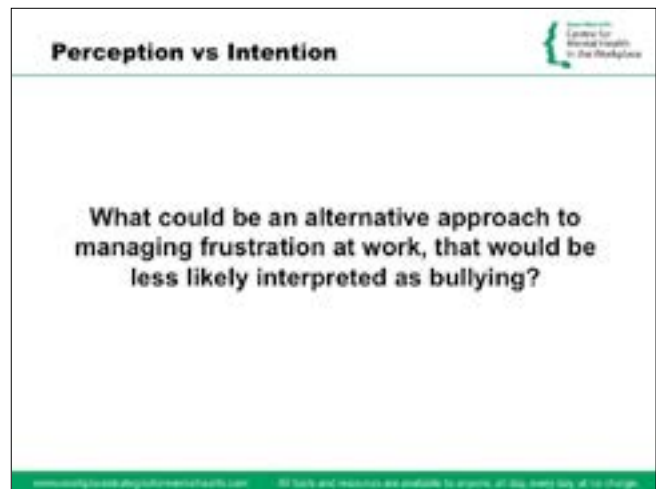
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## Slide 6 - Perception vs Intention

Write out as many answers to this question as you can in one minute. Go!



**Perception vs Intention**

What could be an alternative approach to managing frustration at work, that would be less likely interpreted as bullying?

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Next, compare your answers with others at your table. At each table choose two answers to share with the larger group, one that you think is innovative and one that you think is practical.

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## Slide 7 - Perception vs Intention

Write as many characteristics as you can think of that may indicate someone is weak in character.



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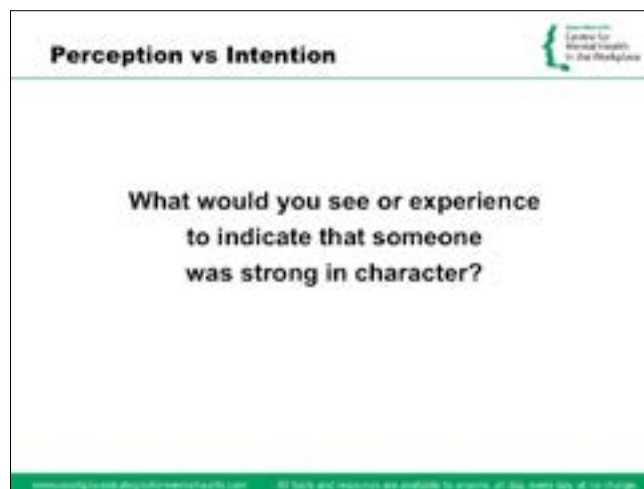
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## Slide 8 - Perception vs Intention

Write as many characteristics as you can think of that may indicate someone has a strong character.



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## Slide 10 - Perception vs Intention

If you were interacting with the strong person, what would you be saying or doing?  
You will not have to share your answers.



### Perception vs Intention

**How might you interact differently  
with a person you perceive to be  
strong and confident?**

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## Slide 13 - Perception vs Intention

You may never refuse to work with others, but it is likely you spend less time engaging with some people on your team. Write down why that is.



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It is not a requirement that we like everyone that we work with. It is a reasonable expectation, however, that we engage in a respectful and professional manner with other employees.

When we are annoyed by or just don't have time for someone, we may ignore or avoid them. The individual may feel like we are shunning or isolating them. If they also have a disability, this could be interpreted as discrimination.

How might we better interact with people who we may experience as difficult or uncomfortable to be around? Note two answers to share below:

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## Slide 14 - Perception vs Intention

Collaboration can be a useful process, but sometimes we just need to be clear about directions and get the job done. Sometimes there is no room for discussion. What makes it challenging for employees is when they are never sure which approach will be used. Write down when you collaborate and when you want people to just take direction.



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If we can manage expectations by stating when collaboration will be sought and when there is a need to simply follow directions, we can avoid some of the stress and misunderstanding that comes from mixed messages.

In your group, try to establish those situations that will absolutely involve collaboration, those that will absolutely require following direction and finally, those that could be either. Once you have a short list of the three, come up with clear communication to others about why each is the way it is. We will take up your three communications when you are done.

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## Slide 15 - They are out to get me... CHECKING ASSUMPTIONS

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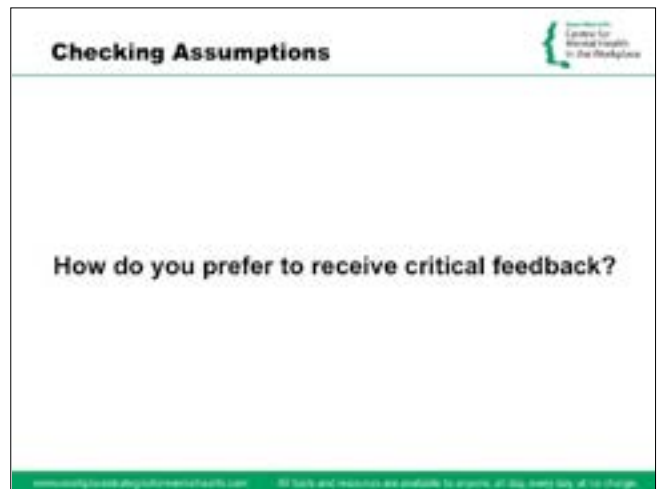


We have examined how our behaviours may be perceived by others quite differently than what we had intended. Now we will look at how we might make assumptions about the way other people behave.

# Slide 16 - Checking Assumptions

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Many of us do not like to be criticized and almost all of us do not like harsh or unfair criticism. By considering this question, "*How do you prefer to receive critical feedback?*" you can explore what would work best for you. Please record your answer in a manner that is so specific that anyone could provide you with critical feedback successfully with no fear of you becoming defensive. For example, include the mode of feedback as well as frequency.



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## Slide 24 - Respectful confrontations... MORAL COURAGE

We have now looked at how others may misinterpret our intentions and how we might make assumptions about the behaviour of others. This awareness can help us to improve our working relationships. But what about when you are witnessing someone else's behaviour and the impact it is having on the person they are interacting with? Are you able to speak up? Do you end up getting angry and confrontational yourself or do you just remain silent? Either of these reactions may allow the negative or harmful behaviours to continue or even get worse.

Having the moral courage to speak up is only half of the skill set needed here. The other half is to speak up or confront the situation in a respectful way; in the way you would expect the other person should be behaving. If we realize that we may be making assumptions about what is going on and that the intention of either party may not be what we are perceiving, we are better equipped to be objective and respond in a supportive, but firm manner to help change the situation from potentially harmful to one that can reinforce good working relationships.













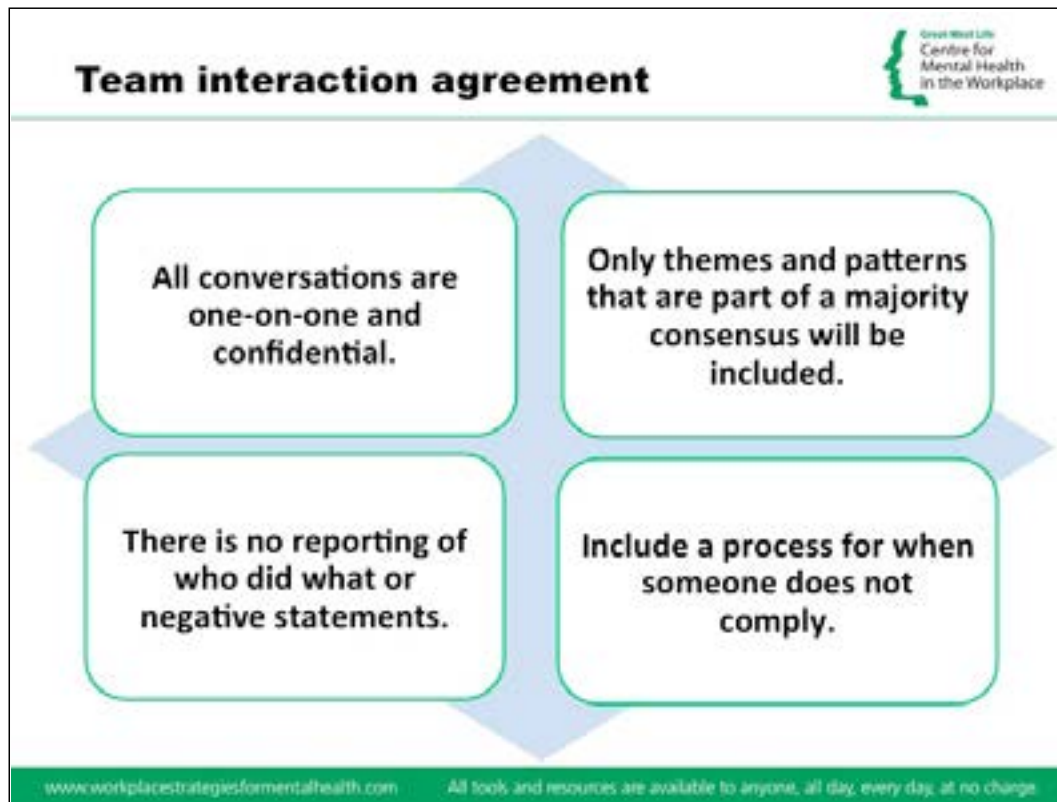
## Slide 29 - Have the team create their own... WORKING AGREEMENT

Next we will discuss the outline for a process that can result in your own working agreement. This is an agreement that helps define how we agree to interact with each other on a daily basis. It will guide us on how to recognize when we may be having a negative effect on others, how to question our own assumptions about the behaviour of others and how to use our moral courage to help those who may be at risk of violating the agreement we devise. It really is an agreement about how team members will interact going forward for the purpose of us having the best working environment we can have.

The dynamics of any group depends on the members in it and how they interact. As a result, no two working agreements are usually the same.



## Slide 30 - Team interaction agreement



There are four key principles of this process to keep in mind:

- All conversations to gather feedback are one-on-one and confidential. There is no attribution to any one person.
- The agreement includes only themes and patterns that are part of a majority consensus. If one person has an idea that is not shared with the majority, such as serving chocolate for breakfast each morning, it will not make the report. This also helps you to see which of the points that you brought up were also shared by many of your co-workers. These will be the ones included in the final agreement.
- There is no reporting of who did what or negative statements. While you are free to share your concerns and observations in the conversation, what gets written up is only the agreed-upon positive actions going forward.
- We will develop and include a process for when someone does not comply with the final agreement. It is important that we all know and agree on how this will be dealt with and that there is someone with both the authority and will to act if this happens.

The goal is to provide an agreement that works for your team, helps to allow all members to enjoy coming to work and supports everyone to do their work effectively.











# Slide 35 - Just one more thing...

Please write down at least one thing that you will do differently at work, as a result of what we have discussed today. We will take up the answers when you are done.



**Just one more thing...**

What will you now do differently,  
as a result of what we have discussed today?

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## Slide 36 - Creating awareness about bullying

If you want more information about responding to bullying and harassment or other resources related to workplace mental health or psychological health and safety, check out the Great-West Life Centre for Mental Health in the Workplace's website [www.workplacestrategiesformentalhealth.com](http://www.workplacestrategiesformentalhealth.com), where the material we've gone through today came from.



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With *Working Through It*, you'll meet individuals who share their insights from reclaiming their well-being at work, off work and when returning to work.



Engaging break time activities that focus on improving mental health at work. Get weekly *Take Your Break* emails with break activity ideas for individuals and teams at work.

Available free from our website at [www.workplacestrategiesformentalhealth.com](http://www.workplacestrategiesformentalhealth.com).