

Bullying at Work: **Dignity and the Damp and Dark Corners of Organisational Life**

Thinking about bullying at work offers real, though often uncomfortable, opportunities to confront the damp and dark corners of organisational life. In such organisational spaces episodes of bullying and harassment seek to humiliate, degrade and subordinate certain people. Though often subtle and difficult to define, equally these damp and dark corners are highly visible and almost taken-for-granted. For every colleague who is mercilessly bullied by their workmates or line manager, there is an employee who suffers corporate bullying in the shape of oppressive management practice and unfair expectations and a service provider who is harassed by an irate customer. Damp and dark corners have no boundaries. We carry with us the hurt, the pain and the indignities of the violations we experience within them. And yet these organisational spaces remain just as damp, just as dark and just as ill-defined as ever. In fact, in the contemporary workplace such toxicity must be hidden and contained in a positive performance for our managers, our colleagues and our customers. Such ignorance and neglect is a fundamental denial of human dignity and leads to negative consequences for all involved. Essentially, dignity is universally accepted as a fundamental human right which is enshrined in international constitution (United Nations, 1948). It is overwhelmingly presented as meaning people are worth something as human beings, that it is something that should be respected and not taken advantage of and that the maintenance of human dignity is a core contributor to a stable 'moral order'. Damp and dark corners disrupt the moral order, they deny employees their status as dignified workers and, by association, corporations their status as dignified workplaces and good corporate citizens. It is therefore important to see that it is not a mere case of dignity existing as a core human characteristic but that various organisational structures and practices will impact on how dignity is realised. Organisation can, and often do, venture into these damp and dark corners and try to confront difficult issues such as bullying, exploitation, and harassment. There are no easy answers but the restoration and maintenance of human dignity is an important task and only those dignified workplaces who recognise their own damp and dark corners are able to contribute to that.

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