

8A • SUBURBAN LIFE • FEBRUARY 10, 2016

VIEWPOINTS

Editor: Richard Maloney, rmaloney@communitypress.com, 248-7134

SUBURBAN
LIFE

EDITORIALS | LETTERS | COLUMNS | CH@TROOM

Cincinnati.com/communities

Women: 7 steps to stop being sabotaged, bullied at work

Let's face it, ladies: women are sometimes bullied at work. Many women have had the unpleasant experience of having an employee, boss or peer put them down, criticize them unfairly in meetings or sabotage their successes.

Men can be bullied at work, too, and sometimes women bully other women. Regardless of who starts it, we all intuitively know this: women need to feel empowered to navigate conflict at work.

The best way to fight office bullying is to confront it immediately when it occurs:

- » Recognize what is happening and respond immediately. If your instincts tell you are being sabotaged at work, listen to yourself. Women tend to think coworkers will be



Kay Fittes
COMMUNITY PRESS
GUEST COLUMNIST

you allow poor behavior to go unchecked, it gives the impression that it's all right with you.

A bully seeks a victim, so as long as the bully knows he or she can intimidate you, harassment will continue. Once a bully believes you will go toe-to-toe with them, respect for you will rise.

- » Start with a look and one

their friends. Sometimes that is true, and sometimes it is not.

Confront or challenge the bully. Be smart and strategic, not reactive or vindictive. If

word. A direct look, raised eyebrow and the "death stare" will serve you well. Sometimes off-color jokes or negative references can be stopped with one word, such as "Really?" along with an incredulous look.

Monitoring smiling here is critical – especially for women. Smiling when delivering a riposte undercuts the message that you are displeased or insulted.

- » Try a little humor. Was the comment made to you or about you demeaning, sexist, trivializing or just unprofessional? Sometimes humor can defuse a situation and convert an office bully into a friend.

- » Create alliances at work. While reality TV shows can be ridiculous, they point out the

importance of alliances at work. Identify power players and be friendly with them. These friends will back you up when you need them, just as you will for them.

- » Develop strong body language, communication skills. Be very clear with your boundaries and make certain you are focused on business. Take assertiveness courses if you need them so you don't act and sound like a potential target.

- » Attack bullies with skill, aplomb and a few new techniques. Avoid going to the highest levels of response, which are to contact Human Resources or pursue litigation. Litigation takes an emotional and financial toll that your career may not survive.

It may offer the prospect of good news financially, but your chances of winning are not necessarily good.

For women who need more information, I'll offer a "Kick Conflict to the Curb: Steps for Coping with Conflict at Work" workshop from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, March 5, at the Crowne Plaza Cincinnati in Blue Ash.

Focus will be on recognizing, preventing and stopping bullying in the workplace. Cost: \$149 before Feb. 26; \$170 afterward. To enroll, contact me at 513-561-4288 or Kay@highheeledsuccess.com.

Madeira resident Kay Fittes is CEO of High-Heeled Success, a women's business coaching and career consultancy she founded and leads.