



# HOW TO FIGHT BULLYING AT WORK

Stand up for your rights and protect your job

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No one should have to endure abusive treatment in the workplace, even in this tough economic environment. We asked Stacey Gray, a New York City-based employment attorney, and Sharon Booker-Brown, an employment lawyer at The Booker Law Group, LLC, in Chicago, to share their best strategies for halting bullying on the job.

• **THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN BULLYING AND DISCRIMINATION**

Workplace bullying is repeated mistreatment that interferes with or sabotages your work (visit [workplacebullying.org](http://workplacebullying.org) for more information). Discrimination is mistreatment based on your race, gender, age, disability, religion or sexual orientation.

• **THE MORE SUBTLE FORMS OF BULLYING**

Reprimanding employees publicly, interrupting them or ignoring their input, excluding them from meetings, giving unjustified performance reviews and using intimidating/threatening looks are a few examples shared by Booker-Brown.

• **THE RIGHT WAY TO RESPOND**

Stay cool and avoid getting defensive, Gray says. Let the bully know you disagree with his or her position and will respond more fully later, then send a detailed e-mail to your supervisor or HR stating the date, circumstances and your concerns, and referencing any applicable policies covered in the employee manual.

• **THE SMART WAY TO PROTECT YOUR POSITION**

Read your employee handbook, then invest in a lawyer to understand your rights, advises Booker-Brown. If money is tight, call your local bar association for informational clinics and referrals to lawyers offering pro bono assistance.

• **THE BEST TACTICS FOR BLACK WOMEN TO FIGHT BACK.**

Document, document, document. Booker-Brown suggests keeping a personal log with dates, times, locations, names, titles and details of each bullying incident. And note your successes, says Gray. "Your responsibility is not just to perform the job but also to keep a record of what you've done well."