

# GLOBAL TOOKIT



**International Workplace Bullying Awareness Week**

**Tip Sheet: For Injured  
Workplaces  
That Weaponize Your**



**Injury**

**Workers in Unhealthy  
Workplace Psychological**

**1. Recognize What's Happening**

If your legitimate psychological injuries are being used against you, such as being called “unstable,” “overly sensitive,” or “a poor fit” - this is not a reflection of your character or competence. It's a tactic used by unhealthy systems to protect themselves and silence you. Recognizing this pattern is your first step in reclaiming your power.

**2. Document Everything**

Keep a private record (not on a work computer or email) of all incidents, communications, and meetings. Include dates, names, witnesses, and exact quotes. Save copies of emails, texts, performance reviews, and medical notes. Record the impact on your health, finances, and safety, this can be vital if you pursue legal or medical claims later. Documentation equals protection.

**3. Know Your Rights**

Educate yourself on your rights under occupational health and safety, human rights, and disability accommodation laws. You have the right to: work free from harassment and psychological harm, reasonable accommodations for any diagnosed injury, and confidentiality about your medical or mental health status. If your employer breaches these, seek legal advice or a worker advocate immediately.

**4. Guard Your Medical Information**

Never share unnecessary details of your diagnosis or treatment with HR or leadership. Only provide the functional limitations required for accommodations, not the full medical report. Unhealthy systems can and often weaponize medical information to discredit or pathologize the injured worker.

**5. Find Trauma-Informed Support**

Seek a therapist or coach trained in workplace psychological injuries, not just general mental health. These professionals understand gaslighting, mobbing, retaliation, and systemic betrayal. They can help you separate your self-worth from the toxicity surrounding you.

## **6. Preserve Your Safety and Sanity**

If you're still working in the environment: keep communications short, factual, and professional. Avoid emotional responses during conflict, take breaks before replying. If possible, have a witness or written follow-up after meetings. Know when to step back — survival is not weakness; it's strategy.

## **7. Connect with Validation, Not Isolation**

Toxic workplaces rely on your silence and isolation. Connect with trusted allies, advocacy groups, or professional associations that understand psychological injury and bullying. You are not alone, thousands of workers have lived this and survived it.

## **8. Understand Secondary Injury**

Secondary injury occurs when the organization's response to your harm causes even more trauma, through retaliation, minimization, or gaslighting. If you are retraumatized by the employer's response, acknowledge that this is not your fault. It's a systemic failure, not a personal one.

## **9. Plan for Exit or Protection**

Sometimes, staying becomes more dangerous than leaving. If the workplace refuses to correct the harm, start quietly planning your next move: gather evidence, references, and copies of your work. Line up support from doctors or legal counsel. If you go off work, get a doctor's note documenting workplace-related injury to protect future claims. If you prefer not to make this a work-related issue, take time to heal before making any life-changing decisions.

## **10. Take Back Your Narrative**

Toxic systems will try to define you by your injury. Reclaim your story. You were harmed because you stood up, cared, and expected decency. Your reaction is not over-sensitivity; it's the natural human response to prolonged abuse. Healing begins when you stop internalizing their narrative.

## **Organizational Solutions**

- Implement trauma-informed psychological safety training for all leaders, HR professionals, and investigators.
- Provide neutral, qualified psychological safety consultants to assess injury-related complaints and ensure fairness.
- Treat requests for accommodation and recovery support as acts of accountability and prevention, not weakness.
- Offer access to specialized therapists trained in workplace psychological injuries.

- Create safe, independent reporting systems where employees can disclose without fear of retaliation.

### Final Word

When organizations weaponize injury, they are committing a form of institutional betrayal. Your pain is not a weakness; it's evidence of harm. You are not broken; you are surviving a broken system. Keep your evidence. Protect your health. Stand in your truth. And remember \_> you are not alone, and healing is possible. Commit to your recovery, with or without justice. This is the choice you get to make – as hard as it may be – it's the right choice.

Linda Crockett MSW, BSW, RSW, SEP

[www.instituteofworkplacebullyingresources.ca](http://www.instituteofworkplacebullyingresources.ca)

[www.workplaceharassment.ca](http://www.workplaceharassment.ca)

**EXAMPLE – employee on sick leave, with no investigation completed to date. He has been an employee for 6 years with no concerns, complaints, or issues reported about this work. A new manager has been undermining, degrading, micro-managing, sabotaging, and humiliating him for 8 months. When he reported it his leaders and HR minimized it and dismissed him. He eventually ended up with the injuries of insomnia, anxiety, high blood pressure, migraines, and depression. He has never taken sick time, until now.**

### Letter from the Employer to the Injured Employee

Good afternoon Brian,

I hope you are feeling better and continuing to focus on your recovery. We want to assure you that the organization remains committed to your success and to providing a supportive and respectful environment as you transition back into your role.

That said, we have observed some ongoing challenges with communication, workload management, and maintaining consistency in meeting organizational expectations. We understand that your recent leave and the circumstances surrounding it may have contributed to these challenges, and we want to ensure you have every opportunity to succeed moving forward.

To that end, we would like to introduce a **Performance and Wellness Support Plan**. This plan is not disciplinary in nature, but rather a collaborative tool designed to help clarify

expectations, identify areas for growth, and provide additional structure and guidance as you continue to reintegrate into the workplace.

As part of this process, we will:

- Outline key performance goals and timelines for improvement;
- Offer access to our Employee Assistance Program for additional support; and
- Schedule regular check-ins to discuss progress and address any concerns you may have.

We also encourage you to share any relevant information from your healthcare provider that may assist us in understanding what supports or accommodations might be beneficial. Please note that while we respect confidentiality, any information shared will help ensure that you are able to perform your duties safely and effectively.

Our intent is to support your overall well-being while maintaining alignment with organizational standards. We are confident that, with this plan in place, you will have the structure and clarity needed to continue making valuable contributions.

Thank you for your cooperation and commitment. Please review the attached plan and provide your acknowledgment by Friday so we can begin this process promptly.

\_\_\_\_\_ Sound Familiar? \_\_\_\_\_

### **Response to “Performance Support and Wellness Planning”**

Good afternoon Gillian,

I appreciate that the organization has expressed an interest in supporting my well-being and success; however, I must ensure that any steps taken at this stage are both trauma-informed and compliant with employment, human rights, and occupational health and safety legislation.

Following medical and legal consultation, it is important that I clarify a few key points moving forward:

#### **1. Causation and Injury Acknowledgment**

My current health status and functional limitations stem directly from cumulative psychological injury caused by ongoing bullying and harassment in the workplace. Any plan or intervention must acknowledge this context, as attempts to frame these injuries as performance issues may constitute reprisal or discrimination under occupational health and human rights law.

#### **2. Medical Privacy and Consent**

While I understand the organization may wish to liaise with health professionals,

I will not be authorizing the release of medical information beyond what is necessary to confirm work restrictions or accommodations. My healthcare providers will communicate only functional limitations, not diagnoses or personal health details.

3. **Performance Framing**

At this time, I do not agree that a “**Performance and Wellness Support Plan**” is appropriate or reflective of the root cause of the challenges I have experienced. Any attempt to apply performance measures related to medically documented injury symptoms may further aggravate my condition and constitute a form of discrimination and/or retaliation.

4. **Required Approach**

I am open to engaging in a collaborative, **trauma-informed recovery plan** that focuses on creating safety, restoring trust, and addressing workplace behaviors that contributed to harm. If the organization wishes to move forward constructively, I request that an independent, neutral **psychological safety consultant** or mediator be engaged to ensure fairness and transparency.

It is also important to note that any action that penalizes or disadvantages an employee due to symptoms or limitations arising from a medically recognized workplace-related psychological injury may constitute both retaliation and discrimination under human rights and occupational health legislation. Framing or managing injury-related behaviors or absences as “performance issues” rather than symptoms of harm risks breaching the employer’s duty to accommodate and could be viewed as reprisal for exercising protected rights, including the right to a safe and psychologically healthy workplace. I trust that the organization will proceed in full awareness of these obligations.

For clarity and accountability, I request that all future communication occur in writing. This will help ensure an accurate record of our dialogue and protect both parties from misinterpretation.

My priority remains a safe, respectful, and lawful return to work process. I trust that the organization will proceed with integrity, transparency, and in accordance with its duty to accommodate and prevent further harm.

Kind regards, Brian

***Disclaimer** I am providing this correspondence for the purpose of example, communication only. This communication does not constitute a waiver of any rights or claims. I encourage you to review this matter in consultation with legal counsel to ensure full compliance with applicable employment, human rights, and occupational health and safety legislation. Linda Crockett*

**If you are suffering symptoms of workplace bullying, consult with a professional experienced in this area for support, guidance, strategy development, and/or assistance with letters, emails, phone calls, or meetings causing you further stress.**

DO NOT COPY



## Toolkit for Targets of Workplace Abuse

### Reporting Workplace Abuse

When reporting workplace abuse, key safety features are designed to protect the individual, preserve evidence, and ensure procedural integrity. Here's a strategic overview grounded in current Irish and EU guidance:

### Confidentiality Protocols

**Secure reporting channels:** **Data protection:** Reports must comply with GDPR and internal confidentiality policies. **Restricted access:** Only authorized personnel should handle sensitive reports.

**Incident Documentation Systems :** **Structured reporting forms:** Include date, time, location, individuals involved, and impact. **Digital and physical logs:** Ensure secure storage and backup of evidence. **Follow-up tracking:** Systems to monitor response timelines and outcomes.

### Risk Assessment Procedures

**Immediate safety checks:** Assess physical and psychological risk to the reporter.

**Dynamic risk assessment:** Especially in volatile or healthcare settings, where risks can shift rapidly. **Hazard identification:** Employers must consult with staff to identify and mitigate risks.

### Support Structures

**Access to trained advocates:** Union reps, wellbeing officers, or legal advisors.

**Mental health support:** Trauma-informed counselling or Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs).

**Protection from retaliation:** Legal safeguards against victimisation for reporting.

### Legal and Policy Alignment

**Clear definitions of abuse:** Align with Employment Equality Acts and Health & Safety legislation.

**Policy visibility:** Dignity-at-work and anti-harassment policies must be accessible and regularly reviewed.

**Mandatory reporting thresholds:** Certain incidents (e.g. injury from violence) must be reported under Irish law.

### Training

Confirm your organisation provides Trauma Informed Training for Workplace Psychological Abuse, Harassment and Violence.

Avoid Risk of Re Traumatization and Invalidation of Reporting abuse in the Workplace.



## **Awareness & Education**

**Recognize abuse patterns:** Understand psychological violence, bullying, gaslighting, and coercive control.

**Know your rights:** Familiarize yourself with national laws, organizational policies, and international conventions (e.g. ILO Convention 190).

**Document everything:** Keep a secure, dated log of incidents, witnesses, and impacts.

## **Strategic Navigation**

**Map your options:**

Internal: HR, grievance procedures, union support

External: legal advice, ombudsman, regulatory bodies

**Assess risks and timing:** Consider safety, burnout, and legal thresholds before acting.

**Build your case:** Gather corroborating evidence (emails, messages, performance reviews).

## **Emotional & Psychological Safety**

**Create a safety plan:** Identify safe spaces, supportive people, and exit strategies.

**Seek validation:** Connect with trauma-informed professionals or peer support groups.

**Reclaim autonomy:** Use affirmations, journaling, and boundary-setting to restore self-trust.

## **Communication & Advocacy**

**Craft empowered language:** Use clear, assertive phrasing that names harm without self-blame.

**Prepare for meetings:** Have a strong professional file, Practice responses, bring a witness, and set time limits.

**Know when to disengage:** Silence can be strategic when systems are unsafe.

## **Systems & Legal Support**

**Consult legal experts:** Especially for constructive dismissal, discrimination, or health-related claims.

**Know your Rights : Workplace policies including Dignity at Work, Health & Safety**

## **Recovery & Renewal**

**Exit with dignity:** Plan your departure with clarity, support, and documentation.

**Reframe the narrative:** You are not the problem—you are the whistleblower of dysfunction.

**Rebuild in alignment:** Seek workplaces that honour psychological safety and conscious leadership.



# Using Social Intelligence to Address Workplace Culture and Root Out Toxic Leadership

## Introduction

Workplace culture issues and toxic leadership often arise from a lack of awareness, unchecked power dynamics, and poor communication. Social intelligence (SI) provides leaders with the skills to observe, understand, and influence behavior in ways that improve culture, foster inclusion, and neutralize toxicity.

## How SI Addresses Culture Issues

### 1. Self-awareness and Reflection:

- Leaders use SI to identify their own biases, emotional triggers, and leadership blind spots.
- Reflection tools: 360-degree feedback, journaling, and coaching conversations.
- Example: A manager recognizes that their default response to disagreement is defensive. By noticing this, they can choose curiosity over judgment, improving team dynamics.

### 2. Empathy and Perspective-Taking:

- Understanding employees' experiences allows leaders to address grievances before they escalate.
- Example: When a team expresses frustration over decision-making processes, socially intelligent leaders probe, listen actively, and adapt processes to reduce stress and inequity.

### 3. Transparent Communication:

- SI helps leaders communicate openly, reducing rumors, anxiety, and disengagement.
- Example: Instead of ambiguous memos, leaders hold small group meetings to explain rationale behind changes, inviting questions and feedback.

#### **4. Building Psychological Safety:**

- Leaders use SI to create environments where employees feel safe to speak up without fear of reprisal.
- Example: Implementing regular check-ins, encouraging speaking up in meetings, and praising courageous input.

#### **5. Modeling Healthy Behavior:**

- Toxic behaviors are often mirrored by others. SI leaders model collaboration, accountability, and ethical decision-making.
- Example: When handling conflict, leaders show calm, fairness, and solution-focused dialogue rather than blame.

### **Rooting Out Toxic Leadership with SI**

#### **1. Detection through Observation:**

- SI skills allow leaders to notice early signs of mobbing, favoritism, or manipulative behaviors.
- Tools: Anonymous surveys, team climate assessments, peer feedback.

#### **2. Coaching and Accountability:**

- Socially intelligent leaders intervene through coaching and clear boundaries rather than punitive measures alone.
- Example: A manager demonstrates through dialogue and role modeling that micromanagement or undermining colleagues is unacceptable.

#### **3. Systemic Levers:**

- Adjust policies and structures to reduce opportunities for toxic behavior.
- Levers include:
  - Clear reporting and whistleblower mechanisms
  - Transparent promotion and evaluation criteria
  - Regular culture audits
  - Cross-functional collaboration initiatives

#### 4. Empowering Bystanders:

- SI enables leaders to train teams in speaking up, peer support, and ethical decision-making.
- Example: Creating a peer-support network and offering communication training equips employees to act when witnessing misconduct.

#### Recommendations Across Systems

1. **Recruitment & Onboarding:** Integrate SI assessments and behavioral interviews to select leaders who demonstrate emotional and social awareness.
2. **Performance Management:** Include SI-related competencies in evaluation metrics; recognize collaboration, empathy, and ethical leadership.
3. **Learning & Development:** Offer workshops in active listening, conflict resolution, and coaching to embed SI across leadership levels.
4. **Communication Platforms:** Use SI-informed communication channels to reduce misunderstandings and increase transparency.
5. **Culture Audits:** Periodically assess climate, track toxic patterns, and adjust systems based on feedback.
6. **Policy Alignment:** Ensure HR policies, codes of conduct, and grievance procedures align with socially intelligent leadership values.

#### Conclusion

By applying social intelligence deliberately, leaders can address deep-rooted culture issues and prevent or remove toxic leadership behaviors. SI provides the awareness, empathy, and communication skills necessary to create resilient, inclusive, and high-performing organizations. Leaders who prioritize SI are not just managing teams — they are actively shaping healthier, more productive workplace ecosystems.

## Tip Sheet: Tackling Toxic Workplaces with Social Intelligence

### ■ Spotting Toxic Behaviors

- Micromanaging & Control: Leaders who don't trust their teams.
- Exclusion: Colleagues left out of meetings, emails, or social events.
- Undermining & Gossip: Backchannel talk meant to discredit.
- Public Humiliation: Criticizing or dismissing someone in front of others.
- Silence Culture: People are afraid to speak up for fear of retaliation.

### ■ Social Intelligence Skills in Action

- Self-Awareness: Name It — Notice your own body's stress signals and prepare calm responses.
- Empathy: Step into Their Shoes — Understand what might drive toxic behavior.
- Social Awareness: Read the Room — Spot who's being silenced or excluded.
- Relationship Management: Redirect the Energy — Use respectful assertiveness to reset boundaries.

### ■ Everyday Practices to Build Healthy Culture

- Model Respect: Small actions like thanking colleagues set a tone.
- Call Out Positively: Recognize inclusive behaviors.
- Support Targets: Back up colleagues in real time.
- Check Yourself: Ensure you're not feeding toxicity.
- Escalate Wisely: Report persistent patterns.

### ■ Quick Phrases to Keep in Your Pocket

- "I'd like to finish my thought."
- "Let's keep this conversation respectful."
- "I noticed [colleague] hasn't had a chance to speak."
- "That doesn't align with our team values."
- "Can we find a constructive way forward?"

■ Takeaway: You can't control every toxic leader or workplace. But with social intelligence skills, you can protect your well-being, support others, and model the culture you want to see.

Kelly Cooper, President, Centre for Social Intelligence

[www.centreforsocialintelligence.ca](http://www.centreforsocialintelligence.ca)



## Am I Being Bullied?

We hope this self-assessment tool will help prevent self-doubt and support you to reach out for help.

It is especially important to review a few definitions of workplace harassment, including forms of psychological harassment e.g., bullying, before filing a complaint. Also, review your organizations definitions, policies, and procedures. Your companies' policies must align with the OHS Act. Therefore, they should state that you are protected against retaliation. In Canada, if you are a federal employee, you are protected against harassment, bullying, and any acts of retaliation for reporting this abuse. Be sure to check with your provincial legislation too. Most provinces also have this legislation. It is important to know that false complaints are considered malicious, and or acts of harassment. Clarity can be found on our website, or you can call OHS, Human Rights, Labour Standards, your Union, or WCB for information.

**CIWPB Definition:** the following is our own formula for defining workplace psychological harassment.

- a) A variety of tactics directed at a person or group of people,
- b) repeatedly used over a period of 3 months or more,
- c) with or without conscious intent,
- d) to cause some form of harm e.g., embarrass, humiliate, degrade, diminish, shame, or silence,
- e) by use of verbal or non-verbal tactics (e.g., in person, by letter, or electronically) towards a person, or group of people (learn about lateral violence or mobbing).

### Examples of psychological harassment or psychological violence (bullying) tactics:

- Have you been yelled at or shouted at in a hostile manner? Whether behind closed doors or in front of others, this is unprofessional. No one deserves to be treated in this manner.
- Have colleagues or leaders refused your requests for assistance, especially in a safety or high-risk situation? For example, you are feeling attacked or threatened by a client or contractor, and colleagues do not respond.
- Has a leader(s) or peer(s) lied to you, set you up to be accused of something you haven't done, or created false rumours about you?
- Has someone been repeatedly glaring at you, or rolling their eyes when you speak?
- Are you repeatedly excluded or ostracised at work-related social gatherings?
- Do you experience someone repeatedly storm out of the room when you enter?
- Are you given the silent treatment? Does someone repeatedly ignore you, turn their back to you, start texting on their cell, or seem (perhaps pretend) to fall asleep, whenever you enter the room or speak in a meeting? Is this a pattern?





- Are you often deprived of recognition and/or praise for which you are entitled? Is someone else always taking credit for your work?
- Is someone repeatedly failing to return your calls, memos, or emails? Even if they have stated that they just don't like you, this is unprofessional and immature behaviour.
- Is someone interfering and/or sabotaging your work activities? Work relationships? Your reputation? Be sure to collect evidence.
- Have you been the target of derogatory name calling or gossip? Be sure to document.
- Are you given unattainable workloads or deadlines? And is this happening just to you, or a few people and not to others? Is favoritism happening?
- Are you subjected to temper tantrums when disagreeing with someone? Are you documenting this? It is important that you do.
- Are you constantly interrupted, ignored, or oppressed when speaking?
- Do you fear that attempts are being made to turn other employees against you?
- Do you feel anxious when coming to work in the morning? Depressed? Fearful? Tearful?

Be sure to learn all you can about workplace psychological harassment (bullying). We know that shame will often keep people silent. Silence and isolation will only feed the needs of people who harm others. It does not make anyone accountable. You do not need to go through this alone. This is painful and can cause physical and psychological harm. Times have changed and there are solutions for you no matter how complicated it may seem. It is helpful and wise to talk to someone about your options. Please receive help with navigating workplace systems and their unique or complicated processes. We can help you develop a strategy for your situation, including next steps. Be sure to see someone who is trained, qualified, and experienced in workplaces systems, and the injuries targeted workers sustain. Start by calling us for a brief assessment/consultation.

The combined services of an experienced and knowledgeable coach and qualified counselor will be most effective! If you wish to process this further with an objective and experienced professional, call for a confidential supportive consultation.



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*It is important to choose your recovery with or without, justice.*

*Linda Crockett*

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## Am I a Bully? A Self Assessment Tool

Do you ever wonder if you might be a bully? What would you do if you were accused? These questions will assist you with a personal inventory. Self insight is key when it comes to prevention of workplace disruptive behaviours. When we are willing to explore concerns regarding our actions, reactions, and behaviors, we are well on our way to clarity and authentic confidence. Try to keep an open mind as you review each question carefully. Be honest with yourself. Consider asking those who know you best. Those who you can trust to give you honest and constructive feedback. Awareness and personal growth are essential to developing strong skills, and healthy relationships. This self assessment tool is for all employees. It is especially important for organizations to create a cohesive, competent, confident, leadership team. Your leadership style, skills, and responses, set the tone for a healthy work culture. Thanks to neuroplasticity, we now know that negative or disruptive behaviors are usually not hard wired. This means, anyone at any age, can improve their e.g., communication, leadership, conflict management style. Anyone can heal, enhance their skills, and grow. For those diagnosed with a personality disorder, this becomes more complicated, therefore more information and/or resources will be required.

With qualified support and/or self-help tools, there is a variety of options and resources that can help you make positive changes.

- **Do you yell, raise your voice, or swear at other staff members?** How often?
- **Are you able to apologize** (be authentic & accountable), and correct and/or learn from your mistakes?
- **Do you expect your leaders or colleagues to be accountable**, and then avoid being accountable yourself? Do you walk your talk? Practice what you preach?
- **Do you intentionally ignore, dismiss, or exclude other staff members?** Even just a little? If yes, what does this person (people) trigger in you? Are you aware that these actions reflect an insecurity and/or lack of professional skills? If you are a leader, you are a role model. *Your staff is watching you. It is important for you to know that your actions impact the work environment.*
- **Do you make insulting or humiliating comments that embarrass and cause harm** to staff or peers? Stated or implied? *Examples: a) I hate the sound of your voice, b) are you stupid? c) how did you get this job? d) you can always leave if you do not like it here.*
- **Do you talk negatively about your staff behind their backs?** Gossip? *If you are a leader and talk negatively with staff about other staff, knowing that this is unprofessional, you need to ask yourself why you risk your status of employment and reputation in this way. For anyone who gossips and betrays others, we need to ask ourselves, what need does this fill? There is no justification or excuse to ever make gossip acceptable, ok, or normal.*
- **Do you have favorite staff member or members**, and make this obvious to others? Do you ever stop and think about what message you are trying to send to others, and why? Once you understand your trigger, purpose, or goal, you can find more positive, constructive, respectful,



and skillful methods to accomplish a constructive goal. This will prevent a formal complaint against you, and a healthier work environment for all.

- **Have people complained about you?** How often? Are these complaints showing a pattern? What are you willing to do about this?
- **Do others walk on eggshells around you?** Would you know? If yes, are you all right with this? You need to be aware that this is a risk factor, and that this type of fear creates an unsafe, unhealthy work environment. What are you willing to do about this?
- **Does your staff respond confidently in meetings?** Are they free to act like themselves with you? Are certain staff unusually quiet or closed in meetings? Do you notice? Do you prefer it this way? Why? *It will be important to learn the difference between shy and/or introverted staff members versus those who feel harmed e.g., diminished, unsafe, and isolate.*
- **Leaders, do you 'win' discussions with statements like:** "I'm the boss," "I am the owner," or "I am the expert around here". You will need to examine your purpose for using comments that diminish others and shut them down. This is a tactic often used by insecure leaders.
- **Are you known for being overbearing,** dominating, loud, and/or controlling? Have you assessed why you are this way? Have you justified this by saying, 'this is just the way I am'? This is no longer an acceptable excuse. We now have scientific evidence that you can change. Your behaviours are not hard wired. *Why wait until you are forced to be accountable? Avoidance may be a barrier that keeps you stuck in this behaviour. We have safe and supportive remedies for those who are overbearing, dominating, controlling, and avoidant.*
- **Have you ever received feedback** stating that you communicate in passive aggressive ways? Sometimes people have been doing this for years and simply lack insight. It is important for you to self monitor, learn about passive aggressive tendencies, and self correct.
- **Do you use the following examples of negative management tools** e.g., threaten, intimidate, micro-manage, micro-aggressions, or subtle acts of oppression? Would you know? Would you like to know? There are safe, confidential, supportive resources to assist you. *Asking for outside feedback is a sign of strength, authenticity, and confidence.*
- **Do staff members make complaints about you?** Is there any consistency or themes in these complaints? Do you want to make things better for them? Do you care about the impact of your behaviour on staff, the overall work environment, or the organizations clients?
- **If you are a leader, do you know your own leadership style?** How would you define your style? If you cannot explain it in terms of an actual style e.g., democratic, situational, inclusive, then you need to ask yourself, why not? How do you measure effectiveness? Make 'Leading with Emotional Intelligence' your foundation! This will ensure you are self monitoring, self insightful, confident, and aware of your strengths and triggers. *There is a variety of free leadership and conflict management style questionnaires on the web. Continued professional development courses will also be positively powerful!*



- **Are you transparent in your leadership and decisions?** If not, why not? Studies show that employees thrive when their leaders are transparent.
- **If someone rubs you the wrong way**, questions you, or disagrees with you, do you feel resentful? Ever plan to get even e.g., sabotage them? Research shows us that these tactics do happen. These actions are signs of insecurity, a lack of self insight, and a lack of tools or skills, to self regulate. Finding out the answers to why one would react this way means developing confidence, self compassion, and more effective ways to respond.
- **Do you "feel the need" to control** your staff? Would you consider examining why and finding other ways to lead?
- **Do you often feel inadequate?** Do you feel threatened when a staff member or colleague shows skills in areas that you may not feel confident in? *Can you accept that you do not need to be great at everything? That you can take responsibility for your own professional development and improve your own confidence? Praising your staff or peers' knowledge and skill is a sign of strength and confidence. We are all just human. Choose to grow and develop, no one has it all.*
- **Are you part of a clique that dismisses or avoids others?** Does this group talk negatively about others? Is it a closed group? You may want to question why you feel the need to belong to a group that creates negativity and toxicity. *Like minded groups with shared interests will always form; however, they need to be healthy and open to others visiting.*
- **Do you tell your staff, or colleagues that others are talking about them?** Is this under the guise of support? What is your intention? We can tell you that the outcome will always be 'damage to their psychological safety.' Ask yourself, why would I want to do this to someone?

We have experience working with those who have been accused of workplace bullying and harassment. This includes cases that are substantiated, and cases that are malicious. Sometimes cases that are substantiated or unsubstantiated, turn out to be errors made by investigators who for example, lack trauma informed training, are unskilled, or biased. Until we have a professional regulatory body that establishes a basic criterion for investigations, and mandatory trauma informed training for investigators specifically assigned to cases of workplace psychological harassment, and/or psychological violence, unfortunately we will see mistakes being made. With this lack of formally established expectation for investigators, when mistakes are made, we see further harm and wrongdoing. We also see no options or protection for the employee who has been wronged.

Anyone accused will need and deserve support, information, and tools. If you wish to process this further with an objective, experienced professional, call for a confidential, safe, and supportive consultation.



Bravo to anyone who completes this self inventory tool!

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# THE CANADIAN INSTITUTE OF WORKPLACE BULLYING RESOURCES

Prevention | Intervention | Repair

## Self-Assessment of Workplace or Academic Psychological Injuries

We're glad you're taking this critical step to understand your emotional and physical well-being. This **self-assessment questionnaire** is designed as a first stage to **help you explore your feelings and experiences related to workplace or academic interactions**. It invites you to reflect on your current state, offering insights into whether you might be experiencing **early signs, moderate distress, or more significant impacts due to workplace bullying, mobbing, lateral violence**, or similar experiences.

**Before you begin, please note the following critical points:**

- 1. Become Knowledgeable:** Familiarize yourself with what workplace and academic bullying can look like, and learn your rights early — this can help you recognize harm sooner and respond effectively.
- 2. Review Your Company Policies and Legislation:** Review your company policies and familiarize yourself with provincial or federal legislation. Copy and paste the following link to Canadian workplace bullying legislation:  
<https://instituteofworkplacebullyingresources.ca/canadian-legislation/>
- 3. Document Everything:** Consistently document incidents that concern you or make you feel uncomfortable. Always include dates and factual details about incidents, who was involved, what happened, where, and when. Keeping organized records, notes, emails, recordings, and text messages, stored securely in one binder at home, will help you maintain clarity, build confidence in your recollections, and provide credible documentation. Avoid including client/customer names and don't rely solely on saving emails in your work account. Print and store important emails safely in your binder. Use your phone recorder to talk to if you do not like to type or write notes. It will type for you.

### Key Definitions

**Workplace Bullying:** is a **repeated** pattern of mistreatment in the work environment where an individual is subjected to verbal abuse, humiliation, embarrassment, demeaning or degrading

comments, or other negative actions. Whether intentional or unintentional, these behaviors undermine an employee's confidence and work performance, often creating a hostile or intimidating atmosphere.

**Academic Bullying:** is similar to workplace bullying, academic bullying occurs in educational settings. It involves the misuse of power by peers, supervisors, or faculty members against students or colleagues, often resulting in emotional distress, academic sabotage, or undue pressure that hampers academic success.

**Mobbing:** is a form of bullying in which several individuals (two or more) target one person with persistent negative behavior. This may be a group of peers or a mix of leaders and peers. It is collective psychological harassment that may involve the spreading of harmful rumors, social exclusion, and coordinated actions designed to isolate or discredit the individual.

**Lateral Violence:** hostile behaviors—whether overt or subtle—occur between **colleagues or peers** in the workplace. Unlike bullying directed by superiors, lateral violence typically involves undermining, sabotaging, or demeaning actions that contribute to a toxic work environment.

**Institutional Betrayal:** is the failure of an organization or institution to protect or support individuals when they are vulnerable to harm or actively participate in practices that cause further damage. Institutional betrayal may include neglecting established policies, dismissing concerns, or engaging in actions that intensify an individual's distress. This betrayal can be perpetrated by internal systems (e.g., leadership, HR, unions) or external systems (e.g., insurance companies, medical teams, investigators, mediators, safety officers). It often adds another layer of harm and can deepen feelings of isolation and mistrust.

**Gaslighting:** is a form of psychological manipulation in which someone is led to question their reality, perceptions, or memory. This tactic is often used to assert control, making the targeted individual doubt their thoughts, feelings, or sanity.

**Trauma-Informed Care:** an approach that recognizes the widespread impact of trauma and seeks to create environments where individuals feel safe, supported, and empowered. It involves understanding the prevalence of trauma, recognizing its signs and symptoms, integrating this awareness into policies and practices, and actively working to avoid re-traumatization. This model emphasizes collaboration, trust, and empowerment to meet the needs of those who have experienced trauma. **Trauma-informed care is not therapy; it's an organizational mindset and approach.**

**Psychological Injury:** A psychological injury is harm or distress that affects one's mental or emotional well-being. Injuries may include persistent anxiety, depression, or stress; feelings of low self-worth; emotional exhaustion and burnout; and difficulty concentrating or making decisions. Such injuries are often the result of chronic exposure to negative interactions, such as bullying, mobbing, or lateral violence in the workplace.

**Physical Injury:** Physical injury is any harm or damage to the body resulting from physical actions or stress. In the context of workplace mistreatment, physical injuries can include tension headaches,

muscle aches, fatigue, and sleep disturbances. While these symptoms may not always be the direct result of physical violence, chronic psychological stress can manifest physically. Chronic psychological stress often shows up physically; don't ignore ongoing pain, fatigue, or sleep disruption.

**Safety First:** If you feel unsafe (threats, violence, or severe retaliation), prioritize your personal safety. Seek external support and legal guidance rather than confronting the bully alone.

### **Purpose of This Tool**

This self-assessment is **not a diagnostic tool** but rather a reflective guide designed to help you. We hope it helps you to communicate your personal/professional experience with your treatment providers and others more confidently.

- Identify your emotional responses and any physical symptoms you may be experiencing.
- Explore why you might be reacting to and in what specific ways.
  - If a door slams or someone raises their voice, and you freeze or cry, that may indicate trauma activation.
- Consider solutions tailored to different stages of distress, from self-care and peer support to seeking professional advice.

Take your time with the questions and remember that every step you take towards understanding your feelings is a step towards a healthier, more balanced life.

If your reflections through this self-assessment indicate that you have been harmed or are struggling to cope, we strongly encourage you to seek support from a qualified professional. Your mental and physical health are paramount, and professional guidance can provide a thorough evaluation and tailored care. **If you are in crisis — for example, if you feel unsafe, hopeless, or unable to function — seek help immediately.** Contact your local mental health crisis line, go to the nearest emergency department, or call emergency services (911 in Canada).

For additional resources, visit [The Canadian Institute of Workplace Bullying Resources](#).

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### **About the Author — Linda Crockett, MSW, RSW, SEP**

*Linda Crockett is an internationally recognized psychological safety specialist and social worker with over **38 years of experience** and more than **15 years dedicated exclusively to workplace and academic bullying and harassment**. She has treated and supported **thousands of employees and students** from every industry, cultural background, and level of education. Linda is the **founder of the Canadian Institute of Workplace Bullying Resources (CIWBR)** and the **Canadian Institute of Workplace Harassment and Violence (CIWHV)**, and she has received multiple national awards for her leadership in prevention, intervention, and recovery, including recognition from the **Government of Alberta** and the **University of Alberta**.*

*This self-assessment reflects Linda's **professional opinion and extensive hands-on experience** helping targets of bullying, mobbing, lateral violence, and institutional betrayal. It is intended as a **self-reflection tool** and should be reviewed with your **family physician, therapist, or other qualified treatment providers** as part of your care plan.*

## Self-Assessment Questionnaire

For each of the following items, reflect on your experiences over the past several weeks and rate how frequently you have experienced each symptom or situation on a scale from **1 to 5**, where:

**1 = Never or Rarely, 2 = Occasionally, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Often, 5 = Very Often or Constantly**

### Section 1:

#### Experiences of Workplace Bullying, Mobbing, or Lateral Violence

##### Frequent Negative Interactions:

1. *I experience repeated negative interactions with colleagues or supervisors, such as derogatory remarks or exclusion.*

**Rating (1-5):** \_\_\_\_\_

##### Unfair Treatment:

2. *I am being singled out or unfairly treated compared to my colleagues.*

**Rating (1-5):** \_\_\_\_\_

##### Rumors and Gossip:

3. *I am the subject of harmful rumors or gossip at work.*

**Rating (1-5):** \_\_\_\_\_

##### Lack of Support:

4. *I feel unsupported by management or human resources when I raise concerns about mistreatment.*

**Rating (1-5):** \_\_\_\_\_

##### Retaliation or Isolation:

5. *I have experienced retaliation or deliberate isolation as a response to reporting issues or standing up for myself or others.*

**Rating (1-5):** \_\_\_\_\_

### Section 2: Psychological Symptoms

##### Emotional Distress:

1. *I often feel overwhelmed, anxious, or depressed as a result of my work environment.*

**Rating (1-5):** \_\_\_\_\_

##### Reduced Self-Esteem:

2. *I experience a significant drop in my self-confidence and self-worth at work.*

**Rating (1-5):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Difficulty Concentrating:**

3. *Due to persistent stress, I find it hard to focus on my tasks or make decisions.*

**Rating (1-5):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Sleep Disturbances:**

4. *I have trouble falling or staying asleep because of work-related stress.*

**Rating (1-5):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Withdrawal or Isolation:**

5. *I feel compelled to withdraw from colleagues or social interactions because of negative workplace experiences.*

**Rating (1-5):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Section 3: Physical Symptoms (Related to Stress)**

**Headaches or Muscle Tension:**

1. *I frequently experience headaches or muscle tension that is related to stress at work.*

**Rating (1-5):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Fatigue:**

2. *I feel physically exhausted even after getting enough sleep.*

**Rating (1-5):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Other Stress-Related Symptoms:**

3. *I experience other physical symptoms (e.g., stomach issues, rapid heartbeat) that I attribute to work-related stress.*

**Rating (1-5):** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Interpreting Your Score**

After completing the questionnaire, add your ratings for each section and the overall questionnaire. While this self-assessment is not a formal diagnosis, it can help indicate the stage of injury you may be experiencing. Take this completed self-assessment to your family physician and/or counsellor for further review and discussion. The professionals will provide a formal diagnosis.

### **Early Stage (Mild Concern):**

- **Indicators:** The total score tends to fall in the lower range (roughly 13–26 across all items).
- **Symptoms:** Occasional negative experiences or mild symptoms; stress is present but not overwhelming.

### **Moderate Stage (Significant Distress):**

- **Indicators:** Total score in the mid-range (approximately 27–39).
- **Symptoms:** More frequent negative experiences and symptoms have a noticeable impact on mood and work performance.

### **Crisis Stage (High Distress):**

- **Indicators:** Total score is high (40 or above).
- **Symptoms:** Persistent and severe experiences of workplace mistreatment and associated physical and emotional symptoms, with significant interference in daily functioning.

*Note:* These ranges are approximate. Workplace bullying is never a one-time incident. Consider the frequency and intensity of your responses to help you understand your situation.

### **Recommended Solutions**

#### **For Early Stage:**

- **Self-Care:** Engage in stress-reduction activities such as mindfulness, exercise, or hobbies.
- **Peer Support:** Talk with trusted colleagues or friends about your experiences.
- **Monitor Your Health:** Keep a journal of incidents and your responses.
- **Early Consultation:** Consider a confidential conversation with a workplace counselor or mental health professional to learn coping strategies.

#### **For Moderate Stage:**

- **Professional Support:** Ensure your family doctor is aware of the stress you are experiencing, as they can document your situation and guide your care.
- **Seek Guidance:** Reach out to a trusted resource, either internal or external, such as:
  - Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) 1-866-415-8690
  - Human Rights organizations
  - Your Union
  - HR or Management
  - Contact a Psychological Safety Consultant (CIWBR), including trauma-informed consultants, coaches, trainers, or counselors.

A trauma-informed psychological safety counselor can assist you with system processes, managing immediate symptoms, advocacy, and stress management programs.

### **For Crisis Stage:**

- **Immediate Professional Help:** It is important to consult with a trauma-informed mental health professional immediately (e.g., CIWBR). If you feel unsafe or overwhelmed, consider crisis intervention services.
- **External Support:** Look into external resources such as CIWBR, your employee assistance programs (EAP), or hotlines available for crisis support. Make sure they have training in this specialized area.
- **Workplace Compensation Board (WCB or WSIB):** Consider filing a claim, but ensure you have been documenting all incidents with evidence (emails, text messages, witnesses) and have sought medical guidance for a diagnosis.
- **Legal/Advocacy Advice:** If workplace bullying or violence is severe, seek legal advice or contact advocacy groups to understand your rights and potential next steps. If you are unionized, call your union representative. If not, you may want to consult with an employment lawyer.
- **Consider a Change:** If the environment is detrimental to your well-being and no internal solutions are viable, you might need to evaluate the possibility of a job change for your long-term health.

### **Final Note**

This self-assessment is a reflective tool designed to help you better understand your feelings and reactions related to workplace or academic bullying. **It does not replace a qualified professional diagnosis or assessment.**

We encourage you to bring your results to your doctor or therapist for further discussion. If you believe you are suffering from any form of injury, psychological or physical, due to your work/or education environment, please consider reaching out to professionals who can provide you with tailored support and intervention. Your mental and physical health is paramount.

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