ELDER "BULLYING" WHAT SHOULD WE DO?

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BULLYING

➡ "Bullying" is defined with the following core elements: unwanted aggressive behavior; observed or perceived power imbalance; and repetition of behaviors or high likelihood of repetition.

➡ Bullying can be direct (e.g., bullying that occurs in the presence of a targeted individual) and indirect (e.g., bullying not directly communicated to a targeted individual such as spreading rumors).

➡ Broad categories of bullying include physical, verbal, relational (e.g., efforts to harm the reputation or relationships of the targeted individual), and damage to property.

Studies suggest that most senior-to-senior aggression in long term care settings is verbal abuse, and that men and women are equally likely to be the victim as well as the aggressor (Senior Bullying, 2015). However, all forms of bullying are possible.

IDENTIFYING BULLYING

Staff in long term care/assisted living should become familiar with characteristics commonly shown among senior bullies, and monitor these individuals for any bullying behaviors. However, not everyone with such characteristics will bully.

TYPICAL TRAITS OF INDIVIDUALS WHO BULLY

✓ Lacks empathy
✓ has few friends
✓ "needs" power and control
✓ struggles with individual differences
✓ uses power and control at the expense of others
✓ suffers from low self-esteem
✓ empowered by causing conflict, or making others feel threatened, fearful, hurt

TYPICAL TRAITS OF INDIVIDUALS WHO BULLY

WOMEN:
✓ gossips
✓ snipes
✓ member of a clique
✓ passive-aggressive behavior
✓ manipulates emotions

TYPICAL TRAITS OF INDIVIDUALS WHO BULLY

MEN:
✓ direct
✓ spontaneous
✓ verbally or physically aggressive
✓ superiority complex
✓ overly protective

OTHER REASONS WHY RESIDENTS MIGHT BULLY

✓ The environment may inadvertently contribute to why a resident may bully.
✓ Transitioning into a new community can be stressful for some, and new residents may feel a sense of powerlessness moving into a more supportive, communal environment.
✓ They make seek out a way to demonstrate some form of control.

OTHER REASONS WHY RESIDENTS MIGHT BULLY

✓ Certain health conditions may contribute to aggressive behaviors.
✓ For example, persons with dementia may have a need they cannot express or be in a situation they cannot understand.
✓ They may also no longer have the ability to verbally communicate, and therefore, act out in a physical way.
✓ Dementia can also cause impulse controls to decrease, often stripping residents of their mental filter.
✓ As a result, residents with dementia may say things that could be construed as verbal bullying.

VICTIMS RISK FACTORS

✓ a new member of the community
✓ considered to be vulnerable (e.g., a person seen as a " sh out of water")
✓ doesn't know what to expect from others
✓ alone (e.g., widowed or divorced)
✓ has a "scattered" support network (family and friends)
✓ heavily dependent on others
✓ suffering from mental illness
✓ suffering from depression
✓ has a change in other health condition(s)
✓ has a quiet, passive demeanor

EVALUATING THE SCOPE OF THE BULLYING

✓ Is it direct or indirect?
✓ Does it fall within the categories of physical, verbal, relational, or damage to property?
✓ Did it threaten or affect someone's safety or health?
✓ Did it harm someone (either physically or psychosocially)?
✓ What is the frequency of the behavior (e.g., was this a first-time offense, or a repeated behavior by a particular resident?).

EXAMPLES OF BULLYING BEHAVIOR

Physical

✓ Dirty looks
✓ Overbearing physical presence
✓ Hitting, kicking or other physical assault
✓ Sexual harassment or abuse

EXAMPLES OF BULLYING BEHAVIOR

Verbal

✓ Passive-aggressive comments
✓ Negative, critical comments about appearance, personality, etc.
✓ Demanding, bossing around a resident
✓ Unsolicited or unwelcome sexual comments

EXAMPLES OF BULLYING BEHAVIOR

Relational

✓ Ignoring a resident
✓ Gossiping
✓ Participating in cliques that conspire to isolate a resident

EXAMPLES OF BULLYING BEHAVIOR

Damage to Property

✓ Stealing items from another resident
✓ Damaging items belonging to another resident

CREATING A POSITIVE ENVIRONMENT

Strategies

✓ **Develop clear rules and expectations for resident and staff behavior**; invite everyone to be involved in determining what these rules and expectations should be.
✓ **Consider adding language around bullying to your admission agreements** to discuss in advance with new residents and their families your community's expectations and processes for handling bullying activities at your organization.

CREATING A POSITIVE ENVIRONMENT
Strategies

- ✓ **Provide regular employee training** to recognize and respond to bullying and other difficult behaviors; include activities that promote the development of empathy.
- ✓ **Review policies for potential revisions that may reduce opportunities for bullying.** These policies must also take into consideration efforts to create a home-like environment where residents have choice and a right to privacy.

CREATING A POSITIVE ENVIRONMENT
Strategies

- ✓ **Encourage staff and residents to report incidents of bullying and take complaints seriously**; staff must feel supported in making reports and in setting limits on inappropriate behavior.
- ✓ **Review state requirements to ensure compliance with staff training and reporting requirements** regarding elder abuse.

DEVELOPMENT OF "CARING AND EMPATHY"
Strategies

- ✓ **Acknowledge members of your community who go out of their way** to welcome new residents or are friendly to current residents who are perceived as "outcasts."
- ✓ **Create a training program with role-playing** to demonstrate positive resident interactions related to conflict and bullying. Incorporate residents into the role-playing.

DEVELOPMENT OF "CARING AND EMPATHY"
Strategies

- ✓ **Institute a "Caring Squad" concept,** where its participants' job to notice acts of kindness and reward them. Nominate residents or employees each month who have been especially caring.
- ✓ **Create a wellness program** that promotes personal responsibility, compassion, tolerance and empathy.

DEVELOPMENT OF "CARING AND EMPATHY"

Strategies

- ✓ **Help residents expand their social networks,** perhaps during meals in the dining room or during activities, to alleviate "cliques."
- ✓ **Host a mixer type event for all new residents monthly or quarterly.** Invite their families and friends, as well as with current residents.

It is important to recognize that developing a caring community is a process and organizational change is slow; improvements will not happen overnight, but gains can be made over time.

RESPONDING TO INCIDENTS

Sample Process

- ✓ Staff member observes or is told about a situation involving bullying behavior.
- ✓ Staff member assesses whether there is a potential for immediate or imminent physical danger to anyone, and if so, takes immediate steps to de-escalate the situation.
- ✓ Staff member notifies the appropriate leadership (e.g., immediate supervisor or DON).

RESPONDING TO INCIDENTS

Sample Process

- ✓ Once notified of the situation, leadership/ management also assesses the potential for physical danger, and if so, whether appropriate steps have been taken to safeguard the victim or if necessary, all within the community.
  - ‣ If a crime has been committed, leadership/ management reports the incident to the proper authorities (consult all relevant law and regulation).
  - ‣ Leadership/management also assesses whether to notify the families, guardian or legal representation of the residents involved with the incident.

RESPONDING TO INCIDENTS
Sample Process

✓ If the incident is less severe, staff may be able to help resolve the situation. Management or the social worker should gather as much information or evidence as possible. Collect accounts from witnesses among staff and residents, and talk with individuals who may have additional background information on the residents involved. Staff should also take into account what it already knows about the individuals involved (personalities, conditions, etc.). (Follow your facility policy.)

RESPONDING TO INCIDENTS
Sample Process

✓ With all the information, brainstorm possible solutions, while still adhering to residents' rights. For example:
- ‣ Would the bully benefit from counseling, or do these residents need mediation?
- ‣ Are there environmental factors that could help deter bullying (e.g., adjoining rooms, proximity to one another at social gatherings)?
- ‣ If a resident living with dementia is exhibiting bullying behavior, what is possibly triggering the resident, or how can they be redirected?

RESPONDING TO INCIDENTS
Sample Process

✓ Develop a corrective plan, and communicate the plan to the impacted parties and staff . Consider whether the plan should be incorporated into residents' care plans and whether family members of residents should also be notified.
✓ With staff educated on the corrective plan, they can help implement, monitor the residents and report back on progress.
✓ If a resident is still exhibiting bullying behaviors— whether chronic, non-discriminatory, or purposeful— staff should reassess possible solutions. If others are at risk, voluntary or involuntary transfer, may be necessary. Again, consult all relevant law and regulation.

OTHER TACTICS...

✓ Clearly communicate to residents that bullying behavior is unacceptable. If you make your residents sign an anti-bullying policy upon admission and they exhibit such behaviors, warn them that they are in violation of the policy. Often this will have an impact, as residents will not want to endanger their ability to remain in the community.
✓ If a bullying issue arises that is challenging to resolve, consider setting up a meeting with appropriate staff to share ideas. You may also want to consider hiring an external consultant to help resolve.
✓ Identify external resources that may be able to available (e.g., Adult Protective Services).

CHARACTERISTICS OF CONFLICT

- ✓ As conflict escalates, concern for self increases.
- ✓ The desire to win increases with a rise in self-interest. Saving face takes on increased importance at higher levels of conflict.
- ✓ Nice people can become harmful to others as conflict increases.
- ✓ Conflict management strategies that work at low levels of conflict are often ineffective, and at times are counter-productive at higher levels of conflict.
- ✓ Conflict may skip levels.
- ✓ People are likely to be at different levels during conflict, but an overall organizational level of conflict can be identified.

STAGE ONE OF CONFLICT

- ✓ Is ongoing and generally requires little action.
- ✓ Is characterized by day-to-day irritations. These irritations can be passed off, sometimes indefinitely. But an irritation can become a problem.
- ✓ The variable that causes irritation to become a problem is people. Different personalities, coping mechanisms and ever-changing life events make it impossible to predict when an individual has had enough.

STAGE TWO OF CONFLICT

- ✓ Takes on the element of competition, typified by a "win-lose" attitude.
- ✓ Losses seem greater at this stage because people are tied to the problems.
- ✓ Self-interest and "how one looks" become very important. A "cover your own behind" attitude can also be observed.
- ✓ People keep track of verbal victories and record mistakes, witnesses take sides, and an imaginary debate develops with scores being tallied.
- ✓ At this stage the *people* are the problem!

STAGE THREE OF CONFLICT

- ✓ Objective shifts from wanting to win toward wanting to hurt.
- ✓ Motivation is to "get rid" of the other party.
- ✓ People choose sides on "the issues that matter."
- ✓ Leaders emerge from the group and act as spokespersons.
- ✓ Outsiders are enlisted toward the cause, giving little room for middle ground.
- ✓ Merits of an argument and the strength with which positions are held are greatly exaggerated at this stage.
- ✓ A loss of perspective is quite likely on the part of all participants.
- ✓ Individuals at this Stage will likely prolong the conflict, consumed by the event and the energy it provides.

RESOLVING CONFLICT

- ✓ Build winners, voting builds losers
- ✓ Declare a "time-out"
- ✓ Encourage equal participation
- ✓ Actively listen
- ✓ Separate fact from fiction
- ✓ Separate "people" from the "problem"
- ✓ Divide and conquer

5 "DON'TS" DURING CONFLICT

1. **Don't get in a Power Struggle!**
- ✓ Once a power struggle begins, three results are possible:
  - ‣ The other person is stopped or possibly killed.
  - ‣ The other person leaves your facility.
  - ‣ An ongoing jockeying for position begins.

  To avoid Power Struggles:
  - ‣ Don't argue unless you are prepared to waste time. Reason will NOT work.
  - ‣ Don't engage in a battle unless you are prepared to lose, because you already have.
  - ‣ Don't take on responsibility for others' emotions; share the responsibility.

5 "DON'TS" DURING CONFLICT

2. **Don't become detached from the conflict.**
- ✓ Important to have a passionate concern for both the people and the problem.
- ✓ Concern is one motivation that drives us to find the opportunity in conflict.

5 "DON'TS" DURING CONFLICT

3. **Don't let conflict establish your schedule.**
- ✓ Don't spend all your time and energy on one issue.
- ✓ Watch time/resident traps. Are there residents who seem to consume your time before you're aware it's gone?
- ✓ Identify urgent issues, especially negative or conflict issues. If you notice one consistent time offender, manage that offender.

5 "DON'TS" DURING CONFLICT

4. Don't be caught "awfulizing" - "The tendency to escalate a situation into its worst possible conclusion..."
   - ✓ People are rarely as benevolent as they perceive themselves to be.
   - ✓ People are rarely as evil as their opponents perceive them to be.
   - ✓ The motivations of others are rarely as planned or thought out as presented.
   - ✓ Every conflict has a history that extends beyond the present. The people and their previous patterns of relating taint the present perception.

5 "DON'TS" DURING CONFLICT

5. Don't be fooled by "projection."
   - ✓ Projection is an emotional release.
   - ✓ Individuals unconsciously project their own flaws and weaknesses onto others.
   - ✓ Notice the generalizations and accusations being made about others, especially comments about someone's motivations.
   - ✓ We may understand others and we may be able to predict their actions accurately, but it is dangerous to believe anyone can read the minds of others.

PERSONALITIES: THE BULL

Characteristics

- ✓ Obsessed with winning
- ✓ Walk/run right over you
- ✓ "My way or no way"
- ✓ HAS to win!

Coping Strategies
- ✓ First, react differently, be calm.
- ✓ Stand up for yourself; stand your ground.
- ✓ Don't run; but don't battle!
- ✓ Be assertive; ask for your rights.
- ✓ Give them time to blow of steam; run out of things to say.
- ✓ May have to interrupt.
- ✓ Do something deliberate to get their attention.
- ✓ Get them to sit down.
- ✓ Talk for yourself only.

PERSONALITIES: THE FOX

Characteristics

- ✓ "Stab in the back"
- ✓ Little barbs; does it in front of other people
- ✓ Back-handed compliments
- ✓ Wants respect, recognition & control

Coping Strategies
- ✓ Foxes count on the "fact" that their victims will do anything to avoid a social outburst or go against social convention.
- ✓ Bring the "fight" out into the open.
- ✓ Ask questions – force them to choose between a real fight of conversation.
- ✓ Bring reality into your discussion.
- ✓ Confront one on one, not in front of people.
- ✓ Ignore!

PERSONALITIES: THE TIME-BOMB

Coping Strategies

✓ Lower voice & slow down your speech.
✓ Give them time.
✓ Best method – help them regain control.
✓ Be patient – let them run down.
✓ Show your sincerity, your desire to talk.
✓ Get out!

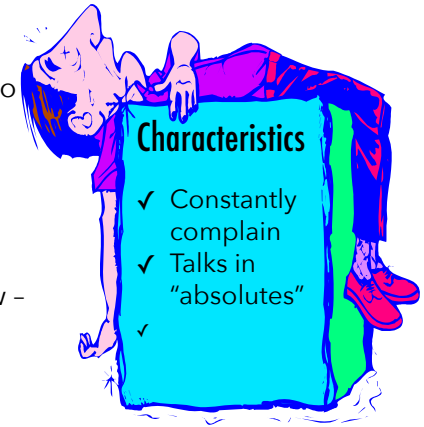## Characteristics

✓ "Mostly nice" people
✓ Something sets them off…
✓ Get no respect…
✓ Later…they're OK.

PERSONALITIES: THE WHINER

Coping Strategies

✓ Will require patience; these individuals are accustomed to being passive.
✓ Listen closely; actively. Let them feel important.
✓ Acknowledge what they've said. Press for specifics. Ask who, what, when, where, how – NEVER why.
✓ Ask them to be specific.
✓ Don't agree – just listen.
✓ State the facts & go to problem solving.

Characteristics

✓ Constantly complain
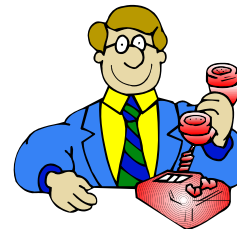✓ Talks in "absolutes"
✓

PERSONALITIES: THE STONEWALL
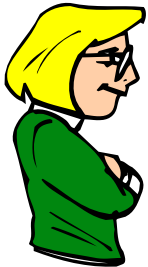
Characteristics

✓ Withholds
✓ Gives no information
✓ Non-conversing
✓ Afraid of looking bad

Coping Strategies

✓ Be attentive
✓ Be persistent & supportive
✓ Ask questions that require more than a "yes" or "no"
✓ Set time limits on silent episodes
✓ Try to break the tension
✓ Ask who, what, when, where & how

PERSONALITIES: THE STONEWALL

Characteristics

✓ Yes person – can't follow through
✓ Will agree, promise anything, but can't produce
✓ Wants to be liked, loved & respected

Coping Strategies

✓ Make honesty non-threatening
✓ Be personal when you can
✓ Watch out for unrealistic commitments
✓ Set priorities
✓ Convince it's OK to say "no"
✓ Let them know you appreciate them in other ways

PERSONALITIES: THE STICK-IN-THE-MUD

Characteristics
- ✓ Negativity
- ✓ Shoot all ideas down
- ✓ Doesn't work well in groups
- ✓ Think they know how the world should be
- ✓ Cannot accept change or disappointment

Coping Strategies
- ✓ "In every problem, there is a gift…"
- ✓ Use them to anticipate obstacles or problems; a Devil's Advocate.
- ✓ Don't get caught in their negativity.
- ✓ In a non-argumentative way, state your perception of the situation.
- ✓ Ask them, "what's the worst that could happen?"
- ✓ Use positive and enthusiastic terminology.
- ✓ Use humor.

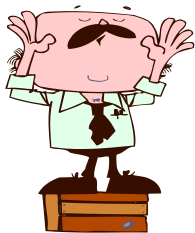# PERSONALITIES: THE KNOW-IT-ALL

Coping Strategies
- ✓ Try to get them to understand other views
- ✓ Be sure and research – know what you're talking about
- ✓ Listen attentively & actively
- ✓ Question them without antagonizing
- ✓ If you're going to disagree, do it tentatively
- ✓ Ask to expand on ideas

Characteristics
- ✓ Knows everything
- ✓ Knows what is right
- ✓ Is irritating
- ✓ Believes the more knowledge, the more influence
- ✓ Needs control & influence

PERSONALITIES: THE FAKE KNOW-IT-ALL

Coping Strategies
- ✓ Right/wrong doesn't work
- ✓ State facts (the real ones) as an alternate viewpoint
- ✓ Give them opportunity to save face
- ✓ Confront one on one
- ✓ Recognize, acknowledge when they do offer something correct or of value Use humor.

Characteristics
- ✓ Makes it up as they go along…"
- ✓ Wants respect.

PERSONALITIES: THE PROCRASTINATOR

Coping Strategies
- ✓ Coach & confront; set priorities; time frames
- ✓ Bring the issue(s) out in the open
- ✓ Help them to be direct & problem solve
- ✓ Stress quality & service – procrastinators are genuinely motivated to help people
- ✓ Keep control and action in your own hands
- ✓ Keep holding them accountable

Characteristics
- ✓ "Puts things off
- ✓ No follow-through
- ✓ Afraid they might not meet expectations
- ✓ Needs respect, love and control

DE-ESCALATING TECHNIQUES

Some simple, common-sense steps:

1. Maintain proper distance (3 to 6 feet) from residents who have a history of violence or combativeness.
2. Respect the resident's personal space.
3. Maintain an open stance. Stand at an angle, palms open – no hands on hips, crossing of arms or pointing fingers.
4. Maintain appropriate eye contact and facial expressions.
5. Project a calm attitude

DE-ESCALATING TECHNIQUES

Some simple, common-sense steps:

6. Utilize active listening skills, acknowledging the resident is upset and asking for their recommendations to correct the problem.
7. Don't take it personally – it's not about you! Manage your own frustration and anger.
8. Listen without interrupting and try to validate his/her feelings.When the resident pauses, say something like "I understand you are upset."

DE-ESCALATING TECHNIQUES

Memorize the four Ds:

1. Disarming: engage in conversation with a resident only after he/she has "cooled down."
2. Diverting: shift the focus from the resident's angry behavior to the issues behind the angry behavior.
3. Diffusing: remain calm and refuse to escalate angry behavior by reinforcing it with verbal retaliation or aggressive body language.
4. Deflecting: Use silence selectively as a means of ignoring verbal attacks.

DE-ESCALATING TECHNIQUES

Some simple, common-sense steps:

1. Remain nonjudgmental, show empathy, and let the resident know you want to address his/her concerns.
2. Be aware of your tone of voice, volume and rate that you speak. Be calm, speaker clearly and slowly in a moderate tone. Speaking too fast or too slowly conveys agitation and loss of control.
3. Use the resident's name in a respectful manner.
4. Set non-negotiable limits. Give residents clear choices and consequences for their actions. For example, "If you refrain from using profanity, we can discuss your concerns."

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