

# Protecting Yourself

Strategies for shutting down disrespectful behavior from other adults

**SESSION:** *Adult Bullying: How to Deal with it Effectively* | **Presenter:** Michael Weber, district administrator, Port Washington-Saukville School District

“**W**e focus on bullying among our students then we make an assumption that when people become adults the bullying stops,” said Michael Weber, district administrator of the Port Washington-Saukville School District.

Unfortunately, that is not the case. Bullying among adults exists in all areas, including our workplaces. However, Weber says, there are tactics and strategies to shut down adult bullying and protect yourself.

The definition of a bully is, “someone who persistently uses intimidation and manipulation to get their way.” Research shows that many people who were bullied as kids are bullies as adults, which makes a strong case for clamping down on bullying among children.

One of the first steps in protecting yourself against adult bullying is to understand that you are not responsible for bullying. Weber said a bullying incident can affect us more strongly than it should if we play back the situation over and over in our head. These are called thought attacks.

“We need to protect this point of human dignity within us at all costs,” Weber said.

One strategy Weber recommends to shut down bullying is to write down exactly what a bully says or does. Keeping a logbook shows the bully that their behavior has been recorded and that they will be held accountable. Weber remembers one union battle in which an individual bullied the other side. Weber used his logbook to recite some of the things this person said.

“It shut down their bullying in an instant,” Weber said.

In other situations, Weber says it can work to “push back respectfully.” You can accomplish this by using phrases that keep the focus and pressure on the bully’s behavior. This can include using phrases such as “What did you say to me?” which help keep the attention on the misconduct. Similarly, people can call a bully on their behavior by focusing on them and their behavior and not how it makes you feel.

For instance, Weber said, don’t say “I don’t appreciate how you’re talking to me,” instead say “You need to talk to me more respectfully.” When you use “I,” it doesn’t motivate the bully to quit, it actually



Michael Weber, Port Washington-Saukville School District

reinforces them.

Weber covered a number of other strategies and offered advice. He said that ignoring bullying behavior doesn’t cause it to stop – it needs to be confronted. Similarly, Weber said that the only people bullies give any respect are those who do not allow them to get away with their harassing behavior. As far as repelling bullying behavior, moving and speaking with confidence does much to thwart bullying behavior. ■

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