

Finding the Good in the Workplace Bully

Debra Stewart

Xlibris (Sep 29, 2017)

Softcover \$19.99 (108pp)

978-1-5434-5441-3

Finding the Good in the Workplace Bully is both revealing in its insights and actionable in its recommendations. Leaders in any type and size of organization should find it to be of great value.

Finding the Good in the Workplace Bully by Debra Stewart is an enlightening guide for redirecting the negativity that comes from being subject to bullying.

Stewart, who grew up being bullied, states that bullying in the workplace is a systemic problem. This brief but excellent book postulates a “bully triad” made up of the bully, the victim, and the bystanders, and states that they are all in some way responsible for continuing the bullying cycle.

An organizational leader who wants to correct the situation, writes Stewart, needs to do “triage” in the form of a cultural assessment of the organization, a needs assessment, and then a plan for change and support. The book discusses these four phases and demonstrates how to proceed.

Stewart not only offers a discussion of assessments, she provides three rubrics—a bully assessment rubric, a victim assessment rubric, and a bystander assessment rubric—that the leader can use to evaluate and rate specific criteria.

Perhaps the most provocative aspect of the book is the author's surprising slant of “finding the good” in the bully, the victim, and the bystander. Stewart very clearly describes bully behavior and acknowledges the harm the bully can do in an organization, but at the same time, she proposes organizational actions that can be taken to offset the bully's negative impacts.

One possible solution, for example, is to embrace the “Vital Life Community” wellness concept, writes Stewart, in which

employees are provided opportunities to socialize with one another, form healthy relationships with others who have similar wellness goals, and develop an attitude of helping others.

Similarly, she addresses organizational strategies and tactics that can help both the victim and the bystander.

There are other chapters that raise the topic of workplace bullying to a new and important level, such as the application of gratitude as a “performance improvement tool” and a fascinating discussion of how to manage gifted and ungifted employees whose behavior may be misinterpreted.

The next-to-last chapter in the book is just as compelling: it includes several actual stories about bullying. Many of these stories are written in the first person, often from the perspective of the victim. Interestingly, some of the stories demonstrate that bullying isn't always committed by a supervisor, but can be by a worker on the same level or even a lower level than the bullying victim. In the book's concluding chapter, Stewart points out that changing the organizational culture can begin a healing process; in fact, "change will bring about forgiveness."

Finding the Good in the Workplace Bully is both revealing in its insights and actionable in its recommendations. Leaders in any type and size of organization should find it to be of great value in fostering a healthy workplace.

BARRY SILVERSTEIN (February 27, 2018)

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