

My Workplace Bullying Experience.

We were in Nelson having dinner when a stranger overheard us and joined our conversation. He told us one of his co-workers was the new staff member who would be joining me at work. However, no-one liked him and customers complained about him and they were pleased he was leaving their employment. I thought that was unusual, until I met him!

We didn't work in the department so I did not have much contact with him. However, when I was appointed the new tourism tutor instead of him, he became the dragon his previous co-worker mentioned! It had taken six months before he vented his anger on me.

We had a work rule to never search through one another's desk when we needed information about one of their students in their earlier study. We were always busy and often left notes for each other instead.

As I was new in my role as tourism tutor I asked my manager before I left a note on the dragon man's desk. We had an open plan office and our desks now faced each other. When he arrived at his desk and saw the note, he looked up and glared at me. I felt knives shooting through the air at me! He stormed over to the manager, interrupted her conversation with a student and asked if he needed to find the information about his former students. Of course she said 'yes'. He glared at me again, before storming out of our office. The doors swung on the hinges as he stamped his way towards our archives room. I guessed the information was still in a box next to his desk but I dared not tell him.

A few minutes later we heard his return. The other tutors and I glanced at each other and smirking, quickly buried ourselves in our work. The door was shoved open almost coming off the hinges. He stormed to his desk, rumbled through his papers and found the information about his student which I needed. Then he came and stood over me whilst I was sitting at my desk and let his anger rip. He was over six feet tall with a red face that shone like a fire engine and had slick back hair, like they wore in the 1930's. He told me he was angry because he should have got the new job instead of me. He was angry because of a dozen other reasons...and no matter what I said...he yelled and performed like a 'two year old' child having a tantrum. A few minutes later he finished and stormed out of the office again.

I had never experienced such rage and childish like temper tantrum behaviour from an adult. Everyone in the office was shocked and horrified and asked how I was. My hands were shaking and my legs felt like they had turned to jelly. I couldn't stand up. I told them he was being a bully which we already surmised because of the stories we were hearing about him in his classroom and students in tears, and how he spoke to his wife on the telephone. I rang the head of department, explained what happened and asked if I could go home. He replied 'yes, and take the rest of the week off'. I said I didn't need to and would return to work the next day.

My years of my personal development gave me the knowledge so I analyzed my experience. He was a bully and I was his victim, so he thought. However, because I understood Transactional Analysis after my bullying at school and marriage, I knew the symptoms and the solutions. He was trying to blame me for his problems, insecurities and vent his anger on me. Although I was the target I didn't believe the insults he yelled at me. Although I was understandably upset, I communicated back to him assertively and my self esteem was still intact. These were my solutions.

Also, I realised if I had experienced this workplace bullying, fifteen years earlier I would have fallen back into the victim role of my earlier life. Our workplace relationship would have reverted into a lose/lose level. However, because I had educated myself with years of personal development, I was now wiser and understood the situation. I wasn't part of the problem. If it hadn't been me, it would have been someone else he abused. I was astute enough now to realise it was a lose/win situation. He was the loser and I was the winner.

Our head of department had told me we needed to discuss it and become friends! I refused and said I would only talk to the dragon in his office with him present. I was concerned about another onslaught of his anger.

Four days later he arrived back at work. Consequently, we meet in the boss's office at 10.00am on Friday morning. Our boss suggested we talk it over during lunch and again, told to become friend. He continued that we were both divorced, had two young daughters and many other similarities to chat about.

I said one of the most important 'no's' in my life. I told the boss I would discuss work only and not become friends.

I was not going to be drawn back into a lose/lose relationship with the dragon. With my new found confidence after my personal development training I had set new rules for my life. I only wanted good relationships and create win/win relationships. I knew what I was aiming for and who I wanted in my life.

During the week I had told my mother about the episode at work and she suggested I put standard roses around my desk to protect myself from his negative energy. I loved the humour of that idea, but instead purchased four small lavender plants which I strategically placed on my desk along with more positive quotes.

We continued working together for about a month before he left. One year later I understood those first remarks made about him by his ex-colleagues and the reason why no-one liked him. He went roaming into another workplace causing chaos.