Analysis and Promotion of Psychological Safety in the Healthcare Setting

Ekta Srinivasa
Clinical Resource Nurse, Med/Surgical Areas
VA Boston Healthcare System, Boston, MA, USA

Charles Kerr
Clinical Resource Nurse, Special Care Areas
VA Boston Healthcare System, Boston, MA, USA
Objectives

• Participants will be able to define workplace bullying and lateral violence
• Participants can name three behaviors that may constitute bullying
• Participants will be able to identify two factors that perpetuate the cycle of bullying
• Participants can identify one framework for addressing bullying and lateral violence
Background and Significance

• 35% of the U.S workforce report being bullied at work - An estimated 53.5 million Americans (The Workplace Bullying Institute, 2011)

• Nursing: Primary occupation at risk (Carter, 1999; Jacobs & Kyzer, 2010; Quine, 2001)
  
  ▪ 44% to 85% of nurses are victims
  ▪ > 90% report witnessing
  
  ▪ Due to high prevalence, the behavior is considered normal and accepted within the nursing culture.
    • Overlooked and unreported

• Prevalence within the Veterans Administration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Complaints by Issue</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016 1st Q</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Harassment: Non-sexual</td>
<td>873</td>
<td>980</td>
<td>862</td>
<td>941</td>
<td>1166</td>
<td>296</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What is bullying/lateral violence

- Covert or overt acts of verbal and non-verbal aggression causing psychological distress (Dellasega, 2009; Hutchinson, Vickers, Jackson, & Wilkes, 2006)

- Deliberate and harmful behavior
  - Can be openly displayed but
  - More commonly masked and subtle as it is repeated, often escalating over time
Bullying as a Challenge to Psychological Safety

- Little Abrasive Things
- Body Language - Looks
- Sarcasm
- Teasing - Put Downs
- Labeling - Name Calling
- Rumors
- 'Icing'
- Taunting
- Mental/Emotional Abuse
- Damaging Property
- Physical Abuse
- Violence

The Human Condition
Invalidation (Creates feelings of Self-Doubt Inadequacy)
Intimidation (Rejection, Mental & Emotional Wounding)
Harassment (Persistent Tormenting)
Malevolence
Once You Feel Unsafe the Damage is Done

• Soldiers often describe their experience in combat where waiting around for an attack is harder on them psychologically than performing in an actual battle.

• In a psychologically unsafe work environment, a person or a group of targets are facing visible or invisible attacks anywhere and anytime.

• Knowing that a person or an entity cannot be trusted, these people are in constant fear of these attacks.
Impact - Personal

• Initiates Fight or Flight response
  – In its more severe forms,
    • It triggers a host of stress-related health complications
      – Hypertension, auto-immune disorders, depression, anxiety to PTSD (The Healthy Workplace Campaign, 2011)

• Victims feel rejection within the work environment

“Neuroscientists have discovered that the anguish of social rejection registers in the anterior cingulate cortex, the same part of the brain that processes physical pain.
Your brain responds to rejection much as it does to a punch in the gut: Once hit, you resist cooperating, even if doing so goes against your rational interests, and attempts to resolve your conflict become far more difficult.” (Shapiro, 2016, Page 51)
Impact - Organizational


- Medical errors are a leading cause of death in the U.S.

- Totalitarian type of an environment, the best qualified people may be seen as a threat and creativity can stifled.
High levels of bureaucracy/job security

Absence of organizational fairness

“The Environment

“Workplace Bullying among Healthcare Workers”

Antonio Ariza-Montes, Noel M. Muniz, María José Montero-Simó, and Rafael Angel Araque-Padilla
Theory of the Nurse as a Wounded Healer

Conti-O’Hare (2002)
Sociopaths

• 1 in 25
• Lack empathy/remorse
• Manipulative
• Superficially charming
• Usually intelligent
• Attain success using unscrupulous methods
• Formally diagnosed if they meet the criteria listed in DSM V

(Stout, 2005)
• If you think you are too small to make a difference, try sleeping in a room with a mosquito—African proverb
Social Cognitive Theory

• There are three core concepts
  1. People can learn through observation
     ▪ A live model
     ▪ A verbal instructional model
     ▪ A symbolic model
  2. Mental states are important to learning
     ▪ External and Internal reinforcement
  3. Learning does not necessarily lead to a change in the behavior
     ▪ Conditions necessary for Effective Modeling
       • Attention
       • Retention
       • Reproduction
       • Motivation

• Reciprocal Determinism
  The world and the person’s behavior cause each other
Interventions

- A framework of Social Cognitive Theory developed by Albert Bandura permits targeted interventions

http://www.changecards.org/change-theory/social-cognitive-theory
Efforts at the Boston VA

VA Central Office Publication
“Psychological Safety: The Canary in the Coal Mine”

Multiple Reporting Avenues
Facility Policy Specific to Bullying and Lateral Violence
Leadership Support
Grass Roots Awareness and Reporting Efforts
Conclusion

A - Acknowledge
Admit there is an elephant in the room

S - Structure

S - Sustain
Don’t be the reed in the wind
References


References


