



IS A BULLYING BOSS KILLING YOU?

According to a new study published in the International Journal of Stress Management, employees who have abusive bosses usually deal with those bosses using methods that make them feel worse. This is bad news because workplace abuse has been linked to stress. Then, stress is linked to mental and physical problems such as a higher body weight and heart disease. "Bullying is a form of abuse which carries tremendous health harm," said Gary Namie, a social psychologist who directs the Workplace Bullying Institute. "That's how you distinguish it from tough management or any of the other cutesy ways people use to diminish it." Close to 500 employees were surveyed about how they handled bosses who are abusive. Bosses who insult and humiliate their employees are labeled as abusive. Bosses who also never let their employees forget their mistakes, break promises, and isolate employees from their co-workers are also abusive. The author of the study is Dana Yagil, from the University of Haifa in Israel. Yagil claims that 13 to 14 percent of Americans work for an abusive boss. "It is understandable that employees wish to reduce the amount of their contact with an abusive boss to the minimum, but the strategies they use actually further increase their stress instead of reducing it," Yagil said. "This may happen because these strategies are associated with a sense of weakness and perpetuate the employee's fear of the supervisor." The survey shows that workers tend to put up with workplace abuse for an average of 22 months. Namie also said that bullying at the workplace often times leads to bad decision-making by the employees. "This is why a person can't make quality decisions," he said. "They can't even consider alternatives. Just like a battered spouse, they don't even perceive alternatives to their situations when they're stressed and depressed and under attack." Namie also works as a legal expert witness on bullying and one of his upcoming cases he said a woman dealt with screaming abuse from her boss for one year. At the end of the year she was working 18-hour days, trying to hide her boss' tyranny from the employees working under her, and then she and her coworkers finally filed a 25-page complaint to the human resources department. Namie said the woman was called into senior management after not hearing much about the complaint. When she was called into senior management she knew she would be fired for filing the complaint. "Rather than allowing herself to be terminated, she bought a pistol, went to work, left three suicide notes, and she took her own life at work," he said. "She was like that rat stuck in a rut," he added. "She didn't see any alternative at that point." "HR [human resources] has no power or clout to make senior management stop," Namie said. "Without the laws, they're not mandated to make policies, and without the mandate, they don't know what to do."

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