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From The Director's Desk

Bullying In Corrections



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A non-profit for the health of correctional agencies, staff and families

FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK

In August I had the perspective-changing experience of visiting Norway with *One Voice United* to learn about the Norwegian prison system. The experience felt surreal, like being on another planet, or, perhaps more accurately, like being in a completely different galaxy.

While in Norway, we attended a presentation on a “hot off the press” Danish research study, by Britt Larsen¹ and her colleagues. The study assessed certain work conditions and mental health disorder rates of prison officers in Denmark. One of the study’s findings startled me. It was about the high degree of prison officers reporting having experienced bullying by coworkers – a reported rate of 48%.

These findings, and comments I’ve been hearing about the subject for the past 20+ years, led me to dedicate this issue of the Correctional Oasis to the topic of staff bullying, as I believe that it is a significant source of occupational stress for corrections employees. It is not only violence by justice-involved persons that can lead to severe emotional distress and mental health disorders among staff. Bullying can erode staff’s mental health as well.

And I plan to share some of my observations about the Nordic prison model in future issues of the Correctional Oasis.

¹Larsen B. O. Mental health disorders among police and prison officers. EPSU/NFF Prison services Network Meeting, 2022.

A reported rate of 48% of
prison officers experience
bullying by coworkers.

BULLYING IN CORRECTIONS

BY CATERINA SPINARIS, PHD, LPC

Is bullying by colleagues a problem in corrections workplaces? The evidence points to a resounding “Yes!”

In fact, a recent Danish study¹ found that a whopping 48% of prison officers reported experiencing bullying by coworkers.

Does the way corrections staff treat one another affect staff wellbeing? A Desert Waters’ study reported that the quality of the staff relationship with direct supervisors, coworkers and justice-involved individuals affected their work health (morale, energy level emotionally and physically, and work engagement). And in turn, work health significantly affected staff’s mental health, physical health and family health.

And in the Danish study mentioned above, 27.1% of the sample of prison officers reported symptoms of either PTSD, depression, anxiety or stress.

In this article, I discuss the nature of bullying and its possible consequences, and I share extensive quotes on the subject from seasoned correctional staff, active or retired, from across the U.S. Quotes are reproduced here with permission.

What is bullying?

What do we mean by bullying?

Here’s the definition offered in the American Psychological Association’s Dictionary of Psychology: [APA Dictionary of Psychology](#):

n. persistent threatening and aggressive physical behavior or verbal abuse directed toward other people, especially those who are younger, smaller, weaker, or in some other situation of relative disadvantage.

And here’s a definition of a bully by Merriam-Webster:

a blustering, browbeating person, especially one who is habitually cruel, insulting, or threatening to others who are weaker, smaller, or in some way vulnerable.

To me, the essence of bullying involves intentional mistreatment of people the bully believes are at a disadvantaged position, and therefore not likely to stand up for themselves or counterattack.

Although these are the published and generally accepted definitions of bullying, many of us would agree that the concept could be further defined to include a much wider range of perpetrators, behaviors, and victims. The perpetrator is not necessarily viewed by all as “habitually cruel;” the behaviors don’t always fit nicely into “neat”

packages that can obviously be categorized as “abuse;” and the victim is often not the one who others would have considered weak or vulnerable.

Let’s dive in further to get a better picture.

What might bullying look like?

At this point we do not have estimates of the prevalence of staff bullying/harassment by coworkers in U.S. corrections work settings. However, my informal discussions with staff across the US for the past 22 years make it clear that staff bullying does occur, often with destructive long-term repercussions on staff morale, functioning and overall wellbeing, on team cohesiveness, and ultimately on the workplace culture.

Here are some thoughts on bullying from seasoned corrections professionals of a variety of job roles and ranks.

1. *“Bullying: We have called the same behavior many different things over the years. It has been called hazing, ‘orientation,’ becoming part of the team, sexual harassment, discrimination, retention strategies, etc.*

Sometimes the bullying is just the way we treat everyone, and other times we target those who aren’t like us, and those we would really like to run off. When we do succeed in running off the people who we believe don’t belong here, that is sometimes lauded as a good thing.

The types of bullying in use that I have seen in my time vary a great deal. Bullying can be something as minor as excluding people, culling them from the herd. In this instance we don’t necessarily hurt them, we just fail to protect them from predators. Excluding people can be done by just not acknowledging them, ignoring them when they talk, ensuring we don’t have to work with them, all the way to not responding to their calls for help.

Other types of bullying behaviors have included physical altercations – hitting, tripping, getting them into potentially assaultive behavior with inmates, setting them up for harm (tampering with their safety equipment, etc.). The fights in the parking lots after shift are real.

Messing with their personal items (food, cars, etc.) is a common bullying approach. I have heard of food contaminated with chemicals, car tires punctured, flashlights filled with ‘stuff’ that was not meant to be in the battery compartment.

*Sexual harassment or harassing someone based upon race, etc., is also another form of bullying. These behaviors are obviously covered by specific laws, but that has not stopped corrections staff from engaging in them. Sexual harassment has included verbal abuse – disgusting words – all the way up to rape. Yes, we have had staff raped by other staff, on duty, in this country. There is even a book that was written about it... **Women on Guard: Discrimination & Harassment in Corrections by Maeve McMahon.***

I think that most staff have been bullied, at least at the beginning of their career, but the really vulnerable people are those on the fringes, the people that we have “culled” from the herd. Even though we throw them out of our group, that doesn’t stop them from being targeted by staff who are angry, bored, or just want to torment someone.

Perhaps the worst form of bullying is when the inmates are used to perpetuate or join in the games. While this seems outlandish to some people, it is relatively common. Just like the staff, the inmates know who is vulnerable and who is being targeted. Sometimes this inclusion of inmates is by specific direction of staff, other times the inmates see how someone is being treated, and they, on their own accord, start treating them less respectfully and no one stops them.”

~ Retired Warden

2. *“Bullying is a major problem in my facility. It has caused both managers and line staff to be fired, forced out in one way or another (they were NOT the bully).”*

~ Anonymous Corrections Professional

3. *“There are times when there is reverse bullying - where the victim makes up what was done / said and the other person is punished for nothing. Manipulation is rampant on both sides of the fence.”*

~ Case Manager

4. *“I’ve experienced verbal harassment. I’ve been reported for situations that did not occur, and investigated for those false accusations, and, lucky for me, they were all found to be false. I’ve been denied vacations, denied training, denied advancement, transfers and promotions. I have several years of college, thousands of hours of training, been an instructor in almost every Sheriff’s and Corrections venue a person could. I started out at the bottom at one Law Enforcement agency and worked my way to the top. Switched to Corrections and worked my way up, 30 years and counting. I have been blessed to have been allowed to be in this profession, and am proud of every title held and color of uniform worn from entry level to Administrator. However, bullying is an awful and uncalled for situation to endure in the profession you have given your entire adult life to, and are still dedicated to performing. I still polish my boots to a glass shine every day and wear a Class A uniform with a tie. I love my job and most of those I work with, and I want to do several more years before retiring. I just don’t think I can do it where I am at, and maybe it can’t be with this agency if it continues as it is. All because of AH in the workplace. Sad. Sometimes I wonder, is there a decent place to work anymore?”*

~ Anonymous Corrections Professional

5. *“Bullying is so frequent in my workplace that I believe it is a cultural norm. Opinions that are not in agreement with some are rarely tolerated and often met with screaming, out-talking and walking away from clarifications. I was recently coerced to use a ‘pass’ on mandated overtime because*

another person who wanted the OT also wanted to be enabled to tell her family she was mandated, in order to get out of an obligation at home.”

~ Anonymous Correctional Professional

6. *“Bullying goes on, and for some I’m sure it makes work life horrible. Maybe it’s worse in some places and maybe it’s worse today, so I think context is important.*

One thing about bullying is the lack of acceptable recourse. If you speak up, you risk more bullying for “not being able to take it,” or for being “soft.” Filing complaints with HR will create a reputation that might slow promotions or stall one’s career. My experience was also that most administrators were more interested in checking a box - providing mass training, maybe a letter of reprimand, rather than looking at the actual issue, or scarier yet, actually addressing inappropriate individual behavior. Most bullying is probably never reported or is swept under the rug. Maybe that’s because bullying happens at the higher levels, too?

Here’s a variety of bullying behaviors I witnessed from administrators:

- Harsh, degrading comments and language about staff in public.*
- Curt responses with no explanation.*
- Publicly ignoring, and even silencing dissent from more experienced staff.*
- Unreasonable deadlines or expectations.*
- Degrading people because they were “only” a lower rank.*
- Pitting one person against another to do their dirty work.”*

~ Retired Director of Training

There’s another form of bullying in the workplace. Let’s call it passive-aggressive bullying. This can be by someone of higher rank/more power conferred to them by the agency or even by someone of equal or lesser rank/organizational power. Such bullying may take the form of people “ghosting” other staff, ignoring them, not responding to their calls or emails, or taking extra long periods of time to respond.

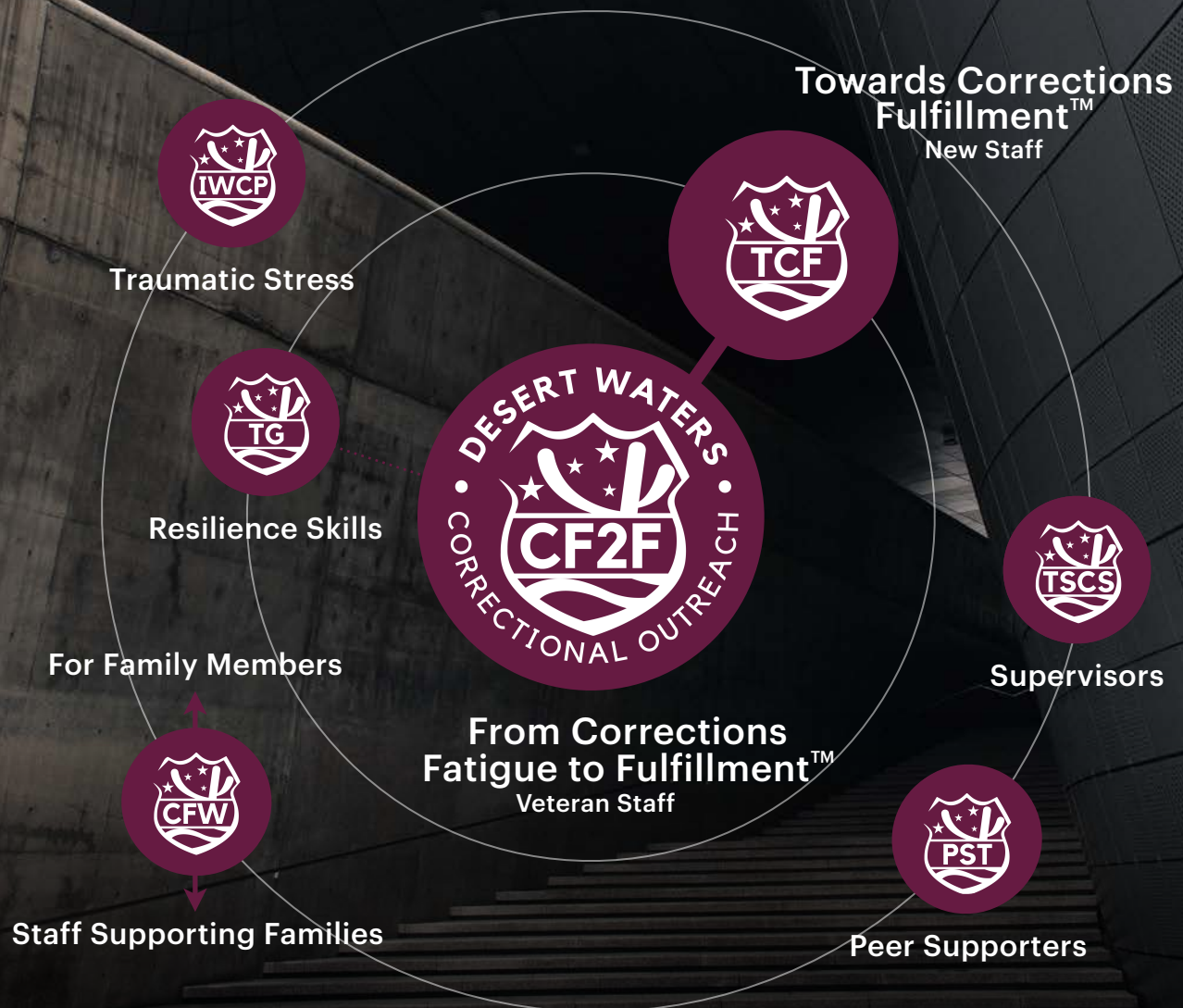
Here is an example of what staff may experience due to passive-aggressive bullying:

“As an administrator, I was consistently ignored by a top-level administrator after I (very politely) stood up for line staff. From that day to the end of my career over a year later, my phone calls and emails were unanswered by her. Did I mention that I was her direct report, and the Director of Training, responsible for many hundreds of new hires annually, and all inservice training for thousands of employees?”

~ Anonymous Corrections Professional

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What about razzing humor?

Sometimes bullying is covered up under a veneer of humor. “I was only teasing!” the bully may exclaim, in apparent disbelief that the person they ridiculed with disrespectful remarks (made with a smile) felt embarrassed and humiliated. “Can’t you take a joke?!”

“I have seen this and have been the victim of it. Sometimes the other person doesn’t view what they are doing as bullying, they view it as teasing and a form of camaraderie. That is why people tend to support the perpetrator; they see it as the victim overreacting to some innocent teasing. Far too often this happens and no one speaks up, no one supports the victim.”

~ Case Manager

In other cases, people are not truly mean. They may simply enjoy seeing others squirm when they tease them, as they think it is funny that they can have that kind of power over someone. Indeed, it makes them feel powerful, in control.

“There is a vague, moving, unwritten line between bullying and ‘verbal razzing,’ which is also common, totally acceptable, and even expected, among very close partners and teams. There were times when I personally felt very much part of the team, precisely because of the razzing ... receiving it and dishing it out.

*In fact, a quick-witted, snappy remark was a sign of one’s ability to think on their feet and at least verbally standing their ground, which fit with the tough culture’ of old-time cops. I think **it never felt like bullying to me, because it wasn’t always the same persons targeting or being targeted. Everyone was fair game. If you engaged, you were in the game, and on the team.***

Rank can play a part in all of this. I recall one time when I was a Sergeant, and we got a new Major. This guy had been around many years, and was very quick-witted. For a few weeks he goaded me for this or that, and I took it personally, because of his rank. It just caught me off guard, that a supervisor would join in the razzing. We finally locked horns one day, cleared the air, and from this experience he became a role model for me. We later grew to be good friends (rank aside). For a young officer, I learned the value and (sometimes pettiness) we assign to rank.

Of course, depending on many factors (work-related, home life, personal trauma, stress, etc.), someone could take the razzing in a way it wasn’t necessarily intended and possibly feel bullied. I was never witness to any mean-spirited, or physical bullying, but that doesn’t mean it didn’t go on. I do recall a few times people said things (razzing), and later, after finding out the individual was having a tough time, offered apologies and subsequent support. This too, was a measure of one’s true commitment to the team. In the end, there was no malice intended ... that I ever saw while I worked the front lines.”

~ Retired Director of Training

I think that razzing tends to be a type of joking more commonly found amongst men. When that is the case and a woman enters the group and the same type of joking is directed toward her, she may not know how to take this. That is when complaints and grievances may happen.

1. *"Sometimes her response is very different compared to the men's response...negative?!"*

~ Retired Warden

2. *"Gender can be a spot where the joking turns to bullying, and so can other demographic categories. My punchline to all this is that any joking about protected class status is probably going to be (perceived at least as) bullying."*

~ Retired Labor Relations Manager

What may be causes of staff's bullying behaviors?

At Desert Waters, we talk about how Corrections Fatigue over time may result in staff becoming "hardhearted," insensitive towards others, habitually angry, and even possibly hostile and aggressive.

In relation to that we address how new hires may be greeted and treated (shunned and/or hazed, for example) by seasoned employees. We also talk about how powerless corrections staff (especially custody/security staff) may feel, and how easy it may be to want to get rid of these unpleasant emotions of powerlessness by "paying them forward" – by treating others in disempowering and humiliating ways that can cause them to experience these same feelings. (As to why corrections staff may feel powerless, consider these two examples: they are expected to be in control, yet in actuality they have very little control about what happens to them – from whether they can leave at the end of their shift to policy changes to the type of legislation which gets passed and radically changes how they are expected to operate.)

The following factors may be contributing to staff's bullying behaviors, and the related hostility and unprofessionalism, such as working in chronically high-stress environments where:

- people are cooped up together for lengthy periods of time in crowded, noisy, close quarters that are devoid of natural beauty,
- staff are not even sure that they can go home at the end of their work day,
- danger is expected to always be lurking in the background,
- staff are chronically sleep deprived,
- staff are overloaded with tasks and under perpetual time pressure,
- staff have their performance scrutinized relentlessly, with the underlying message being that they are guilty until proven innocent,
- staff are not treated equitably, where "favorites" are being played, and where discrimination of various sorts raises its ugly head.

Over the years, staff have told me, “Inmates have more rights than we do, so we take it out on each other.” Essentially, they are saying that they make each other their punching bags to release their frustrations, anger and tension.

This is sad. And horribly destructive.

And here are some thoughts on the subject by seasoned staff:

1. *Possible causes of bullying are if a staff member didn't respond as others thought they should during an emergency situation, or it may be that they are just the new guy/gal and the veteran staff want them to do all the work.”*

~ Case Manager

2. *“What is the cause of bullying... of course power is at the top of the list, but that is too simple... powerlessness is also on the list. When anyone feels powerless to control what is happening to them – negative things—then they strike out at those they can attack—those who are less powerful than they. This cycle of abuse is constantly in motion in this business. This cycle of abuse has been called the cycle of harm (Haney, 2008), an ecology of cruelty that develops in these environments that continues to escalate and affects the actions of all who work there and the inmates who are housed in these facilities.*

I think that the current situation makes all of these issues more dramatic. The fact that staff are exhausted and unable to meet their own needs may increase the frequency of bullying and the harm being done by bullying.”

~ Retired Warden

3. *“In the course of my 30-year career, I did see supervisors use their rank to mistreat people, which I'm sure felt like bullying. This was to me a sign of someone who had risen above their training and ability, and they abused their 'power,' as a poor substitute for supervision. These bullies can be spotted a mile away, much like spotting the fakers in a cell house.*

Administrative bullying, not unlike the power-hungry, line supervisor, has to do with 'lording it over' subordinates and flexing power muscles to build oneself up, while keeping others down.

It's not uncommon for administrators to arrive from other agencies and often have no corrections experience at all. Some outside administrators do well because they lean on and rely on experienced staff. In my experience, some, however, seemed prone to bullying others for their personal gain, or (as they must have thought they had to do) to 'prove themselves' worthy of being on the team by exhibiting tough behavior and language. It seems to be a way of trying to short-cut their way into acceptance, but they end up devaluing others' years of commitment, struggle and sacrifice.”

~ Retired Director of Training



Future research may help spell out more about the degree to which high-stress corrections work environments result in staff harassing coworkers.

What may be consequences of bullying?

In a nutshell, bullying destroys psychological safety among staff. Psychological safety is about how emotionally safe and comfortable staff feel with other staff, and to what degree they expect that other staff will treat them with respect, fairness, kindness, preserving their dignity and helping them when needed.

When this is absent or destroyed by the betrayal of bullying, staff feel in danger around one another. (This feeling is usually not about physical safety, although it might be also. I've heard stories about staff cutting the brake lines of coworkers' vehicles or keying their car. I've also heard staff say that if something happened to a coworker they did not like, they'd run to their aid "a little more slowly.")

In the absence of psychological safety, staff are on alert, hyper-vigilant around one another, and brace themselves to get set up for something nasty. Some staff who have been bullied may end up reacting to the internal pressure they are experiencing, attack a bullying coworker verbally before they are attacked again themselves, causing more mayhem and division among team members.

Either way, staff are stressed, with all the negative consequences of the stress response playing out in their being – an increase in blood pressure, anxiety or panic attacks, hopelessness and despair, anger and even hatred. None of these is good.

Here are three descriptions by staff about how they have been affected by bullying:

1. *"I am a correction officer working at my state's maximum security prison, which right now is the most hostile prison in the state. This hostility, believe it or not, comes mostly from the staff and not the inmates (though a little does still come from inmates). The problem is that the staff in this facility are somewhat cliquey and like to spread rumors and create havoc amongst themselves whenever possible. I have been on the receiving end of this harassment and see no easy way of fixing it, lest I be labeled a 'rat,' which is a reputation that I don't want. I have been alienated by my fellow officers simply because I am viewed as an outsider to them. I went from working in facilities where there was a sense of camaraderie, where it was us against the cons, to effectively going back to high school. The stress caused by my brother and sister officers is starting to have both mental and physical consequences. The mental consequences being that I am having a hard time concentrating at work and home, and I can no longer read a person's demeanor (I can't tell whether a person is joking or serious, and I no longer know what to make of a person's expressions, rendering me useless as an officer). The physical consequences are that my physical health feels like it is going downhill. I am getting regular headaches as well as stomach cramps. I am having a complete loss of appetite and feel like sleeping all day, even on my days off, when I am usually more active and don't like to waste a minute. Even as I write this e-mail, I am in steady pain. As a result of all of the above, I am finding myself making stupid mistakes at work that could be avoided with a little common sense. I just bought my house near this prison where I am currently working and cannot afford to transfer to another facility, which would also be a major drive for me. I*

understand that the problem needs to be addressed, but the problem is that I can't really go to a supervisor, as I feel that I work in a very cliquy institution where most staff have worked with one another for a long time now. If I go to a supervisor, then my name will be thrown out there and it may make things worse. I don't want anybody to get in trouble over it, I just want it to stop."

~ Anonymous Corrections Professional

2. *"It harms not only staff but those persons around them. These days people in charge at the agency do not go after the bully... they go after those who complain about being bullied.... They go after the people the bully complains about.... Most of the time nothing happens to the bully. In all my years in the business, I have never seen anything like it... totally backwards. It is against policy, the Code of Ethics and professional standards. Even as a supervisor for many years, to me it is very apparent who is 'liked' or 'supported.' Sometimes that is the bully."*

~ Anonymous Corrections Professional

3. *"Being bullied by another administrator, and the fact I was past retirement age and years of service, resulted in my choice to retire. Looking back, I feel I was bullied out of my job."*

~ Anonymous Corrections Professional

What may be solutions to problematic behaviors related to bullying?

Bullying adds avoidable stress to a work environment that is often bursting at the seams with stress-breeding incidents and conditions. Anything we can do to reduce or, even better, prevent bullying is worth exploring and implementing.

Everyone needs and deserves to feel emotionally safe while at work, especially among their teammates.

We believe that this starts top-down, with supervisors staying on the high road themselves, modeling professionalism, and treating their subordinates equitably, fairly.

Supervisors must have their finger on the pulse, by spending enough time communicating with and hanging around their subordinates – being accessible to them – so subordinates can feel safe to come to them with their needs, and so the supervisors can sense when there is tension among team members, and address it before it spreads and festers.

Supervisors must inform bullies in no uncertain terms that their behavior is unprofessional and thus unacceptable, that policies will be followed regarding harassing behaviors, and appropriate discipline will be meted out.

A bully who is struggling with considerable anger and resentment may be referred to EAP.

Of course, an agency's anti-harassment policies are an obvious go-to option. As mentioned earlier though, staff may hesitate to escalate matters to that level for fear of retaliation by friends of the bully, and for fear of alienating themselves further.

I wish there were "restorative justice" sessions that could be scheduled with bullies and their targeted "victims," and even their loved ones as well, so the bullies could hear and perhaps grasp the degree to which their remarks and behavior hurt someone whether intentionally or unintentionally. Such sessions would provide opportunities for sincere apologies to be offered and amends made.

In the absence of that, a supervisor can have conversations with a bully about how their target may have been impacted by the bullying, and what the short-term and the long-term consequences of that may be in terms of the individual's well-being, and in terms of the team function and the workplace culture. What we want is for the bully to regain their capacity for empathy and to eventually regain their coworkers' respect and perhaps even trust through genuine changes in their behavior.

Additionally, training in how staff can respond to bullying and training in interpersonal skills would be helpful, so staff can be equipped to confront bullying coworkers in constructive ways. For such training to be effective, it must acknowledge and address what may transpire when staff are bullied, and the range of options available to them to protect themselves.

And here are some proposed solutions to bullying from seasoned staff:

1. *"I have learned to finesse the situation, to let the storms pass, and to pick and choose when to stand up."*

~ Anonymous Corrections Professional

2. *"Solutions? Allow staff to call bullies on their behavior (appropriately, of course). Hold bullies accountable and if they don't stop, fire them. Good workers deserve a good place to work. A--holes do not deserve to work in this profession, as they disrupt other staff and/or inmates."*

~ Anonymous Corrections Professional

3. *"The short answer is supervisors must be accessible and they must role model appropriate behavior. This role modeling includes reaching out to the staff on the fringes and treating them with respect (remember, the supervisors are also at risk of avoiding or ignoring the staff on the fringes...because they don't like these people either!!).*

Role modeling is a great piece of advice, but it doesn't go far enough. The reality is that the staff have to role model appropriate behavior long before they get into a supervisory position. In other words, they have to treat others well when they are officers (or other entry level positions) because you can't get promoted to supervisor and then start treating people right. Your history matters... people will know if you were a bully to other staff before you got rank, if so, it will be hard to ensure that your staff are not also treating others badly. If you try to enforce this it will be difficult to communicate your expectations without your own history clouding the issue.

Again, the role modeling and early intervention is key. Early intervention is easier to accomplish if the supervisor is ROUTINELY out of their office and interacting with staff... at least daily. This also means on all shifts for which the supervisor is responsible."

~ Retired Warden

- "I think that executive level staff need to reinforce role modeling of appropriate behaviors with every single hire, as well as promotions. As you begin your career movement you need to stay focused on all of these cultural enhancements, even wellness, issues.*

One way to do that would be having someone near the hiring official level (let's say Deputy Warden, for example) meet with the newly hired or promoted employee and one of their Officers in Charge, and emphasize the agency values in a very direct way about bullying, sexual harassment, and discrimination. In the best case, it would actually be a follow-up to scenario examples that the employee had to work through at the interview.

My next suggestion would be to build it into FTO selection and training. Since bullying happens so easily with new employees, FTOs can (should?) act as prevention barriers - people the new employee can go to as they are learning the business, not just for technical mentoring but for social mentoring too. The leadership team should deputize those FTOs as bullying opponents, on the lookout for bullying and discrimination and being the agency's first line of defense."

~ Retired Labor Relations Manager

- "As for the person on the receiving end of the bullying, I would say the first step is to stand up for themselves and confront the bully. If nothing changes, go to the supervisor. If still nothing happens, go to HR / Administration. For the supervisors - Hold to a NO TOLERANCE policy. It must be addressed firmly and quickly."*

~ Case Manager

How the Targeted Employee Is Treated by Administrators

I have been told that sometimes an agency's policy is that the person who has been bullied is removed from their post or unit after they file a complaint about being bullied. They end up having to work at a different unit or shift. This throws off their entire routine schedule, especially if they have dependents at home. The employees then feel singled out and practically punished for filing the complaint. In essence, they feel revictimized by the system, and other staff who observe what transpires may become even more hesitant to report bullying if it occurs to them.

- "When inappropriate behavior is reported, it is never a good idea to move the complaining person, but the reality is that sometimes it is the only real option. Immediate and appropriate action must be consistently taken to address what is 'right' and what is 'wrong.' This is tough, particularly if you have a personnel or union system that dictates or limits actions."*

~ Retired Warden

2. *"The reason we remove the person being bullied is so the friends of the accused do not retaliate against the victim. Oftentimes, we don't see others rally to the victim, we see the opposite; which sucks and destroys any chance of fulfilling The Big 7¹. What I believe needs to be passed along to the one being moved is that this is being done to protect them. I, personally, would like to see the supervisors / managers offer the choice to the victim."*

~ Case Manager

These are some thoughts on the nature, possible causes, and consequences of bullying behaviors, and some suggested solutions.

What do you think?

You can send us your views on this critical subject, and perhaps even your personal experiences regarding bullying, by emailing us at admin@desertwaters.com.

We cannot truly advocate for staff wellness without addressing this widespread source of serious stress in the corrections workplace.

We are grateful for candid sharing on the topic by corrections staff from a variety of ranks and years of service. We thank several anonymous corrections professionals, as well as Susan Jones, Greg Morton, Brent Parker, and Jeff Rude. And special thanks go to Daria Mayotte for her edits and thoughtful comments about the content of this article.

¹The Big 7 refers to the seven dimensions taught in Desert Waters' courses to be essential for the professional fulfillment of individual workers and for the maintenance of healthy workforce cultures. These are the need for physical safety, psychological safety, trust, power, respect, connection and meaning. You can read about the Big 7 in the Desert Waters' booklet, *Staying Well: Strategies for Corrections Staff*, 3rd Edition.

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True Grit

Course Author: Caterina Spinaris, PhD., is DWCO's Executive Director and a Licensed Professional Counselor with over 30 years of clinical experience. Caterina conducts research, and offers research-based trainings and interventions to corrections agencies to counter the effects of occupational stressors, and to increase organizational health and employee well-being.

In addition to TG, she authored the award-winning course "From Corrections Fatigue to Fulfillment™," as well as the courses "Correctional Family Wellness™," "The Supportive Supervisor™," and Peer Support Training. Caterina is the 2014 recipient of the **Colorado Criminal Justice Association's Harry Tinsley award.**

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- "By far the best training I have been through."
- "I would like to see this class in the future in Block Training. The class opened your eyes to the different ways of being a better partner at work as well as at home."
- "This class is a great tool for work and more importantly HOME LIFE!!! This should be given during Block Training. I feel it is an important tool to help people take a step back and look at things they may be doing or not doing. Overall an EXCELLENT class!!!"

Criteria for Instructor Candidates

- Prior classroom training experience
- At least 5 years of working in corrections
- Experience working through work-related challenges
- Ability to motivate others
- Ability to manage classroom discussions



DESERT WATERS
CORRECTIONAL OUTREACH

Desert Waters Correctional Outreach is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt corporation (EIN 30-0151345) with the mission to advance the well-being of correctional staff and their families, and the health of correctional agencies, through data-driven, skill-based training.

REGISTRATION FORM

Dates: Dec 6-9 & Dec 12-14 Fee: \$1,495 per Instructor Candidate

We also offer in-person instructor trainings for 10 or more.

Instructor Candidate Name(s): _____

Corrections Agency Name: _____

Address: _____ City/State/Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Method of Payment: Check enclosed, payable to DWCO, P.O. Box 355, Florence CO 81226

To pay by Credit Card, call us at 719-784-4727. Purchase Orders accepted.

admin@desertwaters.com

Cancellation Policy: No refunds less than three weeks prior to the training. Registrations are transferable to another instructor candidate of the same agency as long as instructor candidate criteria are met.

*TG licenses are renewable for another three years by passing an online exam (fee \$490)

**Instructors can teach on their own if necessary; Co-instructors must always team-teach with an Instructor

***Instructors and Co-instructors are NOT certified to train other instructors or individuals outside of their agency

Here's What Participants Are Saying about True Grit!

"This was the first train the trainer course that actually took the time to break down each slide and the content very specifically."

"The contents and material of the course and the way that the master instructors delivered it made a very safe and comfortable environment."

"It was interactive."

"This training has helped me cope with my personal issues, and I am definitely going to encourage others to take this course and learn this content as well."

"Well taught and clearly explained."

"The instructors were very helpful in actually teaching us in how to teach the class as well as teaching us the material."

"One of the better trainings I've taken. The training itself was a topic that gets so little spotlight and helps cope with the fatigue we face as correction officers. Great to finally have a training geared toward our community."

Why not consider joining us for our next online True Grit Training for Trainers? See information on the prior page for details!

IN MEMORIAM

**Benny Alcala Jr.,
Correctional Counselor,**
California Department of Corrections and
Rehabilitation

**Ricky Cooper,
Correctional Officer,**
Alabama Department of Corrections

**Don Pleasant,
Sergeant,**
Colorado Department of Corrections

**Brandon Thomas,
Jail Officer,**
Mecklenburg County Sheriff's Office, North Carolina

**Ken Weber,
Lieutenant,**
Colorado Department of Corrections



Quote of the Month

"I cannot say whether things will
get better if we change; what I can
say is they must change if they are
to get better."

Georg C. Lichtenberg

MEET THE CORRECTIONAL OASIS TEAM



CATERINA SPINARIS, PH.D., LPC
Founding Director

CONTENT CURATION, PRODUCTION & EDITING



DARIA MAYOTTE, M.A.
Deputy Director

CONTENT DEVELOPMENT, EDITING



JUDY MYERS, B.SC.
Executive Assistant

EDITING



STEVEN MAYOTTE, B.DES., LEED AP
Chief Operating Officer

GRAPHIC DESIGN & LAYOUT

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DWCO Mission

Advancing the well-being of correctional staff and their families, and the health of correctional agencies, through data-driven, skill-based training

Caterina Spinaris, PhD, LPC, Executive Director
431 E. Main Street, P.O. Box 355, Florence, CO 81226
(719) 784-4727
<https://desertwaters.com>
Your donations are tax-deductible.

Desert Waters Correctional Outreach, Inc., is a non-profit corporation which helps correctional agencies counter Corrections Fatigue in their staff by cultivating a healthier workplace climate and a more engaged workforce through targeted skill-based training and research.

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