



# **Bullying @ Work: a dark side of human behaviour**

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*We particularly ask you:  
When a thing continually occurs  
Not on that account to find it natural  
Let nothing be called natural  
In an age of bloody confusion  
Ordered disorder, planned caprice,  
And dehumanized humanity, lest all things  
Be held unalterable!*  
(Bertold Brecht)

## Carroll Brodsky (1976)

Bullying consists of the repeated and obstinate attempts of one person to torment, frustrate, or break the resistance of another person, an attempt to get a wanted reaction from them. It is a form of treatment that, applied with persistence, provokes, pressures, frightens, intimidates, and inconveniences the victim.

# Heinz Leymann (1984)

Bullying at work is the accumulation, over a long period of time, of hostile comments, expressed by one or several people towards a third person at work (the target). It is a destructive process, organized around hostile acts whose repetition have devastating effects. The aim of bullying is to elicit anguish, to destabilize, to break the will of the chosen victim, to exclude him or her from the labour market.

# Marie-France Hirigoyen (1998)

Bullying at work is all abusive conduct that manifests itself through behaviours, words, acts, gestures, or writing, that can hurt the person, their dignity, or their physical integrity, put into peril their job or otherwise degrade the climate at work

# Anti-Bullying Law - Quebec Definition

- “Psychological harassment” means any vexatious behaviour in the form of repeated and hostile or unwanted conduct, verbal comments, actions or gestures, that affects an employee’s dignity or psychological or physical integrity and that results in a harmful work environment for the employee.
- A single serious incidence of such behaviour that has a lasting harmful effect on an employee may also constitute psychological harassment.

# Anti-Bullying Law Quebec (Canada)

- Every employee has a right to a work environment free from psychological harassment.
- Employers must take reasonable action to prevent psychological harassment and, whenever they become aware of such behaviour, put a stop to it.

# Five Groups to Characterize Bullying at Work

These behaviours attempt to:

- Prevent the victim from expressing himself/herself;
- Isolate the victim;
- Diminish the victim with respect to colleagues;
- Discredit the victim in the workplace;
- Compromise the health of the victim.

# The Dynamics of Bullying

# Three ingredients

- The Target
- The Bully
- The context

# Turbulent Waters

Initial Factors  
of bullying  
The Target is Chosen



Period of Criticism,  
Unfounded Attacks



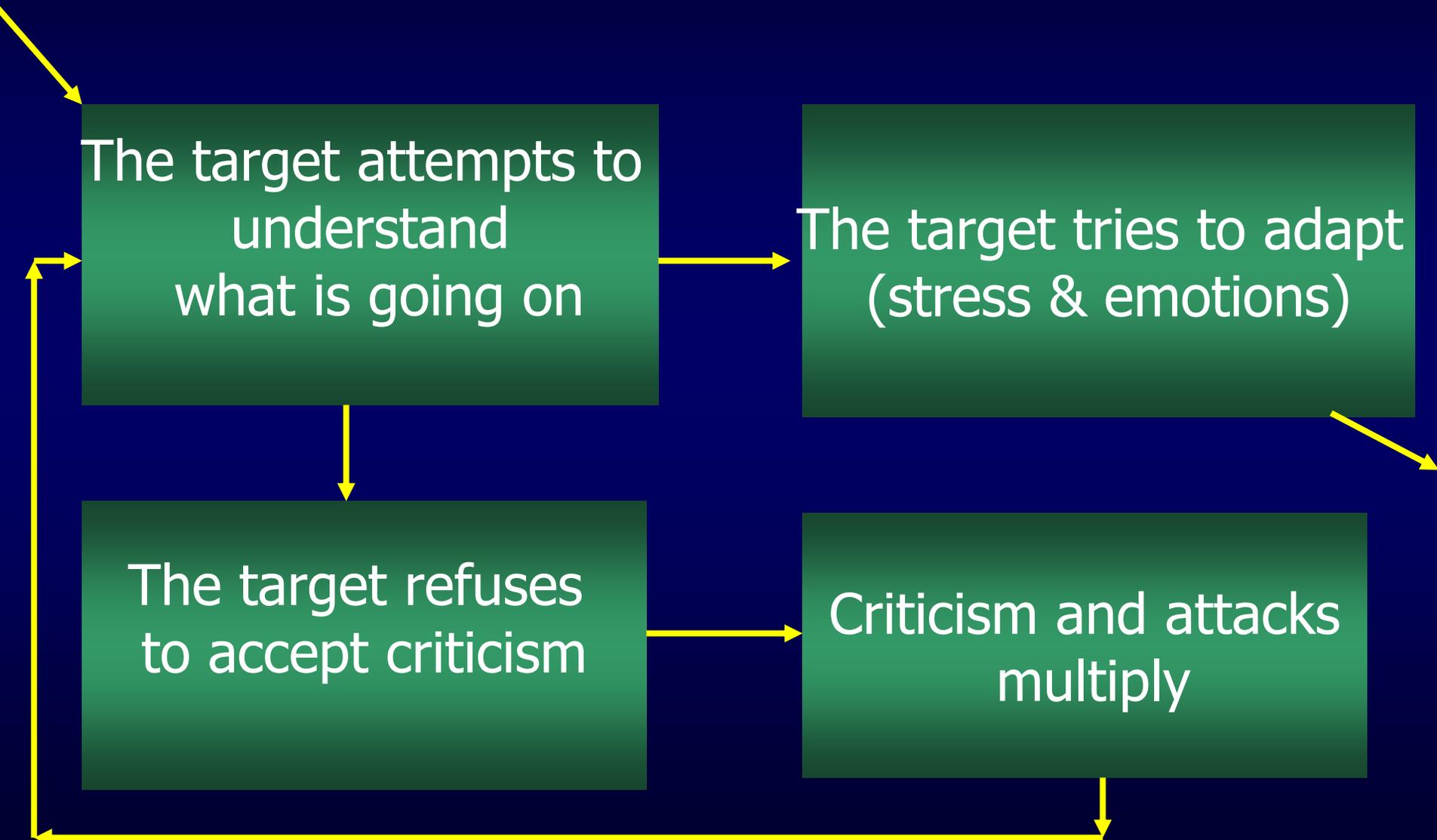
# Turbulent Waters

The target attempts to understand what is going on

The target tries to adapt (stress & emotions)

The target refuses to accept criticism

Criticism and attacks multiply



# Conflict and Debate

Attempts to disqualify and discredit the target

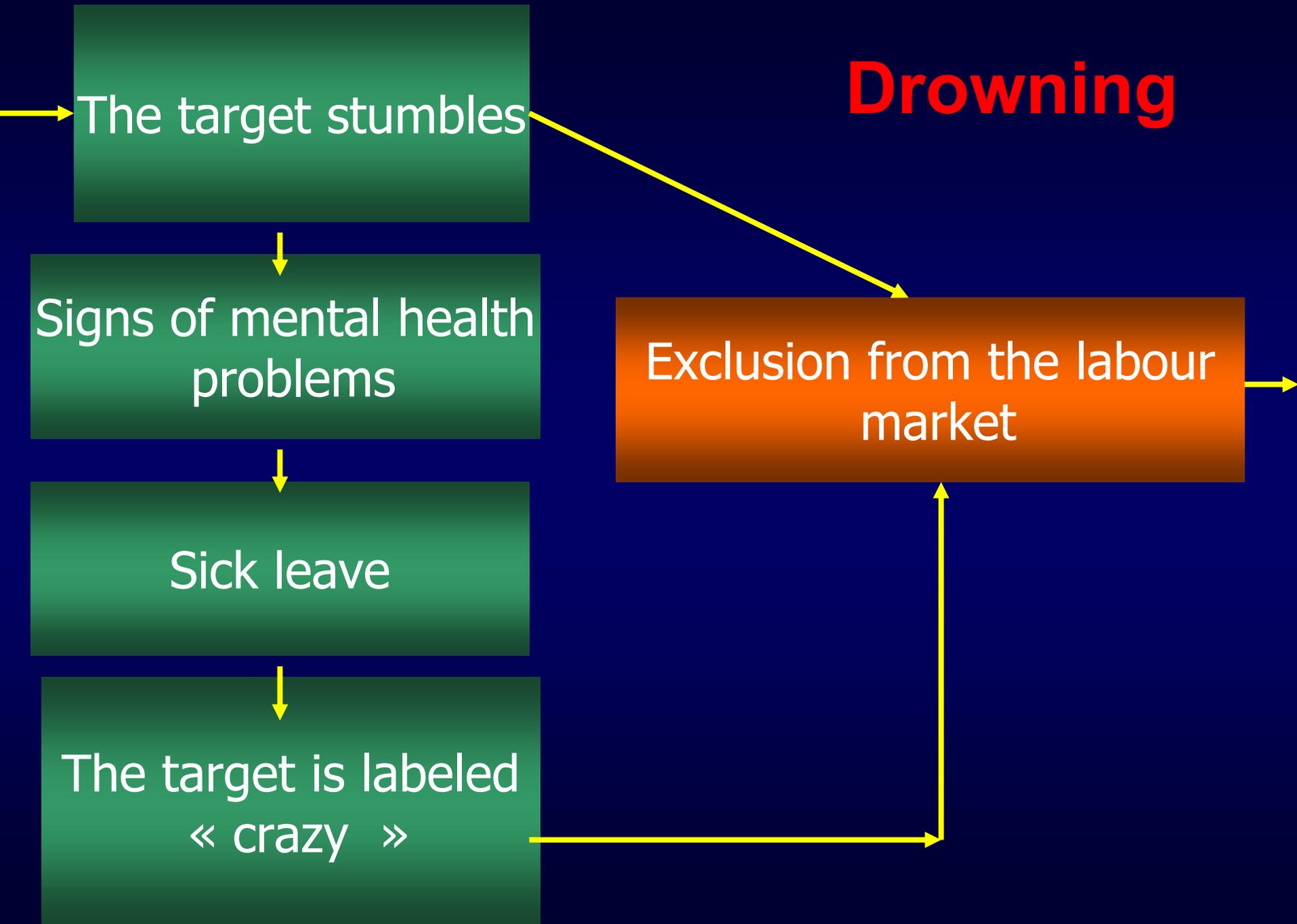
The target fights back (stress rises)

Being stressed, it is more likely to make mistakes

With each mistake, the target is discredited



# Drowning



# Post-Mortem



Searching for justice  
Searching for comprehension  
Searching for lost dignity  
Searching for recognition

# Results

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Four groups:

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Study 1    Study 2

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Currently a victim of bullying

CB

10,5

7,5

Been bullied in the past 12 months

RB

12,0

21,5

Witnessed incidents of bullying

WB

6,7

9,4

Never experienced bullying

NB

70,8

61,6

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# Consequences

- Mental Health
  - Psychological distress
  - Depression
  - Post-traumatic stress syndrome
- Labour Market Exclusion
  - Unemployment
  - Sickness leaves
- Changing Jobs
- Family problems

# Stress

	NB	WB	BB	VB
General Score	15,9	25,2	30,7	38,1
Anxiety	20,1	32,6	36,9	44,6
Depression	14,2	22,2	29,7	37,1
Aggressiveness	15,0	25,5	30,5	37,1
Cognitive problems	15,9	22,9	25,5	36,2

# Severity of Depression

Depression	NB	WB	BB	VB
General Score (0 – 39)	5,9	10,3	14,1	14,1
No depression	58,5%	43,7%	27,2%	23,6%
Depression light	19,9%	15,7%	18,5%	20,0%
Depression avarage	7,3%	15,7%	17,4%	10,9%
Depression severe	8,6%	12,5%	20,7%	21,9%
Depression very severe	6,0%	12,5%	16,4%	23,6%

# Post-Traumatic Stress Disorders – PTSS-10

	Study 1 (%)			Study 2 (%)		
	WB	RB	CB	WB	RB	CB
No symptoms ( $< 2$ symptoms)	74,2	48,2	32,7	62,5	45,9	23,8
Uncertainty (3 to 5 symptoms)	19,4	21,4	26,5	25,0	32,1	28,6
Occupational dysfunction ( $> 6$ symptoms)	6,5	30,4	40,8	12,5	22,0	47,6

# Impact Event Scale

	Study 1 (%)			Study 2 (%)		
	WB	RB	CB	WB	RB	CB
Weak ( $< 8,5$ )	60,9	25,0	9,1	45,7	27,2	2,2
Average (8.6 – 19,0)	13,0	18,8	11,4	20,0	27,2	20,0
High ( $> 19$ )	26,1	56,3	79,5	34,3	45,6	77,8

## Bullying vs Personality

- To date, no personality traits was ever associated to those who have experienced Bullying.
- The causes are found in the social context and in the power structures of organizations.

# The context

# The context

- Intensification of work
- Densification of work
- One makes more with less...
- Casualization of work
- NTIC
- New forms of management



# Organizational Culture

- Aspects that promote bullying:
  - A “Them and Us” culture
  - Intensification of work
  - Unwillingness to accept that bullying exists
  - Mistrust and Negativity

# Organizational Culture

- Aspects that prevent bullying
  - Participation
  - Autonomy
  - Trust
  - Social Cohesion / Social Support
  - Respect

# Consequences

- Health problems
- Violence at work
- Bullying at work

Oups!  
J'en ai  
brisé un!

C'est pas  
grave!  
Achète un  
autre!



# Violence at Work

- In such a context, different forms of violence at work such as: suicide, homicide, physical aggression, verbal abuse become increasingly present in the workplace.
- In different societies, this psychological war is increasingly present in organizations:  
Bullying at work

**Who is the bully?**

# The Bully

Pervers

Manipulators

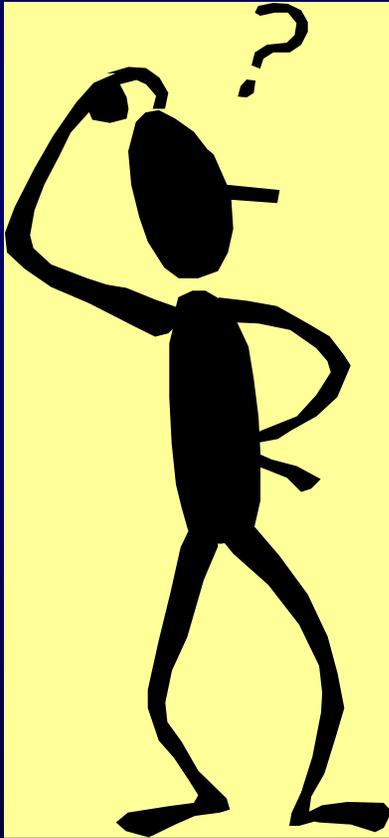


Bad People

Typologies

Monsters

# The Bully



- Pathological Personality
- Job Demands
- Incompetency

# To Stop Bullying at Work

- Information
- Training – Competency development
- Organizational Policies
- Changing work organization



***Countering  
Bullying:  
What To Do?***

Often individuals find it difficult to complain about psychological harassment...why?

## Most Common Reasons

- 1) The person thinks that no one will believe him or her
- 2) The person will fear that the complaint will be understood as an inability to face difficult situations.
- 3) If the harasser is a superior, the person resists complaining to a higher superior in the hierarchy for he or she thinks that they will take sides with the harasser.
- 4) Men are more resistant to making complaints, for this does not conform to the « macho» image.

## Most Common Reasons

- 5) The victim fears making the harassment worse, having further sanctions imposed or even being fired.
- 6) Generally, harassment happens when there are no witnesses. thus it is often the case of one person's word against another's.
- 7) Witnesses to harassment fear supporting the victim and in turn becoming a victim themselves.
- 8) In an organizational culture based on aggressive management, individuals are more hesitant in defying harassment.

# What to do Individually?

## Take note of all agressions



- Dates, times, the nature of the bullying, criticisms, accusations, and the emotions and feelings felt.
- The responses given to aggressors.

# What to do Individually

- Confrontation is not a solution.
- Try to remain calm and polite.
- Keep copies of annual evaluations, letters, and memos regarding your capacities to accomplish your work

# What to do Individually ?

- Try to find witnesses to the harassment and avoid situations where you are alone with the bully.
- Try to find out if you are the only person being harassed or if there are colleagues affected by the same problem in order to make a collective complaint.

# What to do Individually

- Speak to colleagues that you trust and see if they would accept speaking on your behalf. Be aware that this may be difficult as colleagues are also afraid. Despite this, one must try anyway.

# What to do Collectively

- Use all the rights that unionized employees have, especially in the areas of health and safety at work.

# What to do Collectively

- Be conscious of the problem.
- Most people think that psychological harassment is inevitable, and that it is part of the job, or that it only happens to « weak » people.
- Posters, pamphlets, educational material, etc. If your union has a newsletter or bulletin, you can include an article on bullying at work.

# What to do Collectively

- Negotiate with employers about bullying at work
  - The goal: develop an organizational policy on psychological harassment.
  - The cost of psychological harassment (insurance premiums, long absences, loss of productivity, loss of organizational efficiency)
  - Attacks on the corporate image

# Conclusion

You have heard and you have seen  
You have seen what is common, what continually occurs

But we ask you:

Even if it's not very strange, find it estranging

Even if it is usual, find it hard to explain

What here is common should astonish you

What here's the rule, recognize as an abuse

and where you have recognized an abuse

Provide a remedy!

(Berthold Brecht)