

## **Self Reflection – Are You a Bully or Being Bullied?**

### **Bullies in the Sport of Gymnastics**

By Lee Bjella, WA co-SJD

The gym is the workplace for coaches, judges and the gymnasts. Workplace bullying has been around since there have been workplaces!

“Bullying is something we all hope not to have to deal with much beyond the eighth grade. Unfortunately workplace bullies are a problem many people face. Unlike playground bullies who often, not always, resort to using their fists, workplace bullies generally use words and actions to intimidate their victims.” (2)

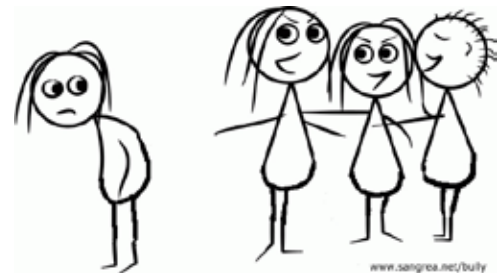
At a gymnastics meet, coaches can intimidate judges and a judge may be doing some bullying of her/his own.

#### **There are a number of variables concerning gymnastics bullying:**

- Coaches - bullying other coaches; their athletes; parents or judges. Being bullied by their boss.
- Parents - bullying coaches; judges; their children; other athletes. Not being aware of their child being bullied or abused at the gym.
- Athletes - bullying teammates. Being bullied or abused by coaches. Punished by their parents for non performance.
- Judges - bullying other judges or being bullied by another judge or coach. Bullying happens at meets or gymnasts at clinics or in the gym. Intimidating younger judges and coaches.

“**Bullying** is repeated mistreatment of one or more persons (the targets) by one or more perpetrators that takes one or more of the following forms:

- Verbal abuse.
- Offensive conduct/behaviors (including nonverbal) which are threatening, humiliating, or intimidating.
- Work interference - sabotage - which prevents work from getting done.” (1)
- Concerning judges – not giving accurate scores because of intimidation or bullying by a fellow judge or a coach.
- Coaches - not submitting an inquiry for fear of retribution by a judge.
- Preventing a judge from being assigned or intimidating coaches so that certain judges are not requested because of gossip or innuendo.



#### **Bullying:**

- “Is driven by perpetrators' need to control the targeted individual(s).
- Is initiated by bullies who choose their targets, timing, location, and methods.
- Escalates to involve others who side with the bully, either voluntarily or through coercion.
- Undermines legitimate business interests when bullies' personal agendas take precedence over work itself.
- Is akin to domestic violence at work, where the abuser is on the payroll. “(1)

“This type of aggression is particularly difficult because, unlike the typical forms of school bullying, workplace bullies often operate within the established rules and policies of their organization and their society.” (3)

## Are you a bully or are you being bullied?

Coaches and Judges – do you use your position to intimidate people?

Judges: Are you intimidated by another judge – a judge coerces you into changing your score when you disagree with that person, but since they are head judge or higher rated, you do what they ask?



<http://jobs-spot.net/workplace-bullying.html>

Judges: do you bully your judging partner? Your helpers? The coaches? Are you a prima donna?

Coaches: are you intimidated by a judge because you believe they will score your gymnast lower if you question them? Are you afraid to turn in an inquiry form? Do you intimidate judges by your facial expression or posture? Do you throw things, stomp around? Yell?

## Solutions?

- “Seek the advice of a trusted mentor who may have dealt with this situation before.
- If you can, confront the bully in a professional manner, but only if your physical safety isn't threatened. Don't sink to his or her level. Stay as calm as possible. Don't yell or threaten. Often bullies are looking for this type of confrontation and it will encourage them to come back for more. Don't cry or show weakness either. That's usually what the bully is after in the first place.
- Don't try to win over other people to your side. The way in which you handle the situation will allow them to make their own judgments.
- Don't allow the bully to intimidate you or make you feel bad about yourself. You know your true worth. Don't forget what that is.
- Do your job and do it well. The workplace bully wants you to fail and when you don't he or she will be defeated.
- Make sure your superiors are aware of your work. Workplace bullies often try to spread the word that you are not doing your job well and will even go as far as to report the smallest infractions. Your actions will carry more weight than his or her words.
- Don't allow the bully to isolate you from your colleagues. Keep up your workplace friendships.” (2)

**Judges and Coaches:** Look at yourself in an honest light, ask yourself if you are a bully, and be more careful at meets and at the gym so that you treat everyone with respect and deference. Are you being bullied? Put a stop to their behavior. If you are not comfortable with talking to the bully, contact your State Judging Director or USAG State Chairperson. If the SJD or State Chairperson is the problem, please contact the Regional Judging Director or your USAG Regional Chairperson.

- 1) <http://www.workplacebullying.org/individuals/problem/definition/>
- 2) What To Do About Workplace Bullies By Dawn Rosenberg McKay  
[http://careerplanning.about.com/od/bosscoworkers/a/bullies\\_at\\_work.htm](http://careerplanning.about.com/od/bosscoworkers/a/bullies_at_work.htm)
- (3) [http://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Workplace\\_bullying](http://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Workplace_bullying)