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# Targets Can Mutate into the Bully

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## **Targets Can Mutate into the Bully**

There are several different schools of thoughts about how one becomes a workplace bully. Some believe that aggressors in the workplace have personality disorders or have personalities that hinder their ability to be a collegial and cohesive co-worker; Thus, transforming the workplace into a hostile and toxic environment that is problematic for everyone.

The workplace bullying culture is also often culpable for creating the aggressors that plague the environment. In this type of culture, both targets and bystanders become significantly at-risk for becoming aggressors themselves because of the lack of effective interventions to stop persistent workplace bullying.

Targets are often in danger of moving into the role of the aggressor because of the fluidity of the workplace bullying environment. The role of target(s), aggressor(s), and/or bystander(s) in the workplace may change, particularly as workers come and go. A bullying culture typically does not heal itself without intervention from leadership. As such, even though bullies, targets, and bystanders leave, the environment continues to maintain the status quo of aggression by creating and generating new targets, aggressors, and bystanders. Therefore, roles of the workplace bullying culture change. For example, the target becomes the aggressor, or a bystander becomes a target.

How could someone whose been emotionally and/or psychologically abused in a by workplace bullying transform into the aggressor? The answer to this, unfortunately, is very simple. It is more beneficial to be the aggressor in the workplace than it is to be the target. As such, given the opportunity, the target may move into this role over time because experiencing workplace aggression is extremely dis-empowering and disheartening. Targets are at extreme risk for becoming a bully when they have been a target for long periods of time, when they have continued to be penalized for being the victim, and when organizations have done not intervened and/or have re-traumatized them.

On the other hand, being a bully is extremely empowering and rewarding in the work environment. Over time, the target learns that their professional world is unlikely to change or even improve unless they modify their role into one that is more powerful. They elect, either consciously or unconsciously, to become aggressive because this allows them to get and maintain power in the workplace. This is something they may not have felt or had in a very long time. It feels good and unfortunately; the aggressive behavior may re-energize the target's work efforts. Therefore, the target transforms into the persistent workplace aggressor to regain control in their professional life. For more information, go to [www.jankircher.com](http://www.jankircher.com) or contact [jankircher@jankircher.com](mailto:jankircher@jankircher.com)