

**CSWA Town Hall:**  
**Introduction to**  
**Astronomical Bullying**

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# CSWA

- **Website:** <http://www.aas.org/cswa/>
- **STATUS:** <http://www.aas.org/cswa/STATUS>
- **AASWOMEN:** <http://www.aas.org/cswa/AASWOMEN>
- **Blog:** <http://womeninastronomy.blogspot.com/>
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# Introduction to Astronomical Bullying

- Unprofessional behavior in the workplace is not limited to gender discrimination and sexual harassment.
- There are cases when “something is just not right” which may involve no sexual overtones whatsoever.



- One example of this unprofessional behavior is Astronomical Bullying or Workplace Bullying;
- It has some things in common with childhood bullying or playground bullying.





Gender  
dynamics

- There is no check list for Astronomical Bullying
- I can't give you a list of 10 items and if you check 8 of them then do XYZ to solve the problem
- Unfortunately, there are many ways for a bully to bully



# Typology of Bullying Behaviors

- Threat to professional status
  - belittling opinions
  - public professional humiliation
  - accusations regarding lack of effort
  - intimidating use of discipline or competence procedures



# Typology of Bullying Behaviors

- **Threat to professional status**
  - belittling opinions
  - public professional humiliation
  - accusations regarding lack of effort
  - intimidating use of discipline or competence procedures
- **Threat to personal standing**
  - undermining personal integrity
  - destructive innuendo and sarcasm
  - making inappropriate jokes
  - persistent teasing, name calling, insults
  - intimidation

# Bullying Behaviors (2)

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  - physical or social isolation
  - withholding necessary information
  - keeping the target out of the loop
  - ignoring or excluding

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- **Overwork**

- undue pressure
- impossible deadlines
- unnecessary disruptions

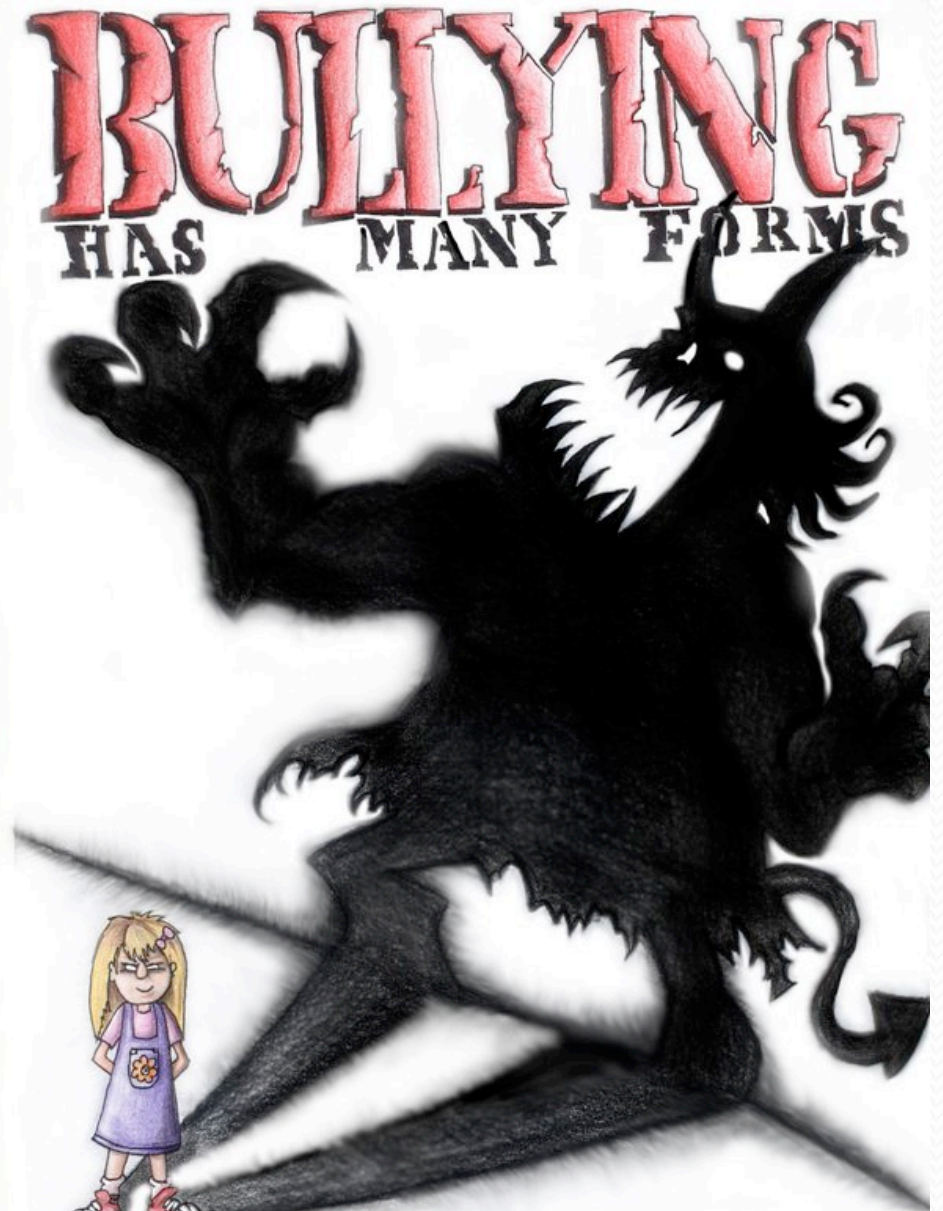
# Bullying Behaviors (3)

- **Destabilization**

- failure to acknowledge good work
- allocation of meaningless tasks
- removal of responsibility
- repeated reminders of blunders
- setting target up to fail
- shifting goal posts without telling the target

Astronomical  
Bullying can be  
overt or covert;

It can come  
from a  
supervisor or a  
collaborator.





Group  
dynamics

# Variations on an Astronomical Theme:

Someone (probably more senior than you, but not your advisor) injects him/herself into your science. He/she could be:

- stealing your ideas;
- giving the impression to others that you couldn't succeed without mentorship from him/her;
- undermining you with your advisor.

**Astronomical  
Bullying can  
involve teasing  
or taunting;**

**It can be  
physically or  
psychologically  
threatening.**





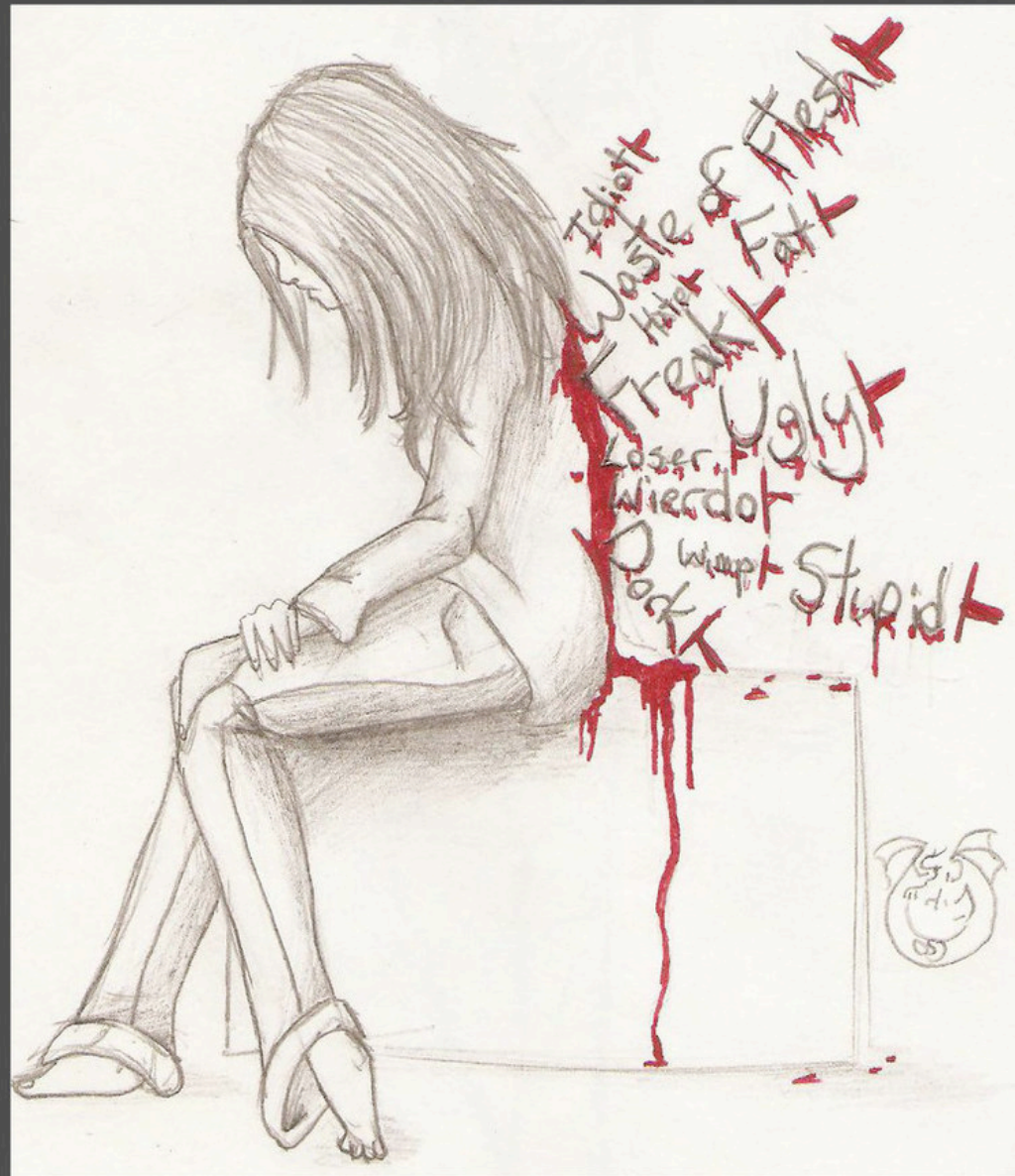
# Fighting Back: An Example from The No Asshole Rule

'I documented the many harmful things she did with dates and times.....basically I kept an "Asshole Journal." I encouraged her other victims to do so, too, and these written and signed statements were presented to our supervisor. Our supervisors knew this worker was an asshole but didn't really seem to be doing anything to stop her harmful behaviors until they received these statements. The asshole went on a mysterious leave that no supervisor was permitted to discuss and she never returned.'

- Astronomical Bullying can involve spreading rumors about your qualifications or abilities as a scientist;
- The stress associated with bullying can affect your work and your health;
- You may even feel that your future career is in jeopardy.

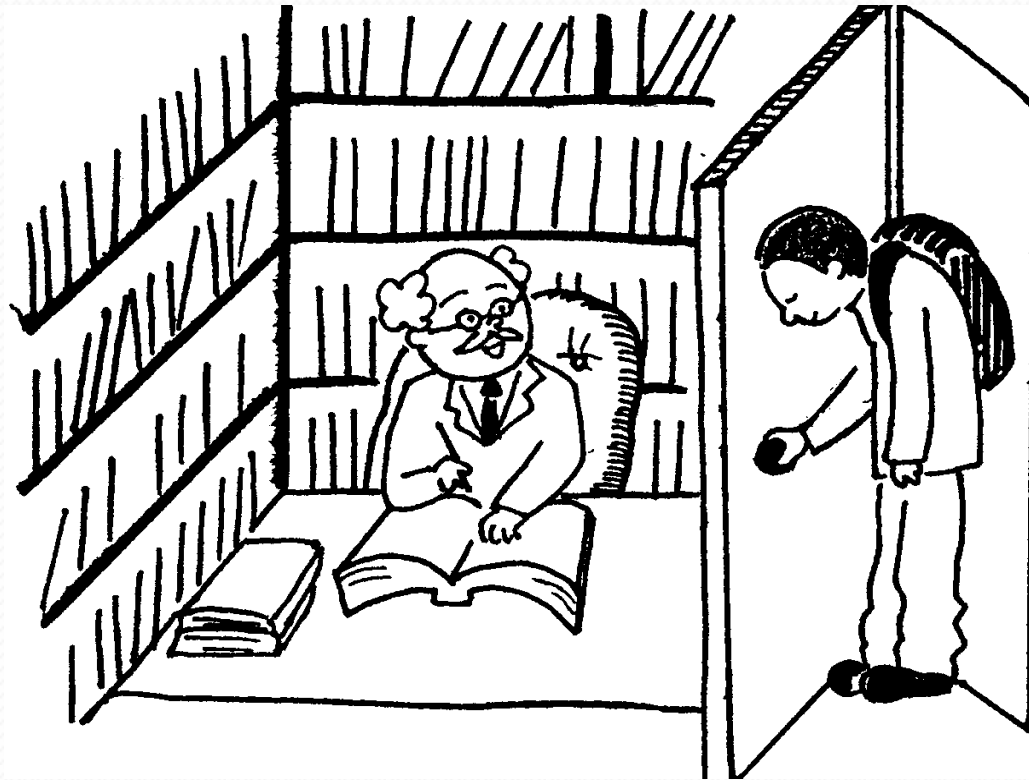


# Words, What they really feel like.

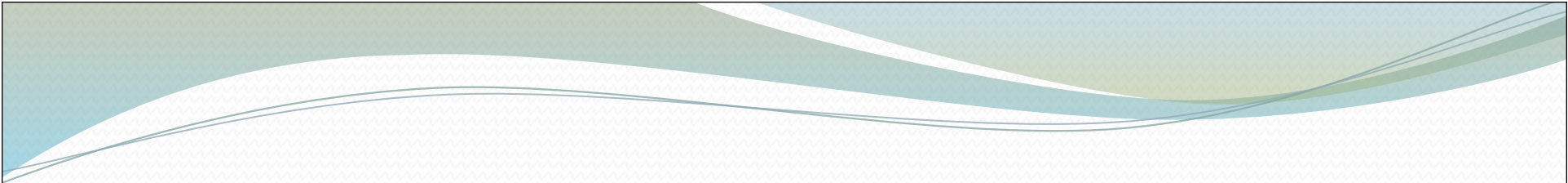


Meghan Grayson (C)

Words  
matter



Parents (**Professors**) often complain that children (**students**) don't come with an instruction manual . . . we learn a lot about being parents (**professors**) from our own parents (**professors**).



**Every situation is  
different; there is  
no “silver bullet,”  
but there are  
effective  
strategies.**

# Strategies

- Admit that the bullying is real and that it can have real effects on you and your work – it is not all your fault!
- Try to avoid being alone with the bully and try to get witnesses to incidents.
- You are probably not the first target of this bully; find other victims. There is strength in numbers.
- Try making a collective complaint with colleagues.
- Write everything down: times, places, nature of the incident, and comments made. Save emails, notes, etc.
- Talk to someone you trust: advisor, best friend, parent, sibling, etc.
- Revenge can be sweet (and tempting), but be careful.



**One last  
thing . . . the  
bully is always  
the biggest  
coward in the  
room**



**BULLIES**



# Survival Skills: An Example from The No Asshole Rule

A CEO described how a member of her board of directors routinely insulted her, swore at her, and demeaned her efforts. She developed a bag of tricks to protect her self-esteem. She avoided meeting him in person and, instead, had phone calls with him. She would say hello, wait for him to start ranting, then turn down the volume and work on something else. Every now and then, she would check in, make some remark to indicate that she was on the line, and then turn the volume down again and go back to her work. After about 30 minutes, he usually wore himself out, and she could then have a reasonable conversation with him.

# Tactics of Bullying Behaviors

- Falsely accused you of "errors"
- Stared, glared, or nonverbally intimidated you and was clearly showing hostility
- Discounted your thoughts or feelings ("that's a stupid idea") in meetings
- Used the "silent treatment" to "ice out" and separate you from others in the group
- Exhibited presumably uncontrollable mood swings in front of the group
- Made up his/her own rules on the fly that even he/she did not follow
- Disregarded satisfactory or exemplary quality of your work



# Revenge Stories: Examples from The No Asshole Rule

A radio producer felt oppressed because her boss was constantly stealing her food -- right off her desk. So she made some candy out of Ex-Lax, the chocolate flavored laxative, and left it on her desk.

As usual, he ate them without permission and spent the afternoon dealing with the consequences of his actions.

## Tactics of Bullying Behaviors (2)

- Harshly and constantly criticized you; had a different standard for you
- Started, or failed to stop, destructive rumors or gossip about you
- Encouraged people to turn against you
- Stole credit for your work (plagiarism)
- Abused the evaluation process by lying about your performance
- Retaliated against you after you filed a complaint
- Created unrealistic demands on you (workload, deadlines, duties)

# Revenge Stories: Examples from The No Asshole Rule

A writer was standing behind an irate passenger at the check-in line at JFK. The passenger went on and on insulting the airline employee, but she remained professional. When the jerk finally moved on, the writer moved up and asked the airline employee how she could be so calm.

Her words stuck forever in his memory: "Oh, he's going to LA, but his luggage is going to Nairobi."

The faint but unmistakable firmness in her smile made the writer realize, half with a chill and half with a thrill, that she was not kidding.

# References

- The No Asshole Rule: Building a Civilized Workplace and Surviving One That Isn't by Robert I. Sutton
- Never Work For a Jerk! by Patricia King
- The Bully-Free Workplace: Stop Jerks, Weasels, and Snakes From Killing Your Organization by Gary & Ruth Namie
- Wikipedia on Workplace Bullying
- American Psychological Association <http://www.apa.org/topics/bullying/office.aspx>