



# 4

## Bullies and Emotional Terrorists

### 4.1 Emotional Terrorists: Extreme Bullies

**B**ecause emotional terrorism is domestic terrorism that uses human feelings for ammunition, nice people don't want to think about it. Assuming that you are a nice person, the reason you need to read this chapter is to address and absorb the reality that there are employees who have an agenda to destroy the well-being of others, using emotions as weapons. They are prepared for you, and you need to be prepared for them. They are getting better at what they do, and you need to be better at recognizing them while protecting yourself and others. They hope you don't get this information. They will discredit this topic. They will distract you and encourage you to be nicer. You need to read this chapter because emotional terrorism is real, and it isn't going to go away anytime soon.

**Emotional terrorism... has eluded or been ignored by business leaders for a long time. This subset of actions and emotions is at first illusive and intangible... a specific blend of human behavior that seems to go beyond the normal definitions of disruptive employees.**

## 4.1.1 Emotional Terrorists and Bullies

If you have ever worked with or for a bully or what I call an emotional terrorist, you already know why you want to read this chapter – for validation. No, you are not crazy; that person you thought was dangerous to your mental health may indeed have been trying to make you go mad. If you have never worked with or for an emotional terrorist and survived, consider yourself lucky. You will want to read this chapter for self-preservation for the long-haul span of your career. If you are an emotional terrorist, you will want to read this chapter to find out if someone is on to you – because someone is! And eventually you will have to move on and find another place to be seriously annoying!

*Emotional terrorism* is an emotional and behavioral phenomenon in the workplace that has eluded or been ignored by business leaders for a long time. This subset of actions and emotions is at first illusive and intangible. Business writers have made attempts to deal with the visible or overt nature of these phenomena by writing about jerks at work, or angry employees, or other references to people at work who are difficult. Managers have read books, gone to countless workshops, talked secretly to each other, consulted psychologists and therapists, and have found themselves unable to wrap their minds around a specific blend of human behavior that seems to go beyond the normal definitions of disruptive employees.

## Why Dealing with Emotional Terrorism is Difficult

At closer scrutiny there are three reasons why dealing with the phenomenon of emotional terrorism has been so difficult:

1. Emotional terrorists do not fall into the range of regular to dysfunctional people and need a separate category;
2. Most employees are nice people; and,
3. Emotional terrorists count on nice people to struggle with the definition and use that discrepancy to gain emotional territory.

Staying good, nice, and friendly is what most human beings do. The majority of people do not like to upset other people. Emotional terrorists have a different approach to life. They actually seek and find pleasure in the discomfort of others. As workers, managers, and administrators have been concerned with productivity and not offending anyone, emotional terrorists have crept into workplaces and felt right at home.

If Steven Spielberg did a scary movie called “The Emotional Terrorist in the Workplace,” managers could see it on the big screen while eating popcorn.

Such a public validation would create a forum for discussion. It would be out in the open. As it is now, emotional terrorists at the workplace continue to stir up emotional chaos and are getting away with it on a daily basis. It is time to put some light on this and make it less possible for people with an agenda of destruction to have their way.

## 4.1.2 Emotional Terrorism

- ▶ **Emotional terrorism:** “Domestic terrorism that uses human feelings for ammunition” (Hawkins-Mitchell, 2007).
- ▶ **Bully:** A person who is habitually overbearing especially to weaker people. Bullying is a form of abuse that attempts to create power over another group or person to create an imbalance of power through social, physical, emotional, verbal coercion or manipulation; an *emotional terrorist*.

Emotional terrorism is everywhere. It can be found in homes, churches, synagogues, shopping centers, parent-teachers association meetings, city council meetings, and anywhere that people live, work, and play. Emotional terrorism at work is a significant risk. International and domestic terrorism are now factored into business risk management. Emotional terrorism must also be seen as risk.

The fact that international or domestic terrorism has emotional roots (someone is very, very upset about something) should immediately translate into the awareness that emotional terrorism is a constituent of these other forms of terrorism. Perhaps one way to discuss emotional terrorism at the workplace is to describe it as *big terrorism's little cousin*. Nevertheless, the agenda of either *big* or *little* terrorism is the same: control through the use of terror. All terrorists have a common agenda: to create fear, chaos, havoc, terror, and destruction in any way possible in order to have some sense of control, make a statement, divert attention, or call attention to something.

Mean, evil, bad, horrible, icky, intentionally dangerous, unconscionable, criminal, vile, scary, seductive, dangerous people exist. *And they work with you*. One very simple and horrifyingly daunting statistic may convince you. It is a statistic that is hidden from public view because of its nature and implications: *the exact number of registered sex offenders in this country!* The reported number, depending on the site, is daunting. One site says 600,000, and another says more, or less, but more than can be even considered without pause. And many are missing and don't continue to report (Child molester statistics, 2005). This statistic represents only the ones who are registered. What makes you think they do not work with you? Or go to church with you? Or shop at the local market with you? Or sit with you at a PTA meeting? They do. And some of them are reading this book. *If this does not get your attention, nothing will.*