

Mentor or Bully — There is a Difference

by Carlene Ashworth, PNP 2010-2011

One of the biggest challenges our organization faces is the ability to get along with each other. The complaint heard often is past leaders on all levels — unit, district, county, and department — tend to dominate and try to control activities that should be, would be, beneficial to carrying out the mission of the American Legion Auxiliary.

Are you the past leader who doesn't know she's a bully? You love the organization, you love what we do, you love our mission, but are people staying away from the meetings because you're dominating all the conversations?

You could be keeping ALA members from attending meetings because you are being a bully, which hurts the mission as well as the growth of the organization.

Are you the first one to speak up, and continue to speak up, when there is discussion on the floor? Do you dominate and intimidate others and leave them with the impression of, 'do as I say or you'll never get anywhere in this organization?'

Are you using your influence as a past leader in your unit or department to convince others that your way is the only way? Are you the one making the phone calls trying to sway other members to your way of thinking? Do you constantly criticize the actions of other members?

Are you mentoring in the wrong direction?

Ann Carlsen, founder and CEO of Carlsen Resources, a provider of executive search and consulting services for media and telecommunications businesses, stated in a recent article entitled, *Taking the Bully by the Horns*, that bullying is the opposite of dealing fairly with others. Carlsen states it may be defined as "repeated acts or comments that are not constructive and hurt or isolate a person in the workplace."

Although Carlsen's article speaks mainly to those in the workplace, her statement clearly applies to any area where a group of people are working together for a common goal.

"Everybody can be great....because anybody can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve. You don't have to make your subject and verb agree to serve. You only need a heart full of grace. A soul generated by love."

Martin Luther King, Jr.

How do you mentor without bullying?

If our organization wants to maintain a culture of goodwill, then we must take a look at ourselves and ensure that we, as individuals, are doing our best to make sure all members are given the respect they deserve. On a scale of 1 to 10, how do you rate yourself on the kindness level? Do you treat those around you with respect and fairness? Are you doing your part to make this world a better place?

If we are going to mentor, or give advice, we must ensure that we are doing it in a way that is without humiliation and is presented in a positive manner. Mentoring is not trying to persuade others to your way of thinking. This is bullying. Mentoring is creating a connection of camaraderie to help build and strengthen our organization and ourselves to accomplish the mission of the American Legion Auxiliary. This can also apply to your daily life and your interaction with family, friends, and strangers.

Doug Lawrence, founder of TalentC, a human resources solution provider and an international certified mentor facilitator (ICMF) with over 30 years of mentoring and leadership experience, stated in a recent article that “the impact on the people and the organization are severe if not addressed.

When it is not addressed, the organization can see a drop in productivity, (*decline in working our programs*), negativity in the workplace (*units*), high turnover rates (*no longer willing to serve in a leadership role*), and dissatisfied customers (*loss of members*) to name but a few.”

Does this sound familiar?

How can I help promote an Internal Culture of Goodwill?

A leader leads by example. A bully dominates and intimidates others and says, ‘do as I say or else you will never get anywhere in this organization.’

A leader shows empathy for others and motivates. A bully lacks empathy for others, ridicules, and demotivates.

A leader can communicate with all levels and understand their motivations. A bully surrounds herself only with people who agree with her.

A leader believes in the abilities of all people and has faith they will do well. A bully thinks everyone else is below them in knowledge and ability and cannot think for themselves.

A leader willingly shares information and is transparent as to its source. A bully withholds information and uses it as a weapon when she wants to show everyone how much she knows.

A leader is assertive when necessary. A bully is aggressive and uses her power to get her way.

A leader is emotionally mature. A bully is emotionally immature.