

HARASSMENT CONSULTING CENTER NEWS

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It is now the Japanese rainy and humid season “Tsuyu”. Recently we often hear the word “moral harassment (mora-hara)”. This issue focuses on “mora-hara” at work which is much talked about in the media.

Definition of “moral harassment (mora-hara)” : It is understood generally as repeated, non-physical acts of harassment at the workplace by words, attitude, gestures, or papers, *etc.* which damage personality or dignity of a worker, hurt him/her physically or mentally, and bring him/her to resign or spoil the workplace atmosphere.

Reference: “Stalking the Soul: Emotional Abuse and the Erosion of Identity” by Marie-France Hirigoyen

※While the definition above is broad, this issue focuses on “mora-hara” in a narrow sense.

“Mora-hara” in a narrow sense is psychological abuse mainly by words or attitude (ignoring, tut-tutting, unnatural sigh, *etc.*). Although “mora-hara” does not cause injuries or bruises, it is a malicious act which deeply damages personality of the victim. While the other types of harassment cause physical or verbal abuses clear to everyone, “mora-hara” typically causes mental suffering by using an insidious trick which is not apparent to people around.

■The basic process of “mora-hara”

Isolate someone in the workplace → Gradually weaken him/her by lecturing, sarcastic remarks, complete denying of personality, shouting suddenly, ignoring, superior attitude, or giving a look of contempt, *etc.* without leaving an evidence → Spread a bad reputation of him/her while pretending to be a victim → Attack or exclude him/her by getting people around involved

■The target of “mora-hara”

A scapegoat is chosen as a tool to make the harasser feel a sense of superiority or a punching bag to relieve stress. A scapegoat is chosen among weak persons close to the harasser or persons annoying to the harasser (not useful any longer after using as a tool, became more noticeable than the harasser, not responds as the harasser expects).

■The purpose of “mora-hara”

Treat someone like a slave lacking self-assertion, bring down someone by spreading a bad reputation, or heal the mind by making poor persons.



Reference: “What is mora-hara? Neglect and abuse at work. (mora-hara data)”

★The points to be checked for “mora-hara” at the workplace:



※If you notice of the points below, you may be damaged by workplace “mora-hara” or you may do “mora-hara” to someone.

- ✓ Say bad things about looks or personality of the victim or his/her family
- ✓ Rebuke the victim in front of many people or make sarcastic remarks deliberately when the victim is within earshot
- ✓ Blame the victim tenaciously for trivial mistake
- ✓ Try to isolate the victim at the workplace by spreading a bad reputation of him/her
- ✓ Not allow the victim to work or lead the victim to make a mistake
- ✓ Not provide the victim with necessary information for him/her to work
- ✓ Put nose into the victim’s private life repeatedly or send messages to him/her repeatedly after working hours
- ✓ Force the victim to do wrong or attend the drinking party

Reference: “The meaning and characteristics of mora-hara, mora-hara at work, slightly different from mora-hara between husband and wife?”

■ The following cases are found in the survey by “Nikkei Woman” .

<Harassment by neglect or gestures>



I am ignored by a co-worker at the workplace. The harasser talks to me normally in front of boss but ignores me instantly after boss leaves. Thus a third party does not notice the neglect. I told it to boss but boss does not pay attention as “it must be your imagination” . (37-year-old person)



Boss showed a contemptuous attitude to me by giving a sigh or a look of contempt or shrugging. (24-year-old person)

<Injurious attitude and discrimination>



I am aware that mental damage is more strongly caused by words or attitude. When I was sick, boss previously said to me even as a joke “You are not necessary and you may go home if you are sick” . The joke was too much for me, although I might not feel so bad if my condition was OK. I think that even casual remarks may have different effects to a person depending on age and gender of him/her and may cause serious damage to some person. (30-year-old person)

<I live in constant fear after “mora-hara” .>



In the office, boss often says to me like “I say these words to you, otherwise you will not work” . Or boss says to another staff (boss’ s relative) “..., because he/she (It is me) does not work” . Although I am not great at my job, boss’ s words make me feel incompetent, self-denying, “I cannot do anything” . In front of boss, I get too nervous to do usual work causing a vicious cycle. (32-year-old person)

Reference: Nikkei Woman (785 persons replied to the questionnaire January 30~February 26, 2015.)

■ If you get caught up in “mora-hara” ,

Generally speaking, “mora-hara” starts as trivial communication misunderstandings and tends to escalate gradually. There are a lot of possible causes and purposes. If you are repeatedly subjected to violent language or malicious slander, we recommend that you take notes or record what happened.



In order to break a vicious cycle, it is important to have a person understanding of you. However you may have been already isolated and you cannot find such a person. In such a case, please do not worry by yourself and please come to Harassment Consulting Center.

We receive complaints related to any type of harassment including “mora-hara” .



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Tsurumai, and Daiko sections are also available. For more information, please see the website:

<http://www.sh-help.provost.nagoya-u.ac.jp/>