

# **How to deal with aggression**

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Many people experience aggressive and intimidating behavior in their work situation. This finds place at all levels, from customers and suppliers to executives and colleagues. It ranges from petty harassment and insults to threats and violent behavior.

In order to function properly, it is important to feel safe and familiar during your work. If you are dealing with aggression, chances are that you no longer feel safe. When annoying and aggressive behavior occurs more often, it has an effect on the atmosphere and the work and that is often a reason for calling in sick or, even worse, for dismissal.

### **External and internal aggression**

There are two main forms of aggression:

- external aggression
- internal aggression

### **External aggression**

External aggression, as the word says, comes from outside. That is caused by customers, patients, bystanders, students and other people outside the organization. Often these are people who are angry because something is not going the way they want, but there can also be aggressive behavior caused by alcohol or drug use or because a mass starts to move and no longer stops to stop, as with demonstrations.

According to the Working Conditions Act, the definition of aggression and violence at work is:

*Incidents in which an employee is psychologically or physically harassed, threatened or attacked under circumstances directly related to the performance of work.*

## **Internal aggression**

Internal aggression comes from colleagues or supervisors. At least from someone or from several people within the organization. This form of aggression is often long lasting. According to 'The Dutch Working Conditions Survey', 1.1 million Dutch employees experience internal aggression. That is 16% of the employees. One in ten employees experience harassment by colleagues or supervisors. One in 12 employees experience bullying at work.

### Aggression occurs in several ways:

- Verbal: cursing, insulting, threatening
- Physical: attacking, kicking, hitting, biting, grabbing
- Psychological: intimidating

## **Forms of aggression**

People who are aggressive want to achieve something. Because normally not successful, they use aggressive behavior to intimidate and still get their way. Whether someone is aggressive or not depends on many factors, such as living conditions, upbringing, temperament, psychological condition, use of substances such as alcohol or drugs and the ability to express what he/she wants.

### There are different types of aggression:

- Instrumental aggression
- Frustration aggression
- Psychopathological aggression
- Criminal aggression