

URL: <https://ecorner-stag.tcg.stanford.edu/quick-dips/recognize-when-youre-the-problem-explicit/>

Stanford management expert Bob Sutton discusses the disparity between the percentage of Americans who admit they consistently treat others badly and statistics on how many of us feel bullied on a regular basis. He explains how the damage from abusive behavior goes beyond individuals' feelings and affects the organization by stifling healthy dissent and driving out the best people.



## Transcript

to be part of the solution, not the problem.. And let's go back to this notion that if you're a jerk, the odds you're gonna admit it to yourself or others are not high.. And there's some good national survey data, it's not great but it's pretty good, by the Workplace Bullying Institute, they do something with Zogby about every year or so, and if you look at surveys over the last 10 years, the general pattern is about one half of one percent of Americans, so that's one out of 200 Americans, will admit to being a consistent, doing consistent or ongoing bullying.. About 50% of Americans say they've either experienced it, are experiencing it, or witnessed it firsthand.. Those numbers don't add up, and there's a whole bunch of other research on self awareness that suggests the worst person to ask, if you wanna figure out if somebody is an asshole, is the asshole him or herself, and that includes you.. So looking in the mirror actually doesn't work that well.. What the evidence suggests is the best thing to do, and research on self awareness says this pretty consistently, is having people in your life who can tell you when you've been a jerk, a temporary one or a certified one, that's the best path to awareness.. And one example of this, so it's June, 1940.. Winston Churchill is in a pretty bad situation.. You think about it, they're losing the war..

They're being bombed like crazy.. The US isn't in the war yet.. Dunkirk has happened or is just about to happen.. It's just a mess in the UK, and he's getting grouchy.. So his wife, Clementine, writes him a letter.. "One of the men in your entourage, a devoted friend, "has been to me and told me that there is a danger "of your being generally disliked "by your colleagues and subordinates "because of your rough, sarcastic, and overbearing manner." And then she goes sort of wifely, but, "My darling Winston, I must confess "that I have noticed a deterioration in your manner, "and you're not as kind as you used to be." I think that's kind of interesting in light of current events, and I would also add, there's two or three sentences at the end where she sort of lays out a mini theory that treating the people who work for him bad is not just bad because it makes them feel bad.. It's bad because it stifles dissent and drives out the best people.. So it's sort of interesting in light of some current events...