

## When Co-workers are Mean and the Workplace is Crazy

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Too many employees can identify with “employee discontent”; they feel unfulfilled and unappreciated on their jobs. To make matters worse, many are underpaid and overworked. Impossible workloads and unfair work policies compound the feelings of unhappiness for many employees. Other job-related issues that can also add to employee discontent are having to labor in emotionally unhealthy environments filled with drama and competition where mean colleagues and overbearing bosses seem to abound. Unfortunately, this is the description of many work environments and it does not end at the job site. There is an emotional backlash that remains. Employees often take home the residues of their stressful workplaces with them, and even after work they can remain moody, miserable or fatigued. As a consequence, their children, spouses and other relatives are the ones who bear the brunt of their dissatisfaction.

Perhaps the easiest solution to this would be to change jobs but in this tough economic environment it is something that many are not prepared to do. However, if you do stay in your crazy workplace, your situation is not hopeless, you can find ways of dealing with those mean co-workers in crazy work places. If nothing else, you always have the power to change you. The most powerful thing about changing you is that when you decide to do so, people and situations around you will change automatically. Here are some suggestions:

**1. Keep your work area clean and organized – even if no one else does –** There’s nothing more telling of a working environment than how its workspaces are kept. Disorganized offices, cubicles, and desks are an indication of disorganized, careless workers. Your workspace is a reflection of the quality of work you deliver. Even if no one else does, keep your area clean.

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2. **Say what you mean and mean what you say** - Stay out of office gossip and politics. Make sure that whatever you say within closed quarters you can repeat in public. Never offer or add information that will damage anyone personally unless you are willing to say it to their faces.

3. **Stay away from the workplace clique** – Every workplace has one or a few inner circles. They are usually employees with seniority or those with some form of authority. New employees and unpopular workers can feel ostracized and at a disadvantage if they are not part of this circle. Reality is that these cliques are usually cut-throat, disloyal, and ruthless. Stay away from them.

4. **Don't take work home** – Don't call colleagues after work to gossip about what happened at work. Remember that you do have another life away from work; invest time in it and in those who form part of your real life.

5. **Don't take your home to your workplace either**– Leave your personal issues home where they belong. Because we spend so much time in the workplace we think that it gives us permission to share our personal lives with colleagues. Make a distinction - your co-workers are work partners, they are not your therapists or counselors, and some may not even be worthy of being your close friends.

6. **Be committed to getting the job done** – It's simple. It doesn't matter who is not doing their job or doing it right, you do yours. That's what you are paid to do.

7. **Live up to your personal principles** – Be clear about who you are and what you stand for. Don't compromise your values for anything or anyone. What you need from co-workers is respect for your value system not approval or acceptance.

8. **Be professional** – From flipping burgers to running an executive office, every job has its internal protocol and policies. Follow them. Carry yourself in a professional manner even if you wash dishes or clean bathrooms.

9. **Hold yourself accountable to a higher creed** – It's not about pleasing your boss or even making the company look good, it's about maintaining a personal reputation of high standards. Everything you do carries your name on it. Do a good job because it represents you.

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