Getting along with others

Have some of your workplace relationships become a drag? With some effort and persistence, you can create more understanding, acceptance and trust between you and your co-workers.

You probably spend more time with your work colleagues than you do with your immediate family. As you know, however, even the healthiest of families have interpersonal conflicts. In order to get along better at work:

• Be respectful of differences. Give your co-workers space to be who they are no matter how they differ from you ethnically, culturally, temperamentally and even politically.

• Enhance your trustworthiness by avoiding office gossip. Instead, look for chances to offer generous praise when a co-worker has made a contribution.

• Be reliable and follow through on your commitments. This boosts your reputation and can be catching—leading to better teamwork.

• If a co-worker says something you think is hurtful or in poor taste, take time to collect your thoughts. Then respond with reason rather than heated emotions or feelings.

• If a co-worker is having a bad day, offer a simple act of kindness. Your colleague will likely return the favor when you’re having a bad day.

When a work project succeeds, share the credit with your co-workers. Even if a success was mostly your idea, remember that few work accomplishments are entirely solo efforts.
Constructive communication

Keep your communication constructive at work in order to achieve win-win solutions.

- Show respect for co-workers, even during disagreements. Words of anger and disrespect block effective communication and create long-lasting wounds. In a conflict, take a moment to step back, regroup, and treat the other person as an equal.
- Most of the time we share at least some responsibility for our conflicts. If you’re wrong about something, humbly admit it. This can defuse the tension in a situation and inspire the other person to meet you in the middle.
- If someone is making a point, listen actively and allow them to finish. Don’t interrupt. Put aside your views and really listen. Even if you disagree, give the person your full attention.
- Avoid making personal attacks (“You made a big mistake on that project”). Instead, be careful with your words and seek solutions (“I think we need to fix how we do that”). This focuses on what needs to be changed, not the person.

Improving your workplace relationships

Build bonds
Spend at least a little time each day building positive rapport with others around you. Offer a random act of kindness or strike up a conversation with someone new. Take part in social events where you can interact with your colleagues outside of work. This builds greater trust and smooths the way for future collaboration.

Break down barriers
Communicate directly to ease conflicts. If an interpersonal obstacle is getting in the way at work, ask the other party to meet with you in private. Calmly and respectfully share your concerns, and ask for the other person’s help in resolving the issue. The direct approach can keep problems from lingering and escalating.

Try a tune-up
Regarding interpersonal skills and dealing with others, you can always stand to try something new in your communicative approach. Take some time to reflect and identify the communication patterns that cause the most problems in your workplace relations—and make a conscious effort to improve them.


Webinar—You’re invited to a webinar on Wednesday, Feb. 14: How to Minimize Conflict in Your Work Life, offering tips for healthier workplace relationships. Register here.