

Co-worker's stale smoke and moldy coffee smell getting to you?

Question: "I sit by a man who is a chain smoker — some days he goes out to smoke six or seven times. He is also a heavy coffee drinker. The combination of smoke and coffee really stinks. How can I address this issue without offending him?" — *Ann E. Harris*

See Comments Below

susan March 9, 2019 at 3:22 pm

Definitely the best argument!

susan March 9, 2019 at 2:30 pm

In 2011, the SIDS (crib death) mystery was finally solved, by the discovery that the "third hand" smoke that remains on smokers' skin and clothing and in their hair, even after smoking elsewhere, was killing these infants.

Pm June 12, 2017 at 1:51 pm

Bunch of Whiney *****.
The world literally stinks with, without the smell of smoke.

AJ January 30, 2017 at 12:47 pm

We have a coworker who smokes like a freight train as well as huffs – literally – essential oils. Soon after she started working here, several of us started having sinus issues because her belongings are coated with cigarette smoke. One guy is so allergic to cigarette smoke he started getting headaches & it greatly impacts his work. After the girl had been here a few weeks she brought in the essential oils & opened them up in our closed-in environment. That day I started crashing at my desk, breaking out in rashes, & my airways started closing. And the smell – everyone complained about how bad they stunk esp with the cig smoke, a couple of people got headaches, & one even had nosebleeds. Even our resident smoker, who is very considerate about his habit & careful to not have it linger on him, told her it was too much. At the last place I worked, a coworker there used oils, as well, and while she was so subtle that no one could smell them the essence in the air caused the same reactions for me. One day I even went into anaphylaxis and it was confirmed to be the oils. So when my coworker at my current place opened them up and I started reacting, I told her directly to stop as I'm severely allergic. She claimed she used them for anxiety. The manager then told her it was against company policy to use them or any kind of perfumes, etc., indoors. Now she sits in her car multiple times daily, huffing the oils in one hand while smoking in the other and her clothing & hair are doused in the odors. When she walks by you smell her trail for at least 30 minutes. When she walks down the stairs or is 20 feet away, you smell her. So we

finally started Febrezing her office to reduce the stench & neutralize the allergens (it's hard to find, but you can get Febreze Allergen Reducer Unscented or the Febreze Unscented Odor Eliminator), which helps but can't fix all of it. Our eyes & nostrils burn, our sinuses clog, & my desk has temporarily been moved to another area as I had a severe allergic reaction one day when it was especially thick and we could taste the cigs & oils on our tongues. I told her 4 times politely but firmly that I'm allergic but she doesn't care or think my allergy (as well as the irritation others experience) is real. When the one coworker got a nosebleed, this girl's reasoning was that the oils were making her detox bad stuff from her body. My allergist has written a letter to submit to HR to address her and hopefully get our EAP program involved as it appears she's addicted & we're concerned about her, but I'm looking for another job because I can't risk living in poor health again. It's inconsiderate to others to force your smelly stuff on them, especially when they have told you - and you have seen for yourself - it makes them sick.

Beth January 9, 2017 at 11:25 am

I'm just looking for practical advice on covering up the smell. There's three people in my office who smoke heavily. Most of the time it's all I can smell because it gets in your nose and stays there, like the smell of vomit or cat urine. I also read online that your brain can trick your mind into conjuring up the smell of smoke due to a virus or a sickness (because your brain believes the smell of smoke is a bad sign regardless), so I also want to ensure it's not that. Mainly, I'm looking for advice on air fresheners, scent dispersers, or maybe one of those ionic breeze things. Note: Candle burning is prohibited.

Suzy October 3, 2015 at 6:12 am

I found this site because I myself have issues with people smoking around me. I have allergies to smoking which causes asthma attacks if I am exposed to too much bad air!

Reading all these comments, it seems that the smokers are offended by what non smokers have to say about it. Well, really, for those of us that don't smoke feel like a victim because our health is being compromised because smokers have this urge to smoke every dam minute. It's not even good for you anyway, so in reality, we non smokers are helping you out. But they don't understand that and want to simple satisfy their urges.

My in laws smoke like a chimney, even though I expressed myself and how hazardous and life threatening the smoke is to my health, I got a , " oh why don't you wear a mask" but why do I have to go out of my way while the smokers don't want to be respectful at least for the time being !

I don't know how to handle this situation without hurting people's feeling or "conducting them" but I sure as hell won't sacrifice my health while they are doing the same..... I must say I didn't find one reply that helped.... It was a bunch of bickering back and forth replies.

It's a give and take situation! Most places don't even allow a smoking sign, maybe those of you in offices can get some type of petition signed and have a non smoking environment. I've been to the ER twice and currently on meds just because I've been nice his far and haven't said anything and now quit frankly, I've had it because selfish smokers feel they have the right to smoke every dam minute !!!!! We non smokers have just as the same right!!! If you don't like the smell of the smoke you tell them!!! And if the odor is nasty tell them that too !! Maybe they'll thanks you or end up quitting their job, you don't have anything to lose but yourself just for the smoke

Rhonda K August 21, 2015 at 7:38 pm

It's awful how you are being bullied for smoking. But I just moved desks at work where I have to smell smoke all day. I have health issues as it is and having a migraine and nausea all day is not a good way to live. This smell that stays on the smokers is not the main issue. Even if someone cannot smell the smoke, the residue from the chemicals is affecting everyone's health negatively. I don't know what the answer is as both sides have their

points. But no one should have to suffer with headaches, nausea, dizziness, coughing, etc all day just to get a paycheck. And they shouldn't have to quit a job either as who is to say that the next place they work won't have the same issues.

Please smokers, please help those of us who get sick from your activity.

smoker April 13, 2015 at 10:36 pm

I am amazed that this is a site of adults. I am a smoker, and do not smoke at work because of a co worker who complains of the smell when I come back from break. I used to use febreze after break and worked perfect. Unfortunately this same worker stated she had scent allergy so that went out the window. This was not medically proven by the way. A few things I would like to touch on-have any of the people who think bullying your co workers is ok or acceptable in the workplace or ever thought of it as bullying? Lets look at it on a larger scale

If your child/spouse was obese and schoolmate or co workers made oinking noises, then justified it by saying they chose to let them selves go or they chose to be fat. Now before you jump on me saying it is different-its not Did they chose to eat? yes Lets go even further-should your health care provider deny an obese person benefits, insulin, or any medical device-even further should your life insurance be cancelled because you were overweight? While I understand that you may not like the smell of smoke- there are all natural alternatives Peppermint oil? or natural oils. Instead of complaining and pointing out how this person offends you ask how you offend and belittle them and instead of focusing on the problem try for a solution. I think if someone came with a solution most people would try to work with them just as I have.

Concerned Coworker February 24, 2016 at 10:01 am

The thing is being fat doesn't effect others...smoking does. We currently had a smoker start and I can say honestly and truthfully I have never been so sick before. I don't think there is a day at work where I haven't been congested and haven't been able to breath right. Should I quit? Heck no I have been here much longer and am not a concern to others. Should she quit? No, but should she stop smoking in her car? Probably.

curls March 12, 2016 at 11:41 pm

My newly bought car was previously smoked in. I can't smell smoke. I've been sick as can be. Headaches, visible rash, can't think straight. Had the car vapor steam cleaned today and THAT's when I learned it was a smoker's car because the headliner gave up piles of smoke smelling dirt.

So this isn't in anyone's head. This stuff made me sick and I thought it was cleaners. Never dreamed it was smoke.

It's less now but cleaning the car thoroughly still hadn't gotten rid of it enough for me to keep the car. Still giving me a headache and stuffed sinus. The rash seems better. But there's this itching down below that's still there, and trouble breathing.

Yuck. I will try harder to spot a smoker's car next time.

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out of time out of space April 8, 2015 at 1:19 am

I am Looking for suggestions. My employer decided to shut down our second lunch area. This is really going to put a strain on the break environment . The lot of us that don't smoke use this auxiliary lunch room because we don't like to eat with the smokers due to smoke odor. Food and smoke odor are not appetizing when trying to eat . In addition we have our sensitivity level , the room is smaller so add two or three smokers after a puff and it's offensive. We never bother smokers they have their area to smoke and we don't go there.

I will raise my concerns with my employer however they seem adamant about the closure.

If it comes to a war I will raise the smoke card for my own health issues. I don't want to make the smokers live's difficult but I need some case law to back us and keep the separate lunch rooms. It will also keep the work environment stable.

Thanks

Ann Marie January 30, 2015 at 7:59 pm

CJ,
You are so right.

Joe June 10, 2014 at 2:20 am

How about you deal with it? What if he finds your face offensive? Should he tell you to get plastic surgery? What about your weight? Maybe he finds the size of your butt offensive. Learn how to co-exist with others and get over yourself.

Linda November 8, 2014 at 5:23 pm

I agree! I'm not a smoker, but the smell of my co-workers' cute little puppies and cat litter that hangs on

them makes me disgusted! Not to mention their disgusting energy drinks, ugh! smells like gasoline and ingested alien ****... The hippies among them have this “hello-I-cut-myself” scent stick smell, which is also pretty gross.

I never said a word to them about it, and I don’t intend to! Live with it people!

Shawn July 18, 2017 at 11:58 pm

***** sit your *** down! None of those smells are associated with over 100 toxic, cancer causing agents in cigarette smoke. You are a prime example of uneducated logical incompetence.

GTeye November 25, 2014 at 4:53 pm

Wouldn’t co-existing include them not coming to work smelling like a pig?

Is it okay if I come **** all day in your office/cube?

Didn’t think so... so shut up.

curls March 12, 2016 at 11:46 pm

Joe – co-existing requires that YOU don’t impact into my space. Someone’s face, butt, and weight don’t invade my body via my nose and skin. It all depends how much impact the smoke has. A little during a once a day 5 minute conversation is fine. Sitting in a co-office with it, not okay.

Non-smoker, wish we all were February 23, 2012 at 12:34 pm

When a choice you make to do to your body like smoking becomes an action acted on some else’s body like an asthma attack, allergic reaction, or migraine headache, etc.. then the smoker is the problem.

This is not simple prefernces or “school bullying”. This is mostly smokers thinking they have the right to make others feel physically ill because it is their right to smoke.

Because I am not a smoker or have pets (because of my allergies to animals), I can smell those that do from a far distance. The smells of both instantly irritate my body and trigger an allergic reaction. My eyes itch, my throat gets scratch, and a migraine sets in. So for your right to smoke, I have to take meds, and sometimes go home sick. How is that fair to me?

Businesses should think hard on how counter productive all this is. You have to give smoke breaks to the smokers which equals less production. You have staff less productive because of the physical discomfort of the allergies, or zero production if they have to take sick leave.

You made a choice to smoke. You made the choice to smell like smoke.

Shawn July 19, 2017 at 12:03 am

Outstanding post; one of the best arguments in this discussion.

SusanL February 3, 2012 at 7:14 pm

A smoker, a co-worker, was out on leave for 3 months. Now that he's back since Wed of this week I've had an upset stomach and irritated nose, throat, and lungs. He sits in a cubicle like me but across a short hall way. Previously it was just the cologne that bothered me. Now I'm going really crazy b/c for some reason it's more so the smoke smell.

I feel like there's a person in my cubicle with me with smoker's breath and strong cologne standing right next to me. It's with me all day long and I can't get away from it. It's invasive. When he comes back from a smoking break the smoke smell is stronger and there's that "new smoke" touch added to it.

In the past I've communicated stricly with HR, never directly to the person. It's not my job to talk to someone about their scents.

Our workplace posts on our intranet a notice about caution with scents in the workplace. HR has been extremely good about talking to the person. On more than one day when the cologne was overpowering they talked to them and then they must have gone to the restroom and washed it off or something b/c when they came back it was only a mild scent. Now how in the world is the cigarette smoke smell going to eliminated?

I wish if he were willing someone would give him an all-expense paid 6 month stay in smoking rehab, if there is such a thing.

ladybug January 26, 2012 at 5:38 pm

Husband had meeting today with HR mgr, smoker and their boss. My husband came out on the short end of the stick. They stood up for the smoker and said my husband's asthma is not their problem and they can't stop the smoker from smoking in his car at break time.28924

ladybug January 25, 2012 at 2:37 pm

My husband shares work space with a man who doesn't bathe. He has greasy hair down to his waist and a very greasy baseball cap. He sneezes in his hand and wipes it on his pants. He always has the same clothes on also. At breaks and at lunch, he sits in his car with the windows closed and chain smokes. My husband has asthma. He complained to his boss and was told he was being hard to get along with. He brought a fan to work but the smoker complained and my husband had to turn it off. He can't change cubicle because each one does a specific job, but the smoker is 3-4 grades higher than he is and helps my husband when he's out of work. He's in a union and the smoker shouldn't be helping him anyway. His boss said 'oh well, he needs something to do'. I think my husband should file a grievance.0

Smokee April 11, 2011 at 2:55 pm

I am a smoker and was recently in this situation and it was not handled tactfully. It very much bothers me some of the comments I see because smokers do not deserve this type of disdain because they ARE people too. You can not harass someone for any reason, even if its smoking.

I see about embarrassing someone enough so they'll do something about it, are you kidding me? You want to humiliate one of your co-workers? Make them feel isolated? Are you in elementary school and advocate for bullying?

This weekend I rewashed all my clothes, put them in a room I can shut up in the house so they are not exposed to tobacco smoke. I bought gum in bulk and am now brushing my teeth and washing my hands after every cigarette due to receiving a complaint. That's how I am. I'm very considerate of my co-workers the moment something is brought to my attention...yet the solution for some is to try to humiliate and embarrass me instead???

The offended co-worker was gossiping about her issues to the point another co-worker (from across the floor) decided to stick up for her and less than tactfully come over and sniff my hair, jacket, clothes to tell me I stunk of smoke and she did it loud enough for others (including her offended buddy) to hear. I had just had a shower before I came to work (my hair was still wet) and I was being told it stunk of smoke when there was no way it could have. I felt like I needed to go home and sterilize myself.

I THEN the same afternoon had my manager call me in because I was reported to her manager and my smell had become a management issue. I was absolutely mortified. My manager tried to make it better by saying he smoked too but realizing that a group of people were now discussing my smell due to ONE person's sensitivity to it, was so humiliating.

I know the offended person has been watching me and makes comments everytime I go to leave my desk asking me if I'm going on a smoke break...this is NONE of her business. I not only get my work done, I'm considered one of the stars of the department due to how well and fast I get my work done. This person doesn't even work closely with me so who is she to comment on my comings and goings when no one I actually work with are....they are too busy praising me for my efforts that go above and beyond the call of duty. I don't notice when other people take breaks because I'M TOO BUSY WORKING!!!

Before you put one of your co-workers through this humiliation, make sure you aren't doing it because you have no respect for smokers. Have enough maturity to handle it with tact and without gossiping with your co-workers. Because it can backfire on you big. All I would have to do is tell those in my department how I felt, how it was handled and this offended person would be the one who felt isolated instead of me...but I'm too professional for that.

If it comes up again, I'm going to suggest strategies to the woman's face because there are things a person can do, like get a air purifier for their desk, instead of trying to force others to cut down or quit smoking for their benefit...which simply does not work.

I would think if she had diagnosed sensitivities, she would know these strategies but apparently she does not. Instead me, the person who was humiliated, is looking up those strategies for her....which makes me question whether her issues are physical or psychological.

GTeye January 25, 2013 at 11:35 am

You don't have the right to make an office an unpleasant place to work because you drag the stench of cigarettes to every part of the office.

You are right, we don't have the right to make you stop smoking but you don't have the right to impose your stench on everyone.

killerbug May 23, 2013 at 12:01 pm

People who use tobacco products don't seem to realize that the smoke and snuff odors are carried around with them long after they return to the work place. In my office the tobacco users are disdainful of my complaints referring to my comments as snivelling. They have chosen their addiction but I have no place else to work, I have no choice in the matter.

MudChips May 14, 2010 at 3:30 am

Smokers impose their offensive (look up offensive in the dictionary) behavior on others. No one has the "right " to do that.

Elaine March 22, 2010 at 12:36 pm

Buy a mask. Let your smoking co-worker know, very politely, that their smells are bothering you. Then let them know that you hope they don't consider your rude and that you definitely don't want them to change their behaviors. Put on the mask. Wear it whenever you're in the office with them. That should embarrass them enough to do something about the smell themselves.

Rhonda K August 21, 2015 at 7:41 pm

Wearing a mask would not go over well at most places of business. The nonsmoker would get in trouble for that.

Victoria January 30, 2017 at 8:12 pm

My mother never smoked my dad was a chain smoker after 25 years the devorce 16 years latter she did of bladder cancer caused by second hand smoke she was 51 never sick i am the same age i have liver disease and second hand smoke affects it plus my autism eight yr old cant breathe when around it i loose my voice and the third hand smoke left on my clothes enters my car and home i get headaches nausia and have to clear more to breath while the people at the entrance door at walmart enjoy there smoke i get to hazardly breath i got one of the stores to put warning signs no smoking and no cigarette e cigarette but went to another one an employee was sitting on a bench in front door at walmart puffing i took picture and ask if she worked there she said yes i have the right to breath clean air and live its a medical for everyone smokes kill cant argue with the surgeon general

C J March 11, 2010 at 11:53 am

Brett Hopkins, if this issue is irrelevant to you, then why on earth would you even bother writing a response? The discussion is for people who truly want to resolve the issue of stinky smokers.

I share a small office with a smoker, and he wears a leather jacket that seems to absorb the smell more than you would expect. I respectfully asked him to hang his jacket in the hall instead of on his chair, which he did for a while, and it reduced the smell quite a bit. Now he seems to have forgotten about it and brings his stinky jacket back in the office.

It's true- smokers don't realize how bad they smell. Smoking reduces your senses of taste and smell (this is a medically proven fact), and they're around smoke so much that it's normal to them.

So they're not really aware of how offensive it is. If they quit smoking, they will eventually realize it and probably be embarrassed by their past ignorance.

Brett Hopkins July 16, 2009 at 10:04 pm

Cry babies. Seriously STFU

DawnMarie March 24, 2009 at 2:15 pm

Freda, although smoking odors can offend some people; there are other items such as POD perfume over dose, natural body odor, meal preference and other such items that can be bothersome. However, to agree with discriminatory companies that choose not to hire smokers... that is not a good call for an HR professional. Please keep in mind that a person can not be disqualified from a position for items that have nothing to do with whether the person can perform the job duties and requirements of the position. At this point in time smoking is still legal, and persons who choose this lifestyle should not be discriminated against. We are trying to break free from this type of behavior and thought processes.

Ms R March 23, 2009 at 2:55 pm

I agree with Janet. We mustn't forget either the smoker's rights, nor the rights of others in the work place who are bothered by chemical odors, perfumes and cigarette smoke. If you can smell the odor, whatever is causing that odor (carcinogenic or not) IS present, and, therefore capable of causing harm.

Management should step up and take care of this. It is possible to have a private talk with the smoker, just as they would if someone was using a failing deodorant. Offering to move might help smooth matters over with management (showing a willingness to work out a solution) as well as the co-worker. Another thing to consider is reasonable accommodations under the ADA. We have several staff who are sensitive to chemicals and odors. When they applied for accommodation, our management declared the entire workplace smoke and chemical odor-free, rather than compromise their health.

As a side note, I find it amusing that people are up in arms about smokers' rights -- they certainly didn't care about non-smokers' rights. For years I couldn't dine in restaurants, fly in airplanes, relax in a bar, dance in a club, work in an office, or shop in a store without having smoke blown in my face. I don't advocate ***-for-tat behavior, but come on, people. If I could put up with discomfort for years and years, you can put up with a little inconvenience, now. We also have a staff person battling lung cancer, who never smoked. Her only exposure was to second-hand smoke, which scientists now claim is even more harmful than first-hand smoke. In a civilized society, we have to get along -- compromises on both sides are called for

Janet March 20, 2009 at 6:21 pm

As a natural health care clinic, we have policy regarding any sort of smells on our personnel. Many of our staff and patients are so sensitive to the smell of smoke, chemicals and any cover-up scents that they react very badly, so our company policy is: NO SMELLS. If you smoke you must not smell of it when you are at the office. You may not wear perfume or scent of any kind. We use special cleaners that do not leave scent traces. No special breaks are allowed — just the regular 15 minutes per shift. And if you smoke during your break, you MUST NOT SMELL upon your return. Our staff know how to manage their smoking (the few that do; most realize

the extremely negative effect on their health and do not smoke at all). My boss even thought that one employee had quit smoking, since she never smelled of it (I know that she did smoke at every break). Controlling the smells can be done; it simply must be addressed correctly and made policy.

And to those who worry about smoker's rights: while you have the right to smoke, you do not have the right to make those around you miserable. Secondary smoke is deadly (and if you can smell it, it's in the air, even if the person is not actively smoking). In my case, the smell of any kind of smoke (even from a fire or a candle) brings on a severe asthma attack. How could you possibly think you have the right to affect my health? If a person had an addiction to, say, flinging food about (perhaps they had permission from their psychiatrist to do this in order to relieve their symptoms, whatever those might be) and everyone around them ended up with spaghetti all over their clothes, it would not be tolerated in the workplace. If a person had a disorder that made them shout obscenities at the top of their lungs for hours at a time (such disorders exist), it would not be tolerated in the workplace. If your vice affects the co-workers and/or customers you come in contact with, it is your responsibility to control its effects. Feel free to indulge on your own time and in your own space, but please have the courtesy to avoid destroying the health and well-being of others.

Becky March 20, 2009 at 4:54 pm

Hello...what about the smokers rights. Those seem to be lost.

GTeye January 25, 2013 at 11:37 am

Your rights to stink aren't being taken away... on private property, in a business, you don't have a right to make everyone else's life miserable.

Just as if someone wore 20 bottle of perfume or never bathed, it's the same thing.

Sarah Myers March 20, 2009 at 3:33 pm

Because I am a smoker, this is near-and-dear to my heart. I hate the smell of nicotine - it's as bad as the smoke, itself - but I find that alcohol-based hand sanitizer (like, Purell) really gets rid of that smell. Sometimes I even run it over my hair, or my sweater, if I think they are harboring any odor. I think it really works - people seem surprised really often when they find out I am a smoker.

Febreze has a pretty strong odor, too, but it seems to go away really quickly. Even if the smoker is asked to wash their hands, that can really cut down on the smell, too!

pekelnr March 20, 2009 at 2:18 pm

The smoker is not aware of the strong lingering after effects of his habit. Mention the smoke smell to him and suggest he purchase a purse size bottle of Febreze to spray on himself before he enters the building. The number of breaks he takes is irrelevant other than it makes the odor stronger, if he is a salaried employee he may work long days etc. Simple honesty and fact is all that should be utilized here, do not put him on the defense. He has a right to smoke, some people wear a bottle of perfume or don't shower often enough etc. and they are offensive as well. The cause of the odor is not the major issue here, it is how to address the odor while trying to not offend anyone. Pretty soon people will say it hurts their eyes if someone wears a bright color to work and it gives them a headache so how do we address someone's color choices? Many smokers are very

willing to accomodate non smokers if approached in a non threatening manner. I think smokers take the brunt of many issues where people that are obese or worse skate by without public ridicule. I am short, (or vertically challenged) and everyone thinks it is ok to make fun of me about it but if I were to say well i may be short but you are fat or ugly or bald or stupid it could start world war 3!!

Liza March 20, 2009 at 2:03 pm

Ok-without becoming hostile or rude lets think about this.

Caffeine and Nicotine are addictive. Asking him to cut back won't work. Asking him to constantly eat mints won't work.

Air freshener: My office has a smoker that hates smelling like it, so instead she puts on an enormous amount of perfume. I'd rather smell smoke than a cloud of girly smell (I'm a girl-its overwhelming). So unless you want to constantly smell a strong odor of the air freshener, that won't work. Claiming you are in a hostile work environment won't work either-and its immature and dumb. Its like saying you eating smelly doritos all day is hostile (they do smell, and for some its not good).

So, my advice, is to talk to your manager and say its nauseating, causing headaches, etc..That is a sure bet you will be moved. It might help if you offer the idea to move as a way where both parties win.

My whole family smoked. I'd be in my parents house for 5 minutes and have to go home and shower- trust me, I feel your pain. But trying to solve the problem with less commotion will make you look better.

Just trust me on this one, think about how it would effect you if someone complained about you being hostile for your disgusting bad habits.. Be nice about it and you'll get what you want.

Diana March 20, 2009 at 1:54 pm

I am an ex-smoker and did not realize how strong the smell was until after I quit. I now find it quite offensive. I think talking to the person and letting him know that the smell of smoke triggers headaches is the way to start. If he doesn't respond then the next step would be to address it with your management. I do not believe the "smell" of the smoke is deadly and since he is not smoking in the office it isn't a death issue. The "Rights" battle cry is a sure way to escalate the issue to new levels. Smokers have had to make all the adjustments for the "rights" of the non-smoker and you are now saying that even the smell violates your rights. I beg to differ. If you feel you have the right to a smell free environment I submit you should not wear perfume, lotions or eat lunch.

Rose March 20, 2009 at 1:44 pm

The laws now don't allow smoking in cars where small children are, or smoking in your own apartment if the smoke is bothering the other tenants. I think the company should not allow people to smoke at their job and if they do, like EM says, have mints on your desk. Then say I sure hate cigarette smell or coffee breath, and pop one in your mouth, maybe they will take the hint.

Louise March 18, 2009 at 11:42 am

First off, wouldn't this be considered a hostile work environment? Second, I don't any company that allows six or seven breaks per day, whether it's five minutes or fifteen. Smokers have no clue as to how much they stink. I attended a seminar once on HR Law and this question was brought up. The instrutor said everyone should be

allowed to take a fifteen break in the AM and one in the PM. The smokers can then smoke as many cigarettes as they want on those two breaks and lunch too. They are not entitled to six or seven a day just because they have an addiction. Less smoke breaks might cut down on the offensive smell. We don't allow drug addicts with addictions to administer their bad habit so why do smokers think they are entitled? It's time for management to step in taking the burden off your shoulders. Everyone is entitled to a clean and smoke free "smell" work environment.

Freda March 17, 2009 at 9:37 am

We have the same problem here. The person that sat on the other side of the cube from this smoker had to actually buy one of those air purifiers and put it under her desk. It didn't totally solve the problem though. I personally think that it is a violation of the non-smokers' rights to have to tolerate something that is actually deadly. I know some companies do not hire smokers and I think this is a good policy. They won't let us heat seafood in our break room because of the smell, but the lingering cigarette odor is 100 times worse!

Ilja Kraag March 16, 2009 at 3:56 pm

Telling a smoker that he stinks in the hope he will stop smoking is a lost case. Smoking is a hard to break addiction. A solution may be, as suggested by Leslie, to swap places with another smoker or to ask for the placement of an airfilter machine. These machines are so cheap that you can buy one yourself if the department is not willing to pay for this. I also agree that adding another "sthink" in the form of an airfreshner is not a good one. It may create even more problems. I don't know how close you sit together but maybe it is an option to have a high partition wall places to buffer the smell. Good luck.

Em... March 16, 2009 at 10:43 am

There is no worse breath than that of a coffee drinker who's just had a cigarette! Personally, I love mints anyway, so I would bring in a bag of lifesavers mints or perhaps some peppermints & put them in a nice little container on my desk, making a public announcement that if anyone would like one to help themselves. If the stinky coworker didn't take the bait I would make a point next time I was speaking to him to take a mints for myself, pop it in my mouth, & say, "Want a mint?" to him also. That was it is all seemingly innocent & no feelings get hurt. :)

Leslie March 16, 2009 at 10:25 am

Is it possible for you to move to a different area of the office or trade spots with another smoker? Two smokers side by side can better tolerate each other's stink. Another suggestion would be to have the company buy one of those towering air filtration machines (not sure what they are called exactly). This would help filter the air without adding a third smell – air freshener. They aren't that expensive and can be purchased at WalMart.

Mrs. M. March 16, 2009 at 8:43 am

Getting an "air spray" or "plugin" could also be a catalyst in triggering allergies or migraines in other co-workers, thereby compounding the problem. I agree with ANON above that the best action is to go directly to the person; let them know how this is affecting you (and others). As Mrs. R. stated, the person should sensitive to the fact that co-workers are experiencing allergy/migraine onset because of this. Being forthright with co-workers in such situations shows that you truly care about their acceptance within the group, as well as the well being of others within your organization.

Mrs. R. March 14, 2009 at 8:45 pm

Do you think his supervisor could talk to him about it? It is a delicate subject, but no different than the whole, "how do I tell someone they have B.O." issue. As Marlene said, he probably can't smell himself. Smells can trigger allergies and migraines. At the very least he should be sensitive to that if nothing else.

marlene harmon March 13, 2009 at 4:51 pm

How about getting an "air spray" or plugin with a pleasant scent to get rid of the other "scent". Many times smokers, etc. are not aware of the odor carried on their clothes, etc. And unfortunately, nowadays, most smokers are terribly sensitive.

ANON March 13, 2009 at 4:51 pm

This is a sensitive issue, however, recently a co-worker of mine placed a really "stinky" plug-in in her area. It made me very sick to my stomach and I had a constant headache. I finally went to her and let her know how I was feeling. She was very apologetic and immediately took it out.

My suggestion is to let him know, he probably doesn't even realize he smells.

Good luck on getting your fresh air back!