Show compassion for 'copycat' co-worker ... up to a point

Question: “There is a new woman in our office who has started to copy everything I do. She tries to dress like me, look like me, and act like me. After complimenting my clothes, she asked where I bought them. A few days later, she showed up in a duplicate outfit. She looked in my purse to find my make-up, then went out and bought all the same brands. Today was the last straw. I had an apple for a snack yesterday afternoon, so this morning my coworker showed up with apples. She never brought apples before. I am getting so irritated that I can't stand to be around this woman. What can I do about this?” —Don’t Need a Clone

Answer: Your copycat coworker sounds both weird and annoying. But since you have to work with this pathetic person, you might as well view her imitation as a bizarre form of flattery.

You can't stop her from choosing clothing and makeup similar to your own. And you can hardly tell her not to eat apples. However, you absolutely must prevent her from going through your belongings.

If you have any further evidence that she is looking in your purse or examining the contents of your desk, make it explicitly clear that this is not acceptable. If your desk has a lock, start using it.

Should she ever start doing really creepy things like calling you at home or showing up in unexpected places, you should immediately talk with your boss or human resources manager. Your unwelcome admirer probably isn’t a stalker, but you can’t be too careful.