

# Avoiding unwanted attention at work

Some of us have had that uncomfortable moment with a co-worker—an unwelcome advance, an inappropriate joke, or a colleague who just doesn't seem to accept your consistent "no's" to lunch or happy hour invitations. Here are five tips to fend off unwelcome behavior.

- 1. Set rules.** Before stepping outside of the office with your cubicle neighbor, set ground rules. For example, maybe it's alright to grab dinner, as long as it's in a group or you split the bill. Happy Hour? There's a fine line between having fun with co-workers and having too many cocktails.
- 2. Nip it in the bud.** If you notice that guy from Marketing has been coming around a lot lately, stop it before it starts. Not sure if he's just being friendly or flirting? Find a way to bring up your boyfriend.
- 3. Speak up.** If Mr. Marketing still isn't getting the hint, tell him straight-up that you're not interested. You do have to see this person every day, so be professional, clear and assertive. If a dinner invitation comes your way, say, "I'm flattered but as a personal rule I don't date co-workers."
- 4. Document.** Take the time to write down dates, times and exact comments when something doesn't feel right. This could be as simple as someone leaning over a bit too closely during a meeting to grab the water pitcher.
- 5. Speak out.** If the inappropriate behavior continues, you need to let the right people know. If the unwanted attention has persisted thus far, you are being harassed. Check your employee handbook for the proper protocol to report sexual harassment. If it's unclear, tell your boss or superior about the situation. If you don't feel comfortable speaking to your boss or superior (or if it's your boss or superior who's harassing you), go directly to your company's HR department.

The most important thing to remember is not to let someone's unwanted attention intimidate you and affect your job. If you're uncomfortable, speak your truth!