

Submerge your disdain for co-workers

We all have to work with people we don't like. While some of us grin and bear it, others implode, seethe or turn caustic.

The healthiest response is also the simplest: Play nice.

"Forget" to judge. If you're too busy to think about how much you dislike someone, then you won't have time for it. Dive into your work and your social life so thoroughly that you can't afford to indulge in personal judgments.

Conjure positive associations. If you must frequently interact with someone you loathe, here's a mental exercise that may make it easier for you:

1. Think of one of your favorite colleagues, someone you genuinely admire and respect.
2. The next time you interact with the jerk, visualize talking with your favorite colleague instead. "See" the face of your friend and you'll feel more relaxed and receptive.

Vent safely. Find a trusted friend or family member to serve as a sounding board. That will allow you to express your dislike for a coworker in a supportive setting far removed from the workplace.

Warning: Don't try to bottle up your disdain. While that may work temporarily, your brewing contempt can well up and eventually explode.

Follow the script. Pretend you're playing the role of an unfailingly nice colleague. No matter what happens, keep cool and stay genial. Let irritation bounce off you.

Bumps on the road to niceness

In your effort to be nice to people you can't stand, stick to some basic rules:

Never be a back-stabber. Even if you're diplomatic in person, your instinct is to let loose when the individual is out of earshot. Adopting a scorched-earth policy of telling anyone who'll listen how much you hate your colleague is futile and destructive. You'll merely generate negative energy and spread ill will.

Commit acts of kindness. Treat the object of your ire with thoughtfulness. Acting selflessly can prove therapeutic: Your disdain may ebb and the co-worker may change for the better.