

# When a co-worker has been humiliated



Perhaps your colleague had one too many drinks at the holiday party and made a fool of herself on the dance floor. Maybe your co-worker's wife aired the sordid details of his affair on Facebook and you and a handful of colleagues read every juicy detail. Or maybe someone just had a complete meltdown after a particularly bad day at work, and everyone knows about it.

When co-workers experience mortifying moments that you either directly or indirectly witness, it can make future encounters with the person very awkward. Follow these tips to move past the incident and keep things professional:

- **Don't talk about it.** As tempting as it might be, do not gossip about the incident with other co-workers. Imagine yourself in the other person's shoes, and how you would feel if everyone were talking about your mistakes. Take the high road and decide not to spread rumors or make fun of the other person.
- **Forget about consoling the person.** You may be tempted to make a sympathetic gesture or offer some words of encouragement. Or you might want to crack a joke to break the tension. Don't. The whole situation is really none of your business, and your words could make the other person defensive, angry or even more embarrassed. It's best to just keep discussions focused on work.
- **Be careful about offering advice.** It is probably best to keep your opinions to yourself. If you say something the other person doesn't want to hear—for example, that you disagree with the behavior—you could destroy the relationship.
- **Set your feelings aside.** You may have seen or heard things that seriously make you dislike the other person. However, don't let your personal feelings prevent you from being amicable and respectful to the person. Accept that things will be awkward, but remain a professional who puts the team first.