

What to say to pregnant co-workers

Do you have a pregnant co-worker or employee? Here's a list of things you should—and shouldn't—say during those nine, often difficult months.

Let's start with the things you *shouldn't* say:

“Are you pregnant?” It's none of your business, frankly. Your co-worker will make the announcement when she is ready.

“When are you due?” First of all, if you aren't 100% sure that a woman is pregnant, as in, she told you herself, never ask this. If the woman isn't pregnant, it can humiliate her.

“How much time are you taking off?” While you will need to do some planning, asking this question right away is in poor taste.

“Are you coming back to work after the baby is born?” Again, that's up to the mother to share with you. Besides, it can open up a slew of legal troubles if the employee is overlooked for promotions or desirable assignments. She could assume—and claim in court—it was done because of her pregnancy.

Now, the things you *can* say:

“What can I do to make things easier?” Companies are actually required by law to provide reasonable accommodations to pregnant women, so if you lead a team, keep that in mind. Additionally, as a co-worker and manager, offering to make her life easier is the nice thing to do.

“Here, have a seat,” “Let me get that for you” or “Here, let me help.” Many pregnant women won't ask for help, even when they need it. So, if you are sitting and a pregnant woman is standing, if you see her struggling with a box or notice her rushing to the elevator, offer help without asking her if she needs it first.

“What should we do to prepare?” You are going to need to cover the workload while the mother is out on maternity leave. As a team, sit down and talk about a plan. Don't make it seem like a burden on the rest of the team. Instead, discuss ways the mother can work ahead and organize in advance to make the time less hectic for everyone involved.