

## 5 Types of Toxic Co-Workers and How to Deal With Them

**Marla Cimini, For Reader's Digest**

For most, working in an office can offer a pleasant, exciting, and motivating path to a successful career. However, sometimes we encounter unprofessional, unhappy, and downright hostile colleagues. Here's how to handle them.

### The “Chatty Cathy”



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Whether you encounter this colleague in the hallway or in a formal meeting, you dread those conversations that seem to last an eternity. It is always a chore to try to extricate yourself from their endless chatter. He or she may be a nice person, but they never come up for air! “Some people need to hear the sound of their own voice constantly because they don’t feel heard,” Sherry Amatenstein, LCSW, based in New York City and author of ***How Does that Make You Feel? True Confessions From Both Sides of the Therapy Couch (2016)***. “However, their need doesn’t mean you need to be distracted by *un-sweet* nothings constantly whispered (or shouted) into your ear. Give a sad sigh and say something along the lines of, ‘Sorry Cathy....I really need to get this done. I’m one of those people who can only focus on one thing at a time and for me it has to be work—or else I’ll lose my job.’” Learn the **phrase that will stop gossip in its tracks**.

## The “Constant Complainer”



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You’ve been dodging this person all week...you can’t stand to listen to your cranky co-worker who is always wearing a frown and preaching doom and gloom. After all, it’s depressing, not to mention non-motivating for the rest of your office mates. What to do? “The Debbie and Dan Downers of the world like to spread their dissatisfaction with the world with the rest of us,” Amatenstein says. “If they’re unhappy,

they're only satisfied—to a point!—if they take the rest of us down too. To get off this Titanic, say something like, 'Gee, things are really tough for you and I'm sorry. But my problem is I get dragged down too easily and at work I need to keep up a happy outlook as much as possible. I hope you understand!'" Use these tips to **build trust with your colleagues**.

## The “Slacker”



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There is little in life more annoying than watching a coworker get away with doing very little while you are working hard and doing your best to maintain a sense of professionalism. Amatenstein explains, “If his or her laziness is not affecting you, it’s not your business, so try to put it out of your mind. However, if his or her laziness is impacting your job responsibilities, say something like, ‘Sadie, I’m telling (boss’ name) that you are doing this part of the job and I’m doing the other half. I’m getting my work in by the 5 p.m. deadline. Hopefully you can as well.’ If this becomes a pattern where you are stuck with Sadie the Slacker, feel free to tell the boss, ‘I know Sadie and I are supposed to do this assignment together, but Sadie seems to be focusing on other things. I can continue working with her if you want us to...but I wanted you to know where things are at so I can be most efficient.’” Remember, every office will have some challenges so read these tips before **starting a new job**.

## The “Bully”



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Unfortunately, sometimes an office atmosphere can be reflective of a grammar school dynamic, with malicious adults playing “unfair” on a number of levels. It’s essential to deal with this type of person as quickly (and swiftly) as possible. “Bullies often trigger lots of childhood memories of feeling tortured by someone in our lives,” Amatenstein says. “So take deep breaths and keep reminding yourself that you are no longer a helpless 8-year-old and this work bully is just an immature, awful person and how unhappy he or she must be to need to assert ‘power’ through intimidation. But steer clear. And if he or she comes into your orbit, don’t take the bait. That’s exactly what he or she wants. But you can only be affected if you allow it, and once this person sees you are not jumping at the fishing line, he or she will find a new target.” Learning more about **emotional intelligence** is always helpful when dealing with these mean-spirited colleagues.



## The passive-aggressive office mate



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Keeping you off-balance is what this hurtful person is all about, and it's definitely not pleasant to have to deal with someone who is not necessarily a team player. Set boundaries—and don't let him or her see you sweat, Amatenstein says. "Getting a visible sign that he or she is getting under your skin is like giving them a loaf of rye after 40 years of wandering in the desert. Smile and keep on moving!" Plotting your escape? These are subtle **signs you could be passive-aggressive** without realizing it.

**Marla Cimini** is a writer with a passion for travel, music and culinary adventures (combining all three whenever possible)! She contributes to USA Today and a multitude of major publications worldwide, covering an array of lifestyle and travel topics — ranging from exotic Tahitian getaways; to Japanese food trips and Italian wine trails. She is co-author of the book, *A Century of Hospitality*, a history of US hotels. A frequent flier, she calls the Philly area home. **Catch up with her on Instagram and Twitter: @MarlaCimini**  
**My website: [www.marlacimini.com](http://www.marlacimini.com) Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/marlacimini>**