

ENG4C-A



# Relationships at Work



# Introduction

In this lesson, you will learn about relationships at work. The lesson presents readings about being yourself at work, dealing with the boss, and dealing with fellow workers. You will be asked to respond to the readings and to reflect, in writing, on what kind of person you are and how you relate to authority figures and peers when you are at work.

## What You Will Learn

After completing this lesson, you will be able to

- analyze and argue against ideas contained in articles about relating to others in the workplace
- write an argumentative essay
- solve a work-related ethical problem
- create a conflict scenario and then script an attempt to resolve it
- use workplace-related vocabulary appropriately
- edit and proofread your writing for spelling and grammatical correctness

# Being Yourself

Once you've got the job, you have to live with it. You may eventually rise above your job or lose it, or you may stay where you are. As you work out your destiny at work, you may be happy or miserable. Just as everything counted when you were interviewed to get your job, everything counts while you actually do it, as well. Your fate at work, like your fate in life, depends not only on hard facts and skills; it depends on how well you know yourself and on how well you relate to your peers, and to those above and below you in the power hierarchy. This is not rocket science—it is harder! Read on.

## **Honed social skills make employee indispensable**

**Janis Foord Kirk**

**Tuesday, August 6, 2002**

So, you finally found your niche. You're in the right field, working for a good company. The probationary period is over and you're about to go on the payroll full time. The money isn't quite what you'd hoped for, but you expect that once you prove yourself, your salary needs will be met. As the new kid on the block, how do you prove yourself?

Or, as one new employee, Benjamin, asks: "What are the key factors in ensuring continued success on the job after the probationary period is complete? I am concerned with points of both a social and professional nature."

A probationary period is something of a trial run, a chance for both the employer and employee to have a look at each other before signing on the dotted line. It can last anywhere from 3 to twelve months, depending on the position.

Dave Woodburn, a manager with a local computer software firm applauds Benjamin's insight. "He knows that both professional and social factors are important to success on the job," he says.

During the probationary period, Woodburn notes, employers assess the performance of new employees like Benjamin to determine if they have the abilities they claimed to have on their resumés and during interviews, the skills needed to do the job. They look, as well, to see if the employee has a compatible work ethic, and if he or she gets involved, communicates well and fits in socially with managers and co-workers.

This final point is of particular significance in the computer software field, he says. “In our business there are usually many candidates with the skills to do the job. But fitting into the team and culture of the organization is generally as important, especially in smaller organizations. The person needs to be able to ‘gel’ with the group.”

In organizations of all kinds, the “social factor” is of growing importance, according to Carol Gallagher, a management consultant specializing in leadership development.

Strong professional relationships are critical to success, Gallagher writes, in *Going to the Top* (Viking Press). “You absolutely have to produce... (but) while competence and outcomes might once have been sufficient to guarantee a promotion in an organization, they no longer are. The ability to develop relationships is imperative in crossing the threshold to the next level.”

Even after the probationary period ends, employers continue to evaluate new workers.

High on their list of expectations is adaptability, says Suzanne Wolfe, who directs the human resources department at MDS Sciex. “A willingness to try new roles, take on new responsibilities and participate in projects signals a strong desire to learn and grow. There is no better teacher than experience, and employers come to know the people who are always willing to try something new.”

Attitude plays a role, as well, she says. “People gravitate to those who have a positive outlook and a passion to make things better. Being part of the coffee machine whiners will not help you move ahead.”

This doesn’t mean to suggest that new employees can’t complain or point out failings within the organization, she adds. “Nothing is perfect and sometimes employers need to hear feedback. But deliver this in a calm way and be sure to recommend a few suggestions to fix the problem.”

“The workplace of the 21st century is highly competitive and employers increasingly notice workers who add value to the organization,” says Wolfe. “Every company is in business to make money. And the degree to which you are improving the product or service, meeting customer needs, reducing costs, or improving the work environment labels you as someone who can be innovative, someone with good analytical skills who can implement an idea.”

Valuable employees are “proficient self-managers,” according to another HR manager, S. Holmgren.

“As a CEO of ME INC. we need to be concerned with the development and maintenance of our social, emotional, physical and financial capital regardless of who we work for or what we do.”

Holmgren acknowledges that employees often need their supervisor’s help to develop and stay on top of their own career management. And if a supervisor can’t or won’t help, he suggests asking the HR department for information about Employment Assistance Programs (EAP) or looking for an outside source of help. “Personal coaches are not just for the senior managers any more,” he says.

So, Benjamin, if you’re still on probation, you need to convince your employer that you have the right skills, and the energy and commitment to do the job well.

You need to communicate well and start to build solid relationships with managers and co-workers.

And for continued success on the job, you'll have to show that you are willing to learn, that you are prepared to actively manage your own career, that you're someone who looks for ways to add value. Good Luck!

### **Tip of the Week**

"When taking on-line applications via e-mail, organizations often prefer a one-page resumé," says Lisa Trudel, an employment counsellor with the Office Workers Career Centre, in Toronto. It's more effective when scrolling down a monitor screen than a detailed two-page resumé.

"Create both a one-page and two-page version of your resumé, both targeted to the positions you are applying to," she advises. "This way you will be prepared for all employment opportunities."

## **Knowing Yourself**

You cannot know that much about a work situation and the people in it before you get there yourself. You can know about yourself, however; the more self-knowledge you have, the more quickly and appropriately you will be able to respond to whatever (and whoever) comes your way at work. This will both help you advance, and help you know when to stop advancing.

If you are not sure of the meanings of the words "introvert" and "extrovert," look them up. Then read the following articles.

## **Introverts make good workers too, author says**

**Ann Perry**

**February 27, 2004**

*They balance out more outgoing colleagues*

*But managers need to understand how they work best*

If you prefer contemplating corporate governance alone in your cubicle to pressing the flesh at a cocktail party, you may not be in line for the CEO's job.

But you might just have crucial skills your employer—and your more outgoing colleagues—need to succeed.

Marti Olsen Laney says organizations are missing out if they fail to harness the talents of introverts.

“Unless you have introverted and extroverted employees and you know how to draw out introverted employees, you really won't be able to achieve (your) goals,” Laney, author of *The Introvert Advantage*, told a Human Resources Professionals Association of Ontario conference in Toronto this week.

“Introverted employees have a lot to offer, but they do need people to understand how they function.”

The first hurdle for employers is to spot them.

“We're all really familiar with what extroverts bring to the party,” said Laney, a California psychotherapist who is herself an introvert.

“They're seen as go-getters, they're snappy thinkers, actors. They think while they're talking, they're quick to take action and they maintain an external focus for companies.”

Introverts, however, tend to be calm and reserved, speak softly and slowly, don't seek the limelight, and act only after thinking something through, she said. Those characteristics often mask introverts' strengths: creativity, intellectual depth, and the ability to see the big picture, maintain an organization's internal compass and balance out the go-getters in the organization.

But in a world of Type A corporate climbers, being an introvert usually isn't a great way to get ahead—or even past the first job interview.

Blame your parents. Introversion and extroversion are hard-wired, Laney said, and research has shown the two types even have different brain chemistry.

Blame Freud, too, who wrote about introverts “in a very negative way,” Laney said. “So right from its inception, it started to get a bad name to be an introvert.”

Introversion still carries a stigma in the workplace. Introverts can be pegged as tentative, withdrawn, lacking motivation, less knowledgeable than they really are and even arrogant.

But, said Laney, “introverted people have a lot going on inside of them.”

“People bring different skills and abilities to the workplace, and it's very important not to misinterpret some of the behaviours and qualities of introverted people.”

And at 25 to 30 per cent of the population, by Laney's reckoning, employers can't afford to ignore them.

That's where savvy human resources people come in. To connect with introverted employees, Laney suggested:

- Maintain a climate of respect for all types of differences.
- Don't assume introverts aren't thinking or involved.
- Encourage different forms of communication, including memos and e-mails.
- Don't put them on the spot. Introverts often need to process ideas overnight.
- Identify and accommodate their style in job interviews.

- Recognize how introverts do their best work—by themselves before involving others, in quiet and private, and with flexible deadlines so they can think a concept over.

Some of the burden also falls on introverts. They can make themselves more visible in the workplace by establishing good one-on-one relationships with people, telling co-workers and bosses they're thinking about issues and learning how to blow their own horn.

Although extroversion and introversion exist on a continuum, according to Laney, don't assume introverts can or should talk themselves into being more outgoing. She likens the result to a right-handed person trying to write with the left hand.

"You can do it, but the effort won't be as good and you'll be much more tired," Laney said.

That's because extroverts draw energy from external stimuli, she said, while introverts thrive on internal sources, such as ideas and reflection.

"Everything introverts do in the outside world requires energy," Laney said. "Everything extroverts do in the outside world gives them energy. That is a huge difference."

So organizations that want to make the most of their talent pool should learn to tap into the introvert advantage by looking past the go-getters and cultivating employees who don't say much at meetings.

On second thought, send an e-mail. Introverts like it better that way.

## Is perfectionism hindering your career growth?

**Carole Kanchier**

**July 28, 2003**

*Are you always worried that no matter how hard you try it's never good enough? Do you feel you must give 100 per cent to everything or be considered a failure? Do you delay completing projects because you can't get them right? Avoid giving opinions because they may sound stupid? If so, you may be a perfectionist.*

Perfectionism refers to self-defeating thoughts and behaviours that cause people to set unrealistic goals and fear making mistakes.

Some perfectionism is good. It can advance your career and encourage excellence and pride in accomplishments. But excessive perfectionism may make you afraid to try. You worry about disapproval. Productivity and creativity diminish.

Perfectionist attitudes can interfere with career success. Perfectionism leads to stress, impaired health, troubled interpersonal relationships, and reduced feelings of accomplishment and confidence.

Other consequences include procrastination, fear of risk-taking and rejection, conformity, self-consciousness and doubt. Perfectionists are vulnerable to depression, performance anxiety, pessimism, compulsiveness, loneliness, disappointment, impatience, frustration and anger.

Perfectionists differ from healthy strivers. Strivers set goals based on their own needs and desires rather than external expectations. Their goals are realistic, potentially attainable. They enjoy the process of pursuing tasks rather than focusing solely on results. Their reactions to failure are limited to specific situations rather than generalized to self-worth. They accept criticism and bounce back from failure.

Perfectionists believe: It's possible to do things perfectly; mistakes must not be made; the highest standards must always be met; failure to reach goals equals personal shortcomings; people judge others

negatively if they see flaws; needs are secondary to goal attainment; everything is black or white, right or wrong.

Here are suggestions for replacing perfectionist habits with healthier, more satisfying behaviours.

- Accept yourself. Acknowledge who you are, not who you “should” be. List accomplishments and personal qualities that deserve recognition. Ask friends for feedback and support. Take pride in successes and forgive mistakes. Use thought-stopping techniques when you mentally scold yourself for not being “good enough.”
- Challenge and eliminate self-defeating thoughts and behaviours. Realize perfectionism is an unattainable illusion.
- Identify irrational thinking patterns, and dispute deceptive thoughts. Try replacing one self-defeating thought or behaviour with a more positive alternative one every week. Believe you’ll succeed.
- Set attainable goals based on your mission, needs, values, strengths and accomplishments. Set each new goal one level beyond your present level of accomplishment. Avoid all-or-nothing thinking.
- Evaluate success in terms of what you’ve accomplished and degree of enjoyment. Recognize that mistakes are part of the process. “Imperfect” results don’t lead to punitive consequences. Learn from mistakes. Acknowledge your right to make them. When you stop making errors, you stop learning.
- Set strict time limits on tasks. Prioritize tasks. Outline activities that will move you toward your goal. Meet deadlines. When time is up, move to another activity.
- Be objective about criticism. Don’t take it personally. Accept criticism. Learn from it.

Remember, a healthy achiever has drive.  
A perfectionist is driven.

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**Support Question**  
(do not send in for evaluation)

13. Respond to the following questions in short-answer form. This means writing in complete sentences instead of in paragraphs. Keep it short and simple—no more than three sentences per answer. Textual references and quotations are not necessary.
- a) How does Ann Perry suggest that introverts deal with their introversion?
  - b) What special strengths does Perry suggest that introverts have?
  - c) What, according to Perry, makes someone an introvert or an extrovert?
  - d) What, according to Carole Kanchier, are the basic beliefs of perfectionists?
  - e) What is wrong with these beliefs?
  - f) In your own words, summarize Kanchier's advice to perfectionists.

**There are Suggested Answers to Support Questions at the end of this unit.**

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## Getting along with the Boss

Obviously, getting along with the boss is important—you will never get promoted if he or she does not like you and, in the meantime, a hostile boss can make your life very uncomfortable. But getting along with the boss is a complicated and conflicting business. There is the difference in power to deal with, and your own self-respect to consider—you do not want to feel like a grovelling hypocrite. Also, you may tend to bring inappropriate feelings about your parents or certain teachers to the relationship, and of course, you have to consider how your peers will view your relationship. To cap it all off, your boss is only human, with his or her own share of faults—you cannot rely on your boss to set the tone. Fortunately, plenty of advice has been written on this subject. Do not rely on this advice mindlessly, though. Read the following four articles critically—you will be asked afterwards to pick holes in them.

### **Being buddies with the boss can backfire**

**Barbara Simmons**

**March 12, 2004**

*But there are tips to managing the relationship well*

Susan was surprised but delighted when her boss of almost a year spontaneously suggested lunch and Christmas shopping together one wintry workday last year. Since then, the two have become good friends: They discuss their budding families with ease, go to movies as a foursome with their husbands, or grab after-work runs together. They also recently volunteered to co-chair their organization's long-term fundraiser for a neighbourhood youth shelter.

Many might envy Susan's easy rapport with her boss, but wonder how the two handle the inherent complexities of such a relationship, such as taking direction, receiving criticism or managing the feelings of co-workers or subordinates who suspect favouritism.

So far, Susan and her boss have been sensitive to the perceptions of others, are mindful that work is their daily priority and recognize that either could risk putting her career in jeopardy if the friendship lacks discretion, logic and forethought.

It could be otherwise. Colleagues who share private and intimate conversations with the boss in the staff lunchroom, or arrive late with their superior every morning are targets for resentment and misunderstandings.

Consider, too, that some industries are more receptive to such friendships than those that are based on commission or competition—such as sales, real estate and investment firms—or where advancement is merit-based—such as government and educational positions—or where managing confidential information is a key function of the job—as in human resources.

While there are upsides to friendly boss-employee relationships, it is sensible to be cautious.

“There are apt to be consequences, particularly if the dynamics of the friendship are used inappropriately,” according to Loretta Helman, supervisor of career services for FGI Employee Assistance Program and Worklife Solutions provider. “Most people have a range of relationships with a variety of people at work, which they manage relatively well.”

“However, sometimes people have difficulty managing boundaries, particularly when the rules have never been spelled out and tend to be implicit,” Helman says.

Joe, owner and partner of a small research firm, has been both supervisor and friend to several of his employees over the years. “I don’t approach work with a lot of rules and I am friends with a lot of my employees. I do understand the inherent dangers but on the positive side, having friendships at work—even when you are the boss—makes the day a whole lot better and productive,” he says.

Joe has never had to deal with some of the disadvantages of getting too close to his staff, such as having to seriously reprimand or lay off a friend. “I know I have been lucky. I have had differences of opinions with these people but, like in any friendship, you discuss it and move on.”

But envy from co-workers, or sharing too much information about company plans or another employee are some of the signals that the friendship has crossed the line of business protocol.

Helman advises employees who are friends with their bosses to recognize that although the relationship can be rewarding, there is a responsibility to have insight into your attitude.

“If you tend to be the leader in the relationship with your boss outside of work—that is, if you are the one arranging to get together or plan activities—it may be all the more difficult to relinquish that role at work and can affect the way in which you speak to one another.”

Staying professional in both attitude and behaviour is key to managing such friendships in the workplace. Employee-boss friendships are more likely to stay positive and mutually rewarding if you consider these common sense guidelines:

- At work, accept your boss’s direction/criticism in a mature and professional manner.
- Don’t flaunt the relationship—it will likely cause jealousy from co-workers and subordinates.
- Outside of work, avoid office talk unless your boss leads the conversation in that direction.
- Don’t take advantage of the relationship to further your advancement, as exploiting it is not within the definition of a friendship; don’t misuse information to which you are privy as friendship is based on loyalty.
- Recognize that if the friendship sours, there could be a danger of losing your position and recommendations for future employment.

There are built-in advantages and disadvantages to consider when one's boss has become a friend, or when one's friend is a subordinate. The key to managing it well is understanding the dynamics of the interactions, the limitations and obligations inherent in a friendship between employee and boss. Your career could depend on it.

For your information ...

Good resources on friendships in the workplace can be found at <http://www.janyager.com/friendshifts-11.htm>, from Dr. Jan Yager's *Friendshifts: The Power of Friendship and How it Shapes Our Lives* (Hannacroix Creek Books, 1999) and "Can we be friends?" by William D. Marelich in *HR Focus*, Vol. 73 (August 1996):17.

## **Ways to build better rapport with the boss**

**Diane Moore**

**September 30, 2002**

"I can't stand my manager," I recently overheard a worker say on a commuter train. "I've never been able to find a boss I could work with. Aren't there any good managers out there?"

The short answer to this question is, yes, there are many good managers out there, and this worker's boss may even be one of them.

While we don't know all the factors that led this individual to feel he couldn't work with his boss, the truth is that developing a good working relationship with your manager is a two-way street.

You have a great deal of influence, perhaps more than you realize, in creating a positive environment in which a good relationship can flourish. How can you forge a strong relationship with your boss?

“Trust is the key,” says Marcia O’Hearn, an executive assistant with Russell Reynolds Associates, an executive search company in Toronto.

“When I start working with a new manager, I always start from a position of trust. I see it as my role to create a sense of mutual trust by keeping sensitive information confidential, and ensuring that I don’t do anything that gives my boss reason to distrust me, such as bad-mouthing him or her.”

Mark Derbyshire, executive director at Russell Reynolds Associates and O’Hearn’s boss, agrees with his assistant’s comments, and adds that frequent quality communication is also essential.

“Both managers and employees need to work at keeping the lines of communication open. Although Marcia and I meet once a week to formally review what’s going on that we both need to know about, the rest of the time there is a constant flow of information between us, whether it’s by voice mail, fax, e-mail or phone.”

What can you do if your manager doesn’t make communication easy? Maybe you work for an introvert who you barely see or a manager who is just too busy to make time to talk with each employee individually.

“There are lots of ways to keep communication flowing with your boss,” says Derbyshire. “Figure out what method will work best with your manager. And when you do communicate with him or her, ensure that you are focusing on providing ‘need to know’ data, not just a lot of non-essential ‘nice to know’ information.”

For example, if you’re forwarding a lengthy article for your manager’s review, add your own comments in the margin highlighting the essential things he or she will likely want to look at.

Of course, some people find themselves working for a boss that they consider to be hard to work with. What can you do in this situation? Before labelling

your manager as “difficult,” examine your own approach and your expectations. Are you expecting your manager to be perfect, have all the answers all the time, and never make a mistake or poor decision?

If so, you are likely setting yourself up for disappointment and frustration. Bosses are human and quite capable of making mistakes. They have their own pressures and problems, and often don't share these concerns with their employees.

Other strategies to help you forge a stronger link with your manager include:

- Understand your manager's personality style and idiosyncrasies. Look for ways to counterbalance this style and provide support in areas where your boss is weak. If your manager tends to be a visionary, “big picture” kind of person, you can play a vital role in handling details that may be overlooked. Try to anticipate his or her needs in advance and gain a reputation for being on the spot with what the boss wants at just the right time.
- Save the day. There will be times when crises occur due to unexpected projects, loss of staff, or just poor planning. Most bosses will appreciate it (and remember) when you come over the hill like the cavalry and bail them out of a tough situation.
- Be trustworthy. If you are privy to confidential information, exercise discretion in sharing this information with others. And don't say anything about your boss to others that you don't want repeated in front of him or her later on.

“When you have a choice in the matter, be very selective about who you work with,” says Derbyshire. “When being interviewed for a new job, try to get a handle on the style of the person who would be your boss and look carefully at the fit between the two of you before you accept a new position.”

What if you inherit a boss that you find to be difficult, or the manager who seemed so pleasant in the

interview turns out to be a Jekyll-and-Hyde kind of personality? Even if you have a truly difficult boss, try to learn what you can from the situation, but don't be complacent about your circumstances, suggests Derbyshire.

"It's virtually impossible to get others to change their personality," he says. "After a reasonable period, you may need to consider moving on if you truly find it impossible to build a good relationship with your boss. Life is too short to spend most of your waking hours feeling miserable in a job."

## **How to disagree with your boss—and keep your job**

**Diane Moore**

**November 12, 2003**

*You're attending a meeting in which the boss unveils his latest ideas for making changes in your department. As he enthusiastically outlines his plans, you can see a couple of major flaws. Should you speak up, or is silence the prudent approach?*

Deciding where, when and how to disagree with your boss is a judgment call, but is definitely appropriate in many workplaces today, says Cy Charney, a Toronto-based performance improvement consultant and author of *The Portable Mentor: Your Anywhere, Anytime Career Coach and Problem Solver*.

Today's organizations are dramatically different from businesses of the past, explains Charney. Previous generations of employees often worked under autocratic managers who told them what to do, exactly how to do it and rarely asked for input from workers. In those days of top-down management, workers who disagreed with the boss might put their jobs at risk.

Companies have gradually evolved to be more democratic, says Charney. "An effective manager today is willing to listen to the ideas of front-line

workers and solicits that information on a regular basis.” Smart managers value workers who know how to tactfully offer differing opinions. In fact, Charney says that disagreements in the workplace are healthy. “This contradicts what many people believe, but conflict is a sign that ideas are being expressed, which provides opportunity for growth and creativity. This is a good thing.”

But disagreeing with the boss can make some workers so uncomfortable that they pass up opportunities to give valuable feedback to their manager. This can be particularly true of workers who were originally educated and trained in countries where a more autocratic management style is still the norm.

If you are wondering whether your manager welcomes other views, there are several ways you can gauge his or her receptiveness to suggestions, advises Charney. You probably have a manager who is open to hearing others’ ideas if he or she spends a lot of time walking around talking to staff, holds meetings that are more like discussions than one-way information sessions, and asks a lot of questions like, “What do you think?”

Even if your boss doesn’t create a lot of opportunities for input, you can still express your opinions if you do it in the right way and at the right time and place. Curb the tendency to zero in immediately on what you don’t like. Charney recommends that you first paraphrase what you think the boss is suggesting and acknowledge the value in his or her ideas, then ask permission to offer an additional opinion.

An effective way to express your opinion is to frame it as an idea or an enhancement, rather than a disagreement, as in “May I offer another idea to build on that?” Avoid the “yes, but” syndrome. Try substituting the word “and” for “but,” to emphasize the addition of ideas instead of disagreement.

.....

“I understand what you are getting at and I have an additional suggestion.”)

If you worry that disagreeing with your boss may give you a one-way ticket to the unemployment line, here are some other ideas for expressing yourself effectively in this tricky situation:

- Choose your words and tone carefully. Disagree with the idea, not the person. Rather than saying, “You’re wrong” or “You should,” try phrases such as, “Another way of looking at this might be ...” or “What would you think about ...?”
- Be objective and professional. You are more likely to gain the attention of your manager if you remain calm while expressing your opinions. Focus on objective measures and potential impact on bottom line, rather than making emotional appeals.
- Back up your position. Most managers will listen to ideas and opinions that are carefully researched. If your reasons for disagreeing with your boss are legitimate, investigate and gather facts to support your position. Rather than using this as ammunition to prove him or her wrong, simply present this information as additional facts for consideration before a decision is made.
- Tread carefully with contentious issues. If you can see that your manager has invested a lot of time and energy in an idea, ask for an opportunity to mull it over, then plan your approach to offering an alternative view. If your manager’s boss is present, save your contradictory opinions until you can talk to your boss in private. Avoid complaining about your manager’s idea to everyone else in the office behind his or her back. It’s sure to get back to your boss.
- Be willing to give it a try. Implementing and managing change is not an exact science. Some managers need to see an idea in practice before they can decide whether it’s really workable. If you have offered your best information and opinions without influencing your manager’s

thinking, you may need to back off for now.  
Accept the outcome graciously.

Although your boss may not seem to accept your opinions at the time, you may discover later that you influenced him or her more than you realized. If things fall flat, stifle the “I told you so” urge. Even if your predictions about what could go wrong turn out to be true, your boss will likely remember without being reminded that you offered a dissenting opinion, and may be more receptive to your ideas in the future.

### **Tip of the Week**

When you disagree with your manager, avoid going over his or her head unless you feel there is no alternative, recommends Cy Charney in *The Portable Mentor: Your Anywhere, Anytime Career Coach and Problem Solver*. If you feel that there would be negative consequences for the company if your concerns are not addressed and you must communicate with upper management, make sure that you inform your boss first of what you plan to do.

## **What to do if harassed: Take it, fight it or leave**

**Mark Swartz**

**May 26, 2003**

*According to the Ontario Human Rights Code, every employee has a right to freedom from harassment in the workplace. Makes perfect sense. So what can you do if you're being abused on the job by your employer or colleagues?*

Sofia Theodorou, director of organizational learning and effectiveness at Cara Operations Ltd., describes workplace harassment as “any conduct, (verbal, physical or by innuendo), that is likely to cause offence or humiliation to any person.”

It includes intimidating behaviour, racial jokes, unwanted sexual remarks, personal verbal attacks and associated acts.

Not that every off-colour remark or action can be labelled harassment. One rule of thumb is that “it must be known to be, or a reasonable person would know it to be, unwelcome without it being explicitly stated,” according to employment lawyer and author Howard Levitt.

Legal distinctions likely won’t dissuade the jerks at work who just don’t know any better. So if you truly feel that you’re being compromised in some way, you need to take action.

It isn’t always easy to do, of course. Many people put up with humiliation or bullying because they’re afraid of what might happen if they report it.

Maybe your colleagues will resent you if you tell on them for treating you badly. It could be that you’re worried about what your boss might do if you confront her with the way she’s been treating you.

These fears are especially prevalent in smaller companies and those without unions. “Many larger organizations, like Cara Operations, have a zero tolerance policy on workplace abuse or harassment,” says Theodorou.

There are policy manuals and procedures in place to assist in dealing with these issues effectively. A unionized environment generally has protocols and arbitration rules, which govern such matters.

For the rest of us, what recourse do we have when faced with harassment by peers or supervisors? Levitt outlines three basic options: “You can put up with it, you can fight it or you can leave.”

Regardless of which route you choose, Levitt suggests that you document your case scrupulously. Make a written note of each incident, including the circumstances, the place where it happened, the time, the people present, any witnesses, and who said or did what to whom. That way you’ll be able to support your case if need be.

Beyond that, you have a number of options to pursue. Legal Line.ca (<http://legalline.ca/employment/618.html>) states that you can start by talking directly to the harasser if it's safe to do so.

Theodorou suggests that you then discuss the situation with your employer or human resources department if appropriate, possibly even asking for a transfer if need be.

Still not satisfied? Try filing a formal complaint with the Ontario Human Rights Commission ([www.ohrc.on.ca](http://www.ohrc.on.ca)), or sue the harasser and/or the employer. In the case of severe sexual harassment where assault is involved, you could also have criminal charges laid.

If you do decide to fight, Levitt advises hiring a competent employment lawyer sooner rather than later. "Once you begin writing memos to your superiors and other people in authority, setting out the complaint and asking for help, you run the risk of limiting your employment prospects with that particular company," he adds.

On the brighter side, if you end up forced to sue as a way of seeking redress, your chances of winning are improving. The courts have recently taken a more socially liberal stance toward cases involving workplace harassment.

Levitt gives the example of Baycrest Centre for Geriatric Care vs. Prinzo. In what was essentially a disability issue, Prinzo sued successfully, arguing her employer intentionally inflicted mental stress. She claimed for lost wages plus damages.

The ruling, a first, noted that the company had given her a case of "nervous shock" by acting with reckless disregard.

The good news, then, is that the courts, and many employers, are taking harassment more seriously. Certainly companies are looking to mitigate any damages they might incur by not dealing with such situations quickly and firmly.

In addition, employers are becoming more aware of the toll that tolerating abuse can take on its staff. As Theodorou explains it, “With so many companies competing for top talent to gain their competitive advantage, creating an ‘environment of choice’ that is free from any abuse is a foundational step in attracting the right people.”

In spite of this progress, it’s unlikely that we will ever have a 100 per cent harassment-free workplace. Nor can we count exclusively on our employers to protect us, especially if they don’t know what’s going on.

That’s why it’s so important not to sweep these things under the rug. If we do, says Theodorou, then we “send the offender a message that their behaviour is acceptable and opens up further, ongoing opportunities for abuse.”

### **Tip of the week**

Nutshell strategies for those seeking a positive outcome to conflict in the workplace:

- Deal with conflict rather than avoid it.
- Set a time and place to address the conflict with the other person.
- Watch your tone and body language.
- Listen to the other person’s position.
- Paraphrase what the other person says to you.
- Summarize your position.
- Identify common goals and intentions.
- Jointly develop a goal or condition on which you can both agree.
- Decide how you will know if the solution is working.

From *Career Ability*, a new manual on the workplace by Career Monitor columnist Diane Moore.



**Support Question**  
(do not send in for evaluation)



14. Find a statement, idea, or implication that you disagree with in **each** of the four articles you have just read. In each case, explain why you disagree, in a paragraph or two.

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## Getting along with Peers

There are more peers in the workplace than bosses, and your relationships with them, good or bad, are likely to be more intimate. You will like some and dislike others. Some may help you, and some may hold you back. Some may be out to get you. The readings that follow do not attempt to deal with all the variations—they focus on love and conflict, and what to do (or not do) about each. After reading them you will be asked to write an essay of your own about relationships at work.

### **Labour and love—Two-thirds of Canadians have dated a co-worker**

**Vera N. Held**

**September 13, 2003**

*Some say office romances have workplace benefits. Seventeen per cent of working Canadians meet their significant others at work, a 2001 survey by Thompson Lightstone & Company Ltd. found. But does cozying up to co-workers belong in the workplace?*

Thirty years ago, fraternizing was taboo in many offices. In 1973, when Jacqueline McDonald, director human resources at accounting firm Fuller Landau LLP, was 18 and in her first job, socializing with the opposite sex during office hours was non-existent.

Household Finance in Victoria, B.C., was in competition with the banks and out to build a polished image. "There were no office parties, no lunches with the men. Gents wore suits and bowlers, and we were not allowed to wear pants. The women even had to address each other as 'Miss' or 'Mrs.'"

McDonald says she believes her workplace was restrictive and that it was unrealistic of her employer to think staff wouldn't make friends or fall in love. Actually, in their free time staff went skinny-dipping together.

More than 70 per cent of Canadian employees in a 2001 Workopolis survey said work was an important source of friendship and personal support. McDonald says singles having healthy on-the-job friendships and, by extension, love relationships is not only normal and natural, but that there are significant workplace benefits, too.

In the last one and a half years, McDonald hasn't had to hire. She says her staff of 30 young, single chartered accountants and students make continuous and excellent hiring referrals. "When people have fun at work, socialize and help each other, turnover is minimal and time, energy and money are all saved."

Sixty-three per cent of Canadian employees Workopolis surveyed in 2001 said they had been romantically involved with a co-worker. Factor in the attraction to a like-minded co-worker plus today's gruelling work schedules and it appears the workplace is a fertile and practical environment to foster love.

The Canadian Hearing Society's human resource director, Jane Gilmore, says people have limited time to pursue love outside the office. "Staff put in long hours and commute long distances to work. Many don't live near their families. We have a number of married couples and together couples at CHS.

Everything works well. They just don't report to one another."

Two key factors to making love at work a success are being ethical and responsible. McDonald, now divorced, met her husband in 1976 when both worked at the Bank of Montreal. "It was typical then, too, to meet your mate at work. But in those days the men were all in management and the women were all in clerical." Once romance was in the air, the women were transferred to other departments.

Associate professor of organizational behaviour, Dr. Patricia Bradshaw at York University's Schulich School of Business, characterizes the relationship between boss and subordinate as inherently unequal—a structure that bodes ill for romance.

"People think they can compartmentalize work relationships from personal ones but it's impossible. The power of emotion takes over and it distorts people's judgment," adds Dr. Calvin Brown, organizational psychologist with Meridien Consulting Associates Ltd.

When romance involves a boss and a subordinate, Brown and Bradshaw concur the ethical thing for both parties to do is to immediately have the structure of whom they report to at work changed. This avoids power inequality, favouritism, jealousy and possible harassment.

"You can undermine the credibility of the organization and destroy trust if staff come to believe it's who you know rather than what you know that gets people ahead," says Brown.

Some employees don't feel love at work is entirely positive. The 2002 Leger Marketing survey found that 56 per cent of respondents believe love relationships can have a negative impact on the quality of office life.

Several years ago with a previous employer, Gilmore had just such a case. Staff had complained about

the verbal fighting of a couple who had been together for a year and then had split. Gilmore had to speak to the employees about their conduct; departmental transfers were offered but in the end both decided to remain in the same department but behave with professional civility.

Professionals are judged for their professionalism. "People always remember the dirty stuff. Their professional competence will become secondary to the fact that they've had a love relationship on the job," says social worker Hilary Freeman.

## **When Cupid's arrow strikes at the office**

**Sharda Prashad**  
**February 17, 2004**

Yes, it's Valentine's Day and if you're a singleton, being at work this week may have been painful.

You've had to witness flowers being delivered to colleagues. You've had to listen to co-workers discuss their sickeningly sweet romantic Valentine's Day plans. Even if this sort of behaviour normally leaves you proud of your single state, there's something about Valentine's Day that makes you wonder how you can meet your significant other. Online dating is starting to sound good.

But before you start forking over your hard-earned money to find a love match, look no further than the cubicle beside you.

A recent *Elle*/MSNBC.com Office Sex and Romance Survey by Dr. Janet Lever, professor of sociology at California State University Los Angeles, showed that 25 per cent of survey participants found their current partner at work or, if the participant was not in a current relationship, had met their previous partner at work. This outweighed 23 per cent of participants who met their partner through friends and 19 per cent meeting their partner at school.

Take Tatiana Zoubrilina and Oleg Kantemirov. Zoubrilina was an aerial gymnast and Kantemirov a third-generation member of a Russian circus dynasty. The couple met while working as circus performers at the Moscow Circus in 1979. Over the past 25 years the two have travelled all over the world, worked for Cirque du Soleil, opened a circus training school, Wonderful World of Circus, in Thornhill—and enjoyed a quarter century of Valentine’s Days together.

If running away from home and joining the circus—Moscow or otherwise—is too exotic an adventure for you, don’t despair. People with more ordinary jobs also find love at work.

Rosalind Liu and Ken Shum met while articling to be chartered accountants at Richter, Usher & Vineberg in December, 1997. Liu and Shum had ample opportunity to consider whether the other might be a potential Valentine during 12-hour days working at the same office and while studying together for their accounting exams. While their casual contact indicated they might be a good love match, their romance didn’t start immediately.

“I had a rule that I didn’t want to date anyone in the office,” says Shum. “I thought it would be difficult for people around us. And I like to keep work separate from pleasure.”

Fast-forward to December, 1998: Liu left Richter for an opportunity at another firm. Two months later, they had their first date and on August 16, 2003, the pair were married.

Who would have thought going to work could be so rewarding?

The prevalence of the workplace as a romantic meeting place can be partly attributed to people getting married later. Therefore, they are more likely to meet a mate while working, rather than at school.

Also, bosses are expecting employees to spend more time at work, so there is less free time to meet people outside of work and more time to get to know your co-workers. And those who work in a similar field and for the same employer already have a great deal in common, such as income level and education.

Despite the old adage that opposites attract, according to Dr. Pepper Schwartz, professor of sociology at the University of Washington, “opposites attract and similar people stick.”

But what if your resolve isn’t as strong as Liu’s and Shum’s and you decide to date someone while you’re still with the same employer? “Make sure it’s worth doing,” warns Schwartz. “It’s a high-risk endeavour.”

Schwartz warns the relationship could make co-workers jealous and uncomfortable. If co-workers perceive the couple is forming a coalition against other employees, or one partner is receiving favourable treatment, it could be disastrous—particularly if the relationship ends.

One in five of respondents in Lever’s survey reported workplace conflict after the relationship ended. Seven per cent reported rifts and/or disruptions with co-workers, 2.5 per cent were fired because of the relationship and 2 per cent were demoted or felt they were blocked from advancement because of their relationship.

To manage some of the risks, Schwartz recommends couples keep their relationship private, establish ground rules at the beginning of the relationship and take the relationship slowly. Schwartz also suggests potential couples avoid relationships with supervisors or subordinates as they can be more filled with pitfalls than two peers working together.

Both Schwartz and Lever stress that one of the major merits of finding your Valentine at work is the time that you get to spend becoming acquainted with

your partner before dating. Similar to Liu and Shum, you get to spend a great deal of time observing and interacting with someone in the workplace. You get to see how they interact with their subordinates, boss, and may even get to overhear how often they call their mother. You'll have sufficient evidence to determine what they'll be like on Valentine's Day.

"Relationships at work last longer and are stronger than anywhere else in life," emphasizes Lever.

And the benefits aren't just for the couple.

Professor James Clawson of the University of Virginia observes that while it varies by workplace, couples who work for the same employer tend to be a benefit to their boss. They have greater loyalty and less turnover than other employees. Other experts have noted that increased creativity and productivity are additional benefits. Why? Having an employer who hires both members creates commitment and increased energy levels for the couple.

Ellen Auster, associate professor of strategic management met her Valentine, Steve Weiss, associate professor of policy and international business, in the winter of 1986 and married him in 1989. They were both working as visiting professors at Dartmouth College when they were approached by the dean of the Schulich Business School at York University in the spring of 1991 to work in the same department. He was looking for two mid-career professors and was able to find them in one couple.

Partly because they didn't want a commuter marriage and partly because both were offered excellent opportunities, Auster and Weiss agreed to work together. And they have been working together at Schulich since the summer of 1991. They've shared more than 18 Valentine's Days together—15 with a shared employer.

While the couple admits one of the obvious downfalls of working together and sharing a profession is never really getting away from work,

Auster and Weiss have dealt with this with some personal guidelines.

“We have a no-work rule,” says Auster. “When we’re at home and on the weekends, it’s time for family. Part of what works is that we have clear values.”

These values include not only having a no-work rule, but also having a regular Saturday night date with no kids and no work.

Cyril Bouquet, assistant professor of strategic management at Schulich and co-worker of Auster and Weiss, didn’t realize that the two were a couple because they didn’t act like one.

“It’s a funny thing, it took me awhile to figure it out,” says Bouquet. “They are autonomous, have their own research projects and own teaching agendas.”

Not to mention different last names and choosing not to sit beside each other at meetings, Bouquet quips.

Bouquet doesn’t hesitate to talk about one partner in front of the other, any more than he does with other colleagues. He attributes this to the professionalism that Auster and Weiss display when in the office. Bouquet adds that part of the professionalism is that the couple doesn’t share everything with one another.

“Steve asked me to help with a negotiations course, while Ellen had already asked me to co-teach a class (at the same time),” Bouquet explains. “They are two different individuals who interact in a job.”

And that is perhaps the key to Auster and Weiss’s success. Their personal relationship doesn’t overshadow their professional one. And that’s probably the key to working with your Valentine: It should be a professional relationship in the workplace. You’ll have plenty of time after work to get personal.

## Don't duck chronic complainers

**Janis Foord Kirk**

**August 8, 2003**

*Out of the corner of your eye, you see him approach. Dropping your gaze, you focus intensely on the work in front of you, hoping he'll pass by.*

But he has you in his sights. He stops at your desk and hovers, bristling with indignation until you look up. "You won't believe the latest," he begins.

He's the office naysayer, an expert in dissatisfaction, a chronic complainer. And as he begins his tirade of blame and recrimination, your good mood vanishes.

Most of us complain at one time or another: a situation that's particularly galling, a perceived injustice, a slight that seems intentional.

Chronic complainers are a different breed, however. They tend to live in permanent outrage. They believe they've been hard done by and feel they have a right to let the people around them know about it.

Mental health and behavioural experts say chronic complainers often hunger for recognition, and complain to gain attention and acceptance.

Many fail to realize their disapproving attitude works against what they'd like to accomplish.

Much as we might prefer to ignore chronic complainers, it's better to come up with strategies to deal with them, says Kelly McCormick, a Toronto-based speaker and workshop leader who helps people become more effective when communicating with others, but also with themselves.

(<http://www.mccormickteam.com>)

The missing link in most discussions about effective interpersonal communications, McCormick says, is "our own self talk: where we put responsibility and how we allow ourselves to get hooked into other people's behaviours."

The next time a chronic complainer corners you, here's the communications strategy McCormick suggests.

"Stay detached," she says. "Don't take it personally. The minute you personalize negative behaviour, you lose your objectivity. ... Don't judge the other person, it's a waste of time and energy."

At the same time, "don't take the bait, don't get hooked into the content of the complaint."

"Avoid responding, agreeing or asking questions," she advises. "That just keeps the conversation going. Instead, as you listen to the complaint, respond with a neutral, 'um hum.' That lets the person know that you're listening."

"Eventually, there's only one person talking and that's a monologue, not a conversation. People will hear themselves and stop."

Once they do, pause for a moment to indicate that you're thinking about what's been said.

Thereafter, there are two ways to respond, McCormick says.

You can redirect the conversation. Change the topic in a polite way. Talk about anything but the complaint that has been raised. "This introduces a new dynamic which is an eye-opener," she explains.

"The other person has an option: He can go down that road with you because basically you're saying, 'If you want to hang out with me, this is how I operate.' Or he can find someone who will listen to the complaining. And that's okay, too."

The other response is to say, "Boy, that really is a problem. Now what are you going to do about it?"

This technique may be especially relevant for managers dealing with complaining staff members.

"Sometimes complainers actually have something of merit to say," McCormick points out. "But it gets

lost because we get tired of listening to them and we actually don't hear them."

You can separate the people who have a real issue from the chronic complainers by saying, 'Thanks for bringing this to my attention. I take this seriously ... why don't you put your ideas in writing and get back to me?'

"The chronic complainers will recognize that they've been given a message: We take action, we don't just complain. This puts the responsibility back on them," she says.

Expecting people to take responsibility for problems in the workplace can help them become more personally effective, she believes. "What you're saying is, 'You've got a problem, you've got the power to change it.' The complainer may have been shifting responsibility for a long time, and started to take the 'victim stance.' She may have no idea that she does have power in her own life. People tend to lose perspective on that.

"Chronic complaining could also be sign of depression," McCormick cautions. And if you suspect that it is, yet another approach is advisable.

"You may want to say, 'I've seen a change in your behaviour. I'm very concerned about you. You don't appear to be as happy as you used to be. Is there anything I can do to help? Is everything okay?'"

It takes patience to deal with people with an entrenched negative perspective.

Adopting a direct approach rather than ignoring the behaviour puts people on notice, McCormick says.

"It says that this behaviour is not OK. It gives the person an opportunity to self-correct. You haven't lectured; you've just created awareness."

At the very least, they'll decide that you are not receptive to their point of view and skirt by your desk the next time they want a gripe session.

**Tip of the Week**

“One of the best ways to stop ... incessant complaining is to model the behaviour you expect,” writes Martha Lasley, a business coach and author with Leadership that Works ([www.ltworks.com](http://www.ltworks.com)). “That may mean cutting down on your own complaining. Notice where your behaviour falls short of your own personal standards of ‘walking your talk’.”

**Managing conflicts keeps careers on track**

**Diane Moore**  
**Tuesday, July 2, 2002**

Do you have a co-worker who drives you crazy? Would you like to give him or her a piece of your mind? Before you do, think carefully, because your ability to manage conflicts can make or break your career.

Many people feel uncomfortable when disagreements occur in the workplace.

Some dislike conflict so much that they go to great lengths to avoid it, and may resort to calling in sick, asking for a transfer, even quitting a job just to avoid confrontations.

Others mishandle office disagreements and think that it’s okay to blow up and let others “really have it” if they deserve it. But handling conflict tactfully and professionally is crucial, as many employers make hiring and promotion decisions based on one’s ability to get along with co-workers.

Brenda Moore, manager of telecommunications for the Rouge Valley Health System, says the ability to handle conflict and work effectively with others is key when she is evaluating potential hires.

“It doesn’t matter to me how good a candidate’s credentials are on paper. If I sense that someone

isn't a team player (usually because they start bad-mouthing former managers or co-workers in the interview), I won't consider hiring them."

Lisa Trudel, an employment counsellor at the Office Workers Career Center in Toronto, admits that she learned how to deal with conflict the hard way—through trial and error.

"I took things way too personally and shied away from confrontation early in my career," she says.

"I tended to give negative labels to people, such as thinking they were boring, rigid, or just hard to get along with. I eventually realized that the quality of my working relationships depends on being able to negotiate disagreements professionally, and that I can't and shouldn't rely on a manager to step in and resolve every conflict I have with a co-worker."

Moore likes to see this kind of accountability among staff, and says, "When employees approach me with a complaint about a co-worker, the first thing I do is ask them if they have talked to the other person and tried to resolve their differences before coming to me."

Before talking with that co-worker who gets on your nerves, ask yourself whether you really need to confront the other person at all. Is the conflict about an issue that, while annoying, doesn't affect your work? Although it drives you crazy that your co-worker does everything at the last minute, if it doesn't have any impact on your job, why not let it go?

A conflict that occurs regularly and has a negative impact on productivity (for example, you're falling behind in your work because you have to pick up the slack when your co-worker is always late), should be dealt with before it escalates to the point that someone blows up. Once that happens, you may need the services of a third party to mediate, which might mean getting your boss involved.

How can you confront others without putting them on the defensive? Meet in a private place where you won't be interrupted. Don't try to iron out differences when tempers are high, and take control if the other person loses it. If you're both red-faced with rage, take a break to cool off.

Trudel offers this additional advice for negotiating conflicts:

- Avoid attacking or criticizing, otherwise defences go up and you will get nowhere.
- Focus on work-related issues, not personality.
- Staying calm and respectful is essential if you are to have a chance of working out a solution.

Also, be willing to examine how you might have contributed to the problem, advises Moore. If you must get your boss involved in the situation, describe the problem in terms of its impact on productivity, not on the fact that you just can't stand your co-worker.

While these strategies should work in many situations, you may still encounter a "no-win" scenario in dealing with people who are incompetent, uncaring, or just plain unreasonable, such as the case of Lynn C., who discovered soon after starting a new job that her new co-worker had been there for years, had a cynical attitude toward the company, and did as little work as possible.

Even worse, she seemed to resent Lynn's enthusiasm, shot down every new idea she offered, and made sure Lynn got stuck with all the "grunt" work in the department. Unfortunately, the department manager quit soon after Lynn was hired, and no one else was hired in his place right away, leaving Lynn to cope with the situation alone.

Lynn tried very hard, but unsuccessfully, to develop a good working relationship with her colleague, and decided to concentrate on just doing the best job she could, despite her co-worker.

It took a new manager coming on the scene to recognize what was going on and address the performance issues of Lynn's co-worker, who eventually left the company.

Not every conflict can have a happy ending. But keeping a cool head will keep your foot out of your mouth and your career on track when you confront office problems.

## **Working wounded: conflict resolution**

### **Handling conflicts with co-workers by Bob Rosner**

**QUESTION:** I've been battling with a co-worker for a long time. I'd like to end the conflict once and for all. Can you tell me how?

**ANSWER:** Your e-mail reminded me of a conflict of biblical proportions that I recently heard about. At the New Salem Missionary Baptist Church the parishioners voted 67-10 to fire their pastor Stanley Hall. His crime? He refused to reschedule a consecration service that conflicted with the Super Bowl.

Pastor Hall learned the hard way that a little bit of flexibility goes a long way toward keeping people happy. It's no different when dealing with conflict at work. I've listed strategies below to help you take your conflict with your co-worker to a better place. For more, check out *The Portable Mentor* by Cy Charney (Amacom, 2004).

### **Tips for Improving Relations**

Do you try to see the world through their eyes? As my mom was fond of saying, it takes two to tango. So take a moment to explore how you contribute to the problem with your co-worker. Then try to see the world through the eyes of the other person.

What pressures, history and politics are influencing their actions/behaviors?

Ask, "Can we sit down and work this out?" Conflict's great enabler is the 10-foot pole. You've got to get up close and personal with the person you're having problems with to see if it's possible to hash out your issues. There is, perhaps unfortunately, no such thing as "long distance" conflict resolution.

Do you thank the other person for agreeing to meet? Don't ever take for granted that they agreed to talk with you. Let them know that you appreciate it.

Do you use "I" statements? It's common when you are angry with someone to use a lot of "you" statements, like "you left early while the rest of us worked late." This tends to make the other person defensive and tends to block your ability to work together toward a solution. That's why it's important to use "I" statements like "I feel frustrated with how late Jim is having to work" to let them know what you're feeling without needlessly raising their hackles.

Do you try to create a positive environment? Do whatever you can to make the other person comfortable. Bring up the conflict at a time when they aren't under a deadline, try to do it when they are in a good mood and offer to meet in a place where they'll be comfortable. A great peace offering? Offer to buy them a cup of coffee or lunch.

Do you ask "what if" statements? Anytime you can brainstorm with the other person on possible solutions to your problem you are more than halfway home. "What if" statements are a great way to better understand the other person's concerns and to start the process of seeing if there are creative solutions to address both of your concerns.

Use these strategies to address your conflict and your prayers will be answered.



**Support Questions**  
(do not send in for evaluation)

15. Write an argumentative (opinion) essay of about 300 words in response to the following statement: “Generally speaking, it is best to keep work relationships impersonal.” An argumentative essay makes an argument; that is, it gives reasons to support an opinion. You must make a clear statement of opinion at the beginning of the essay and then explain why your opinion is correct. You may agree or disagree with the statement quoted above, in whole or in part, but you should be clear about what position you are taking.

State your opinion clearly in the first paragraph. This is your thesis statement. Give three clear reasons to support your opinion, and develop each reason in a separate paragraph. Write a concluding statement in the fifth paragraph.

16. Look at the following ethical problem, and then answer the question that it poses.

A local TV station has run unfavourable stories about the company I work for. I have been instructed to inform key decision makers at the TV station that our company will withdraw our advertising if the stories don't stop. I feel very uncomfortable doing this. Is this ethical and, if not, how can I refuse?

Think about it, and then write down your advice in a paragraph or two.



## Key Question

Save your answers to the Key Questions in your Course Journal or e-Journal.

4. There are three parts to this question. **(75 marks)**
- Part a) requires you to fill in a table as background information about a conflict.
  - Part b) asks you to write a story describing the conflict.
  - Part c) requires you to write a dialogue that could happen between you and the other person in the conflict, as you try to resolve it.

Think about a conflict situation you have been in with a co-worker, a fellow student, or some other person with whom you have a working, rather than a personal relationship. It should be someone who is an equal in terms of power. That means you should not choose a conflict with a boss or teacher. If you can't think of a conflict situation, imagine one that *could* happen to you with a person in this category.

- a) Create a table like the following to plan the way in which you will describe the conflict. Fill in the upper boxes with specific details about what your role in the situation is supposed to be, what the other person has done and why it bothers you, and what you have done to express irritation or to retaliate. Fill in the lower boxes with information about what the other person's role is supposed to be, what they think they have done (try to imagine their side of this), and what they are now doing in response to your irritation. You can write in point form, but include enough details to give a clear picture of the conflict.

	<b>Roles in the situation and background to the conflict</b>	<b>What each of you has done in this situation, and why there is conflict</b>	<b>How irritation and retaliation have been expressed</b>
You			
Other person			

### **Marking Guide for Part a) (18 marks)**

Your responses in each box will be marked out of **3 marks**; for clarity, relevance, and sufficient detail.

- b) Write a story about the conflict, using the information from the table you made. How did it start? What happened? What has made it worse? What stage are you at now with this person? How is it affecting your work? Write in paragraphs, using about **250 words**.

Check the following Marking Guide before you begin to write.

### **Marking Guide for Part b) (25 marks)**

#### **Organization (5 marks)**

- Is the overall situation introduced at the beginning?
- Is the background of the conflict established near the beginning?
- Are both sides of the conflict introduced near the beginning?
- Is the information presented in order of when things happened?
- Are there appropriate introductory and concluding sentences?

**Content (10 marks)**

- Is the information clear?
- Is there enough information to make the situation understandable?
- Are both parties' actions and responses described?
- Does the story reveal likely reasons for the conflict?

**Style (10 marks)**

- Is the introduction effective and interesting?
  - Is the vocabulary precise, varied, and vivid?
  - Are there some descriptive images or comparisons such as similes or metaphors to make the story lively?
  - Is the spelling accurate?
  - Is the grammar accurate?
- c) Write a dialogue that you and the other person could have, in which you try to resolve the conflict. You can make the other person co-operative or not, as you wish. Make the language believable and make the ideas relevant to the story you already wrote. Make sure that you write the exact words a person would say, for example: "I don't feel very happy about what has happened between us," not: "I said that I didn't feel very happy...". Include statements that mark a beginning and an end to the dialogue. Your dialogue should have at least 10 statements from each party.

The following rubric will be used to evaluate your dialogue.

### Rubric for Key Question 4, Part c) (32 marks)

Categories	Below Level 1 (0–49%)	Level 1 (50–59%)	Level 2 (60–69%)	Level 3 (70–79%)	Level 4 (80–100%)
<b>Knowledge/ Understanding</b>	makes no use of language and/or ideas that would begin a process of conflict resolution	makes minimal use of language and/or ideas that would begin a process of conflict resolution	uses some language and ideas that would assist in a process of conflict resolution	uses language and ideas that are appropriate to a process of conflict resolution	uses language and ideas that show the complexities in a process of conflict resolution
/8	0–3	4	5	6	7–8
<b>Thinking/Inquiry</b>	most of the statements are not relevant to resolving the conflict, and they do not express the points of view of two people in conflict	some of the statements are relevant to resolving the conflict, but they do not express the points of view of two people in conflict	statements are relevant to resolving the conflict, and somewhat express the points of view of two people in conflict	statements are relevant to resolving the conflict, and clearly express the points of view of two people in conflict	statements are relevant to resolving the conflict, and expressively reveal the personalities and roles of two people in conflict, through language, style, and content
/8	0–3	4	5	6	7–8
<b>Communication</b>	statements do not sound like people talking and convey only isolated facts	statements minimally show emotion and fact but do not link to previous speaker's words and feelings	statements express some emotion, as well as fact, and occasionally link to previous speaker's words and feelings	statements express attitudes and emotions, as well as facts, and are linked to previous speaker's words and feelings	statements flow naturally, as in a conversation, and each responds to previous speaker's words, attitudes, and feelings
/8	0–3	4	5	6	7–8
<b>Application</b>	many errors in spelling and grammar distract the reader and obscure meaning in at least one place	errors in spelling and grammar distract the reader	several errors in spelling and grammar but they do not distract reader	few errors in spelling and grammar and they do not distract reader	no, or almost no errors in spelling and grammar
/8	0–3	4	5	6	7–8

**Now go on to Lesson 5. Remember, you do not send your journal to the Independent Learning Centre until you have completed Unit 1 (Lessons 1 to 5).**

