



## 10 Tips for dealing with Toxic Colleagues

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**We have all come across those people before, heck, we may even be those people: The negative Nancys, the nagging Nellies, the mean-spirited Mandies, the rude Robs, the blaming Berties, the put-down Peters, and the gossiping Gerties. The people who make the workplace miserable and stressful. Given how much time we spend at work, learning how to deal with toxic people can make a big difference to how you feel at work and at home.**

1. Distance yourself from the person. Find a reason to go and work in another space at the office, take lunch outside, or wear headphones if you are allowed to. The more you can stay away from toxic people the less they are likely to affect you. Put some physical space between you if you can.
2. The more you engage with a toxic person the more they will engage with you. So, unless you absolutely have to interact with them, don't. And when you have to engage keep it polite and professional and short and to the point.
3. Set limits with toxic people. Don't allow people to take up endless amounts of your time complaining, or gossiping, or putting others down. End the conversation by saying you have a meeting to get to, or you have a deadline to meet. Be polite but not overly accommodating.
4. Don't respond to triggers. Often toxic people have learned what to say or how to act to get a reaction from others. They know which buttons to push and they push them when they want a reaction from you. Remain aware of your emotions. Know the triggers and don't respond to them.
5. Whatever you do, don't try and play them at their own game. Just don't play any games. It will end badly. Ignore them as much as you can. And be firm and polite when you do need to interact with them. Rise above their game.
6. Deliberately plan to spend time with people who are the opposite of toxic colleagues. Build strong and positive relationships. You cannot totally avoid toxic people, but you can make sure you spend time with people who lift you up.
7. Let your work speak for itself. Often toxic people will bad mouth your work, or claim your work as work they have done. Stand up for yourself and if someone is claiming your work as their own, point out what you have done so people know the truth. And keep doing a good job. The truth does eventually come out.
8. If people complain and moan a lot to you, and they are people who are reporting to you, or you have to engage with them, then ask them how they intend to solve the problem. Get the focus off problems and onto solutions.

9. Create and use a support system at work and at home.
10. Remove the person from your headspace. Many people continually think about the toxic person, even when they get home from work. Yes, you can do it. Just simply stop thinking about them and move your thoughts onto another topic. Stop obsessing about the person. Fixating on how crazy and difficult the person is gives them power over you.



When I work with clients who are going through difficult situations, I find a useful technique is to train yourself to think of the situation as an opportunity. How you think about a situation has an impact on how difficult and frustrating it can be for you. So stop seeing the situation as difficult. See it as an opportunity to draw on your resources and strength and show yourself and others what you are made of. It is an opportunity to demonstrate self-leadership and other-leadership which you would not have if everyone was so nice in the workplace. So reframe the way you think about it. Instead of telling yourself what a nightmare work is and feeling sorry for yourself for having to go through this, tell yourself you are going to use this to grow. You are going to use this to show others what you are made of. Often difficult work situations give us the opportunity to show the best of ourselves.