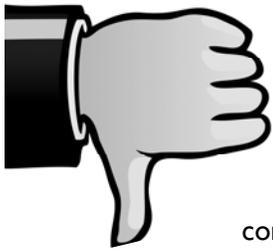


SOLUTIONS

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Are You Annoying At Work?

Have you watched episodes of *The Office* and chuckled at the outrageous behavior of Michael Scott and his staff? They have to be the perfect picture of annoying in an office setting! I hope you can read this with a little humor as well as a little self reflection. We all get comfortable in our surroundings when we have been there a while and sometimes we get too comfortable. There are many surveys floating around the internet taken by coworkers as well as supervisors comprising the top annoying behaviors. Here are the Top Ten ~~points~~ that keep resurfacing:

Hovering when someone is on the phone.

Come back another time or leave a note or go back to your space and email. Standing just outside the door to wait is still hovering.

Cell phone always being on.

If you can't turn it off, consider turning all sounds and notifications off. Vibrate mode can still be heard and considered annoying if your phone is frequently vibrating.

Loud phone talkers.

Some people have a naturally booming voice and they have to be particularly careful.

Groupism (cliques)

It's normal to have people you most "connect with" at work, but include others to avoid hurtful grouping ~~as this leads~~ to morale problems.

Not taking responsibility for mistakes.

Be willing to apologize. It not only makes you less annoying but commits you on some level to doing things ~~different~~.

Not reading or responding to emails or phone calls.

At least provide some acknowledgement that you read the email or received the call even if it's just to say "I got it and I'll get back to you tomorrow."

Texting or shuffling papers in a meeting

Even if you can do two things at once, it is still appropriate to give someone your undivided attention. Texting, although quiet, is still obvious.

Smelling bad (yes I swear this was listed!)

Need I say more?

Chronic lateness or leaving early

You know how to fix this.

Being the office "Know It All."

You have seen them and you can feel yourself groan just thinking about them! Interestingly, this was the # 1 complaint from bosses on one list. Being smart is great but quiet intelligence is just as obvious and nicer to be around.

I am sure we have all committed at least a partial infraction or some version of these across our careers. Consider checking these out with a trusted friend or send out a "blind" office survey where comments are anonymous. Be honest with yourself about any chronic behaviors that could be alienating you from the pack and commit to change!





When you think of safety hazards and employee injuries, you probably focus on what goes on inside your workplace. But one of the threats to worker safety is right outside your door—on the road. Consider these facts:

Distracted Driving

OSHA reports that distracted driving is a factor in more than 4,000 motor vehicle accidents a day. And that's not surprising. How often do you see drivers talking on a phone, fiddling with the radio or climate controls, or eating while they drive? How often do you do it yourself?

Aggressive Driving

Aggressive driving has become a national epidemic. Traffic jams, bottlenecks, and construction inevitably lead to driver frustration, and as the level of frustration rises, so does the risk of aggressive driving. OSHA cites excessive speed, tailgating, failing to signal lane changes, running red lights, and passing on the right as examples of aggressive driving.

Fatigued Driving

OSHA reports that fatigued or drowsy driving may be a factor in more than 100,000 crashes each year resulting in 40,000 injuries and more than 1,500 deaths. A National Sleep Foundation study revealed that 51 percent of adults have driven while drowsy, and 17 percent report having fallen asleep at the wheel.

Driving Without a Seat Belt

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration estimates that seat belts save nearly 12,000 lives and prevent more than 300,000 serious injuries every year. Wearing a seat belt in a car can reduce your risk of dying in a traffic crash by 45 percent, by as much as 60 percent in a truck or SUV. What those statistics tell you is that you need to require seat belt use in company vehicles and spot check to make sure that drivers are at least leaving your facility with seat belts on.



Stress & Stomachaches



There's a reason why when you're upset, you feel a knot in the pit of your stomach. The brain and digestive tract share many of the same nerve connections, according to Douglas Drossman, M.D., a gastroenterologist and psychiatrist at UNC-Chapel Hill. It is because in the womb, the nerves that eventually separate into the brain, spinal cord, and nerves of the intestine all have the same beginnings and remain interconnected.

Mental stress delivers a one-two punch to our digestive systems. First it causes the release of cortisol and adrenaline, hormones that not only divert energy to your muscles (so you can fight or flee), but also slow digestion. For momentary bouts of stress, that's a good thing (you want to use energy to escape the bear, not digest your lunch), but when stress is chronic those same hormones can make your digestive system sluggish, leading to constipation. In addition, chronic stress can alter the release of neurotransmitters like serotonin, which promotes relaxation. And because 80% of your body's serotonin is located in your gut, it's no wonder that when too much is released it can keep you running to the bathroom, while too little can make you irregular.

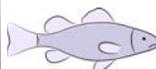
Science suggests that when stress strikes, you reach for certain foods that will soothe your psyche and your GI tract. They include:



Oatmeal: This comforting grain is packed with fiber, which helps regulate digestion—slowing things down when they're moving too fast and speeding things up when they're sluggish. The fiber in oatmeal also guards against dips in blood glucose that can leave you cranky and lethargic.



Yogurt: Probiotics (good bacteria) can improve digestive health, and a new medical study in Great Britain indicates these bacteria may alleviate stress as well. Study participants who took a probiotic supplement felt less stress, depression, and anxiety than those who received a placebo. Probiotics are very strain-specific, meaning that each strain has unique and distinct benefits. While the study looked at only two specific strains (that aren't currently available to consumers in foods), it provides encouraging evidence that probiotics may have a beneficial impact on the mind-gut connection.



Fatty Fish: Stress can trigger an increase in compounds called cytokines that promote inflammation, which can worsen digestion. Eating more omega-3 fats found mostly in oily fish (salmon, herring, and sardines) can help relieve inflammation linked to stomach problems, according to a 2005 *Scandinavian Journal of Nutrition* study.

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