



## **What to Do When You're Hated at Work** **By Jean Maslanka Kelley**

At some point in your career, you've probably felt disliked—or even hated—by someone at work. Maybe it was your boss, a co-worker, or someone in a different department you interacted with occasionally. Perhaps the person was trying to get you fired, make you look bad, or just cause you frustration and self-doubt. Does this sound familiar? Is it happening to you now?

Whoever it was and whatever they did, this person made your work-life miserable...and that's a serious problem for your career, your health, and all your other relationships. Recent medical studies from all over the world show that being around someone who negatively impacts you affects you physiologically as well as psychologically. These studies cite that everything from heart attacks to depression can result from an environment that's toxic to you. Notice the key phrase "toxic to you." Even though the environment might not be toxic to others, it might be toxic to you.

So what can you do when you're the target of someone's dislike? In reality, no matter who hates you or what they're doing to show it, you have three—and only three—options.

### **Option 1: Ignore it**

You may be able to ignore the situation, especially if the person who hates you doesn't work with you directly, interacts with you infrequently, and isn't trying to get you in trouble. If the brunt of the problem consists of a few mean glances in the elevator or a cold shoulder in the break room, then ignoring it could be the answer. Sometimes you just need to develop thicker skin.

However, if you have a gnawing feeling in your gut every time you see the person, that means you can't ignore it. The feelings are taking their toll on you and will affect your health at some point. Remember, we're social beings, so feeling hated is stressful. Any additional stress will negatively affect you in some way. Therefore, it's time to look at option number two.

### **Option 2: Fix it**

Yes, you *can* fix the situation. To do so, first realize your part in it. While most of us wouldn't lie to a trusted friend, we lie to ourselves every day. Something pivotal happened that caused this person to hate you. Identify it. Perhaps you were hired from the outside over them...maybe you got the nicer office they wanted...perhaps the boss liked your marketing idea better...possibly you reacted to their constructive criticism in a negative way...or maybe you mistakenly took their can of soda from the break room refrigerator thinking it was yours. Look back over the course of your relationship with the person and pinpoint when the negativity started and your role in it.

Next, decide to have a much-needed "difficult conversation" with the person. Realize that if you don't talk to the person, nothing will change. People are complex and we never know what

they're thinking unless we ask them. Sure, we often think we know what's going on in someone else's head, but in reality, we don't. That's why having this conversation is so important.

Taking this step requires courage, but it's always step in the right direction. There are many resources and books available that detail how to approach and have these difficult conversations. Research it and then do it.

### **Option 3: Leave**

Of course, if you can't ignore the person and if you don't *want* to fix the relationship, then you always have the option to leave. If you choose this option, be smart about it. Don't stomp out one day out of frustration. Rather, explore other options within the company. If the organization is large, confide in HR and see if you can be moved to another office location or another department. If the company is small, perhaps you can transfer to a desk or office space on a different floor or away from the person you're having challenges with. Sometimes physical distance is all the problem needs.

Realize that deciding to leave is a huge step in any job market. Therefore, stay at your current job while you look for another one. Taking action on your own behalf and knowing that another opportunity is on the horizon could give you the motivation you need to push through the challenges you're currently facing.

### **Put an End to the Hate**

No one likes being hated, especially at work where we spend the majority of the day. But once you know and understand your options for dealing with the situation, you can take positive steps to ensure it doesn't affect your career or your health. No matter which option you choose, honest communication—with yourself and others—is the key to creating a work-life that is both prosperous and pleasurable.