

# TERRIBLE COLLEAGUES: CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Watch the [video](#) “Difficult coworkers and how to deal with them” by Big Think.

## 1 JOKES AND CHAT



**Task 1: Do you find the following quotes and jokes funny?**

Proficiency in language includes the ability to understand and use humour effectively.  
Can you explain the humour in the following work-related examples?

1. The boss told me to have a good day. So, I went home.
2. I get plenty of desk exercises in, like jumping to conclusions, pushing my luck, and dodging deadlines!
3. If every day is a gift, I'd like a receipt for Monday. I want to exchange it for another Friday, please.
4. Learn to spell... AutoCorrect isn't always write.
5. My boss told me that, as a security guard, it's my job to watch the office. I'm on season 6, but I'm not really sure what it's got to do with security.
6. I just started dating someone who works in admin. They tick all the boxes.
7. If incompetence were a sport, my colleagues would be Olympic champions.
8. Someone has stolen my Microsoft Office, and they are going to pay for it... you have my Word.

**Task 2: Let's begin exploring today's topic by discussing the following questions.**

- a. Give a brief description of the key people within your team or department.
- b. Do you have any close friends among your fellow employees?
- c. What kind of tasks or projects do you collaborate on with your colleagues?
- d. Are there any cultural differences among your coworkers that you've noticed?
- e. Have your colleagues influenced your professional development in any way?



## 2 TERRIBLE WORKPLACE BEHAVIOUR

Task 1: Study the pictures below, describing what is happening in each one.



1. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_



3. \_\_\_\_\_ 4. \_\_\_\_\_

Task 2: Discuss the pictures using the questions below.

- How does workplace gossiping affect people?
- Have you ever worked with someone who constantly complained? Explain.
- How do you feel about colleagues speaking loudly on the phone?
- Do you think it is appropriate for music to be played in the office?
- What should an employee do if a colleague makes fun of them?

Task 3: Work in pairs. Create a list of 5-10 more examples of terrible office behaviour.

- When you have created a list, discuss how you react to each situation and how you would resolve them.



### 3 TYPES OF TERRIBLE COLLEAGUES

**Task 1: Read the three quotes taken from the video.**

“Did you know that 80% of people say they work with at least one terrible coworker?”

“Workplaces are full of people who are going to push our buttons or annoy us.”

“What we see in the research is that one negative interaction between you and another colleague can have a detrimental effect on your mental health and your career.”

- Have you ever worked with a difficult colleague?
- What does it mean to “push one’s button”? Describe a recent occasion at work when a colleague pushed your buttons. How did you react, and what did you learn?
- Do you agree that negative interactions at work can have a detrimental effect on one’s mental health? Discuss what can be done to prevent this.

**Task 2: Match the eight archetypes of difficult colleagues to the definitions.**

insecure boss	the tormentor	the biased coworker	the political operator
the pessimist	the victim	the know-it-all	the passive-aggressive peer

1. Shows favouritism and treats some unfairly.
2. This person always needs reassurance, and micromanages.
3. Enjoys making others uncomfortable through criticism or bullying.
4. Believes they know everything and dismisses others.
5. Focuses on personal gain and manipulates situations.
6. Always negative, spreading a sense of hopelessness.
7. Blames others and avoids taking responsibility.
8. Hides hostility with indirect behaviours, making it challenging to address issues.

**Task 3: Let’s discuss:**

- a. Discuss how each of the eight archetypes impacts an employee's professional life and the impact they have on business performance.

## 4 HOW TO DEAL WITH TERRIBLE COLLEAGUES

Complete each of the exercises below that analyse quotes from the [video](#).

### The Passive Aggressive Peer.

**Task 1: Complete the quote by using the words in the box.**

failure      articulate      passive-aggressively      fine

"The person who says one thing then does another, or acts as if they're really angry, but when you ask them how they're doing, they say, "I'm just \_\_\_\_\_."

When someone is behaving \_\_\_\_\_, recognize that they're probably not being passive-aggressive on purpose; chances are they're afraid of something.

They're afraid of \_\_\_\_\_ or rejection; they're conflict-averse, or they feel powerless. You can try to understand a little bit more about what's underneath that. You won't call them passive-aggressive.

Ideally, you will not dismiss them for that behaviour, but you'll use that understanding to allow room for them to \_\_\_\_\_ their thoughts and feelings in a more direct way."

**Task 2: Discuss the following questions as a class.**

- What is a common behaviour associated with someone who is behaving passively-aggressively? Do you know anyone who acts this way?
- Why do you think some people don't express their feelings openly and resort to passive-aggressive behaviour instead?
- What approach does the quote recommend for handling someone who is behaving passively-aggressively in order to encourage more direct communication?
- What are some ways we can create a more open and direct environment for communication in our daily interactions?



## The Insecure Boss.

**Task 1: Choose the correct word to correctly complete the quote.**

They tend to **micromanage / micromanaging**. Their lack of **security / insecurity** can often make you question yourself.

One of the tactics right away is to point out what they're **good / bad** at, and it has to be something you **genuine / genuinely** feel they're good at.

Are they good **in / at** pointing out risks? Are they good at bringing the team together? Point that out. Tell them that you **appreciation / appreciate** it, if you do.

**Task 2: Discuss the following questions as a class.**

- How does insecurity affect behaviour, according to the quote?
- Can you share a personal strategy you've used to address controlling or micromanaging individuals in your life, and what was the outcome?
- In your experience, how has expressing genuine appreciation and acknowledgment of people's strengths strengthened your relationships or teamwork?

## The Tormentor.

**Task 1: There is a grammatical error in each paragraph. Can you find and correct them?**

This archetype is most like Darth Vader. That's the person who you expecting to be a mentor, but who seems set on undermining you.

This person can really damage your career and damage your self-esteem by make you feel like you are not cut out for the job that you know you are.

So what do you do when someone is tormenting you instead of lifting you up? Show that you're invested in their success. Show that you're willing to focus on there goals.

Your not challenging them. You're not threatening them. It is tempting to focus on all the ways that you would like them to change, but you cannot always control how they think, what they value, and how they behave.

**Task 2: Discuss the following questions as a class.**

- What effect can this archetype have on one's career?
- How does the quote recommend dealing with these people?
- Have you encountered a person like this? How did you handle it?

## 5 THE SIX STAGES CONFLICT RESOLUTION

**Task:** Put the headings of the six stages into the correct order, by matching the headings from the box to the relevant language.

Implementation and Follow-up	Evaluation and Decision	Clarification of Issues
Agreement and Commitment	Opening and Initiation	Generating Solutions

1. \_\_\_\_\_

- "I'd like to begin by addressing the conflict that has arisen."
- "Our first step is to create an open and safe space."
- "Thank you all for coming today to discuss this important matter."

2. \_\_\_\_\_

- "Let's start by sharing each other's perspective on this issue."
- "Could you please explain your point of view?"
- "I feel that it's important for us to understand each other's concerns."

3. \_\_\_\_\_

- "Now, let's brainstorm possible solutions to this problem."
- "What are some ideas that might help us resolve this conflict?"
- "Let's be creative and consider all possible options."

4. \_\_\_\_\_

- "Now we have some solutions, let's discuss the pros and cons of each."
- "What are the potential outcomes and consequences of each option?"
- "Which solution do you think is the most practical and fair?"

5. \_\_\_\_\_

- "It seems like we've reached a consensus on the solution."
- "Are we all in agreement with this decision?"
- "Let's commit to working together to implement this solution effectively."

6. \_\_\_\_\_

- "To ensure that this solution is successful, let's develop an action plan."
- "Who will be responsible for each step, and what are the deadlines?"
- "We should schedule follow-up meetings to track our progress"

## 6 CONFLICT RESOLUTION: ROLE PLAY

**Task:** Complete a role play exercise to practise how to resolve conflicts at work.

### Instructions

- a. Work in pairs.
- b. Take it in turns to play both sides of the disagreement.
- c. Follow the stages of how to report toxic behaviour from exercise 5.
  - a. Open and initiate the conversation.
  - b. Clarify the issues.
  - c. Generate solutions.
  - d. Evaluate and decide.
  - e. Agree and commit to a solution.
  - f. Discuss implementation and how to follow up.
- d. Use the language from exercise 5, and ideas from the rest of the lesson too.
- e. Practice resolving conflicts, and have fun!

### Scenarios

1. Two colleagues, Maria and John, are working on a project together. They are constantly misinterpreting each other's emails and messages, leading to frustration and delays in the project.
2. An employee, Alex, feels unfairly evaluated during the performance review. He believes his contributions have not been recognized, while his supervisor, Lisa, has a different perspective.
3. John's boss frequently micromanages his work, leading to frustration and a lack of trust. John believes that he would produce better results working alone.
4. Beth constantly belittles and criticises Hannah's work in front of others, making her feel targeted and humiliated.
5. Oliver constantly focuses on the negative aspects of projects and brings down team morale, making it challenging to maintain motivation and productivity.
6. Daniel shows clear favouritism towards Jane, leading to an uneven distribution of work opportunities and resentment among the team.

## 7 WOULD YOU RATHER?

Study each of the following questions. Select the scenario you'd prefer, providing a detailed rationale for your choice, weighing the pros and cons of both options.

1. Would you rather have a micromanaging boss but a high salary, or a supportive boss with a lower salary?

2. Would you rather work in a job you love with difficult colleagues, or in a job you dislike with fantastic colleagues?

3. Would you rather have a long daily commute to a dream job, or a short commute to a job you find uninspiring?

4. Would you rather work in a completely open office with no privacy, or in a closed office with minimal interaction with colleagues?

5. Would you rather have a boss who frequently provides constructive criticism, or a boss who rarely gives feedback, positive or negative?

6. Would you rather work in a startup with high potential but uncertain stability, or in a well-established company with a guaranteed salary but limited growth opportunities?

7. Would you rather be known as the best in your team but have a heavy workload, or be the least productive but with a light workload?

8. Would you rather work for a company with a strict dress code or one that has a casual dress code?



# HOMework

Watch the [video](#) "The Most Toxic Person In The Workplace" by Excelsior.

## 1 VIDEO ANALYSIS

**Task 1:** Watch the [video](#), then decide if the following statements are true or false.

1. The speaker worked with the army rangers.
2. The navy seals drew a graph for the speaker.
3. The graph had the words "performance" and "trust" on it.
4. Performance only refers to skills on the battlefield.
5. Trust only refers to how someone is off the battlefield.
6. The navy seals would rather have a high performer of low trust than a low performer of high trust.
7. Toxic leaders are always high performers.
8. Negligible metrics are used to measure someone's performance.

**Task 2:** On a separate piece of paper, write detailed answers to the following questions.

1. How did the Navy Seals define the terms "performance" and "trust"?
2. What kind of person are they referring to when they say "high performer of high trust"? Describe the actions of this type of person.
3. Why is a high performer of low trust considered a toxic leader and team member?
4. What is the problem with lopsided metrics in businesses?
5. Why is it easy to find the toxic person in any team?
6. What is the importance of measuring someone's trustworthiness in a business?
7. Who do teams typically point to as the best gifted natural leader?
8. Is it necessary for the best natural leader to be the highest individual performer?
9. Why is it important to keep the best natural leader on your team?
10. Summarise the video, linking it to your own professional experiences.

