**What To Do About Nosy Co-Workers**

By Jeanne Marie Laskas

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* [E-Mail](http://www.rd.com/openArticleToFriend.do?contentId=163550&contentName=What+To+Do+About+Nosy+Co-Workers&contentUrl=%2fhome-garden%2fwhat-to-do-about-nosy-coworkers%2farticle163550.html&KeepThis=true&TB_iframe=true&height=512&width=550&modal=true)
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[](http://www.rd.com/home-garden/what-to-do-about-nosy-coworkers/article163550.html)

"I would rather not discuss my personal business with these folks, but every day they ask me if she has moved out. How do I answer?" ©2009 Jupiterimages Corporation

* [Common Sense Advice to Improve Your Relationships](http://www.rd.com/home-garden/common-sense-advice-to-improve-your-relationships/article156351.html)
* [Life's Little Etiquette Rules](http://www.rd.com/home-garden/lifes-little-etiquette-rules/article140050.html)

**Q.** Some of my coworkers have decided that I am a horrible mother because my 21-year-old daughter still lives with me while she finishes school. These busybodies have no children of their own but comment liberally that they would kick their kids out at 18, it's the best thing for them, blah, blah, blah. I would rather not discuss my personal business with these folks, but every day they ask me if she has moved out. How do I answer?   
—Wish I'd Kept It to Myself   
  
**A.** I'm assuming you don't want to confront these chatterboxes about their boorish behavior, so let's talk strategy: You're going to have to change the subject by beating it to death. To do this, brag about your daughter. Brag big. Go on and on about how wonderfully she's doing in college, all the clubs she's in, how many awesome awards she's likely to win. They will get so sick of hearing about her, they'll beg you to talk about something else.

**Q.** I'm part of a small church group, and we have a problem with one of the ladies. She must practically bathe in her perfume, a scent so strong that some of the others have dropped out because they're allergic to it (a few even went to the doctor). Do we tell her that her perfume is making us sick?   
—Miffed Sniffer  
  
**A.** When people are about to pass out, it's time to take action. It's likely that Ms. Aroma has lost her sensitivity to scents, so this calls for the utmost tact and kindness. Tell her how much you enjoy her contributions and how valuable her counsel has been to the group. Tell her that some in the group are seriously allergic to perfumes. Ask her what she thinks about a "no scents" policy. Make it fun. Say "How about we call ourselves the Non-scents Ladies?" Engage her in the group effort instead of singling her out.  
  
**Q.** My boss has been successfully running her business for almost 20 years. (I've worked for her for seven.) Her husband, who used to handle small handyman chores and payroll on the side, recently retired, and she made him a partner. He's become unbearable: He argues with clients, leaves nasty messages in our inboxes, and makes us write down everything we do each day. All the employees are afraid to speak to him, and we don't know how to deal with his obnoxious demands.   
—Cowed Coworkers  
  
**A.** You're afraid to speak your mind to your boss's husband? What about your boss? Someone better wise these two up or 20 years of hard work will evaporate. If Bear Stearns can disappear overnight, you can believe your boss's business is not immune. Talk this out!  
  
**Q.** I recently gave birth to my first baby, and I'm already having issues with my in-laws. They are both heavy smokers. My husband and I agree that it's unhealthy to bring our baby into a nicotine-filled house, and my in-laws are outraged. We've told them they're welcome to visit us, but they accuse us of keeping their grandson from them. Are we being unrea­sonable?   
—Fuming Mom

**A.** Unreasonable? Try responsible. You're a parent now, and that means you and your husband get to be boss. Give your in-laws clear guidelines, such as "no smoking around the baby." You can hope they figure out a more gracious way to accept your pronouncements, but their happiness is not your worry; your baby's safety is. Stick to your guns.

**Life's Little Etiquette Conundrums  
Q.** I [have a pet](http://www.rd.com/home-garden/what-to-do-about-nosy-coworkers/article163550.html) peeve: people who blow their nose during meals. I was taught to excuse myself and go to the restroom or outside when I needed to blow my nose. Am I overreacting?  
  
**A.** You wouldn't think polite society would need a refresher course on this, but here, for the record, is my public service announcement: All matters of personal hygiene—hair combing, teeth flossing, nail clipping, makeup applying, and nose blowing—should be done privately, not where people are dining. (Allergy sufferers and those who have need to dab at a runny nose are excused, however.)

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