

## Polishing Your People Skills

People skills are the grease that keeps relationships humming. And the ability to maintain good relationships is the cornerstone of good business.

People skills begin with good manners. One longtime corporate trainer has seen businesses bleed clients and revenues because of unintended slights, clumsy interactions, and out-and-out rudeness. Within a company, such gaffes can breed hostility, confusion, and inefficiency. That hurts the bottom line and makes office life miserable.

Modern business etiquette isn't complicated—it's built on the time-honored values of kindness and common sense. But many people seem to struggle with the basics. Here are some typical questions:

**Gift giving at our office has gotten out of hand. Every time I look up, someone seems to be collecting money for new babies, family funerals, retirements, you name it. I'm no Scrooge, and I appreciate the importance of these occasions, but I can't afford it, especially for people I barely know! Is there a gracious way to opt out when someone passes the hat?**

There's no shame in being financially prudent. And you are probably voicing what others are feeling. If it's possible to change the pattern, do so. You might simply tell others about your concerns and suggest a modest contribution limit that is within most people's budget.

If you can't change the policy, create your own. Pleasantly and matter-of-factly, say, "I've decided to curtail giving at the office. It's just not an expense that I can budget." But go the extra mile and write personal notes or cards to those people you know to commemorate their special occasions.

**I'll be starting a new job soon and want to put my best foot forward. How do I make sure my nervousness doesn't show through?**

Congratulations on your new position! With a positive attitude like yours, you're sure to do well. In fact, a great attitude is your biggest asset on the job. Negative attitudes corrode the work environ-



ment. Negative attitudes were the top complaint from executives when my company surveyed them about obstacles to doing business.

The executives' other pet peeves:

- Sloppy message taking and giving someone the runaround
- Making people wait
- Criticizing people publicly
- Disregarding social courtesies for business functions
- Committing errors with names
- Failing to make introductions
- Using vulgar language and wearing inappropriate clothes

Steer clear of these blunders, and you'll do fine.

**My new coworkers have been asking me to meet them for happy hour after work. They seem nice, and I wouldn't mind joining them occasionally, but I don't drink alcohol and I dislike being in a drinking crowd. I also never know whether to bring my "business" self or my "social" self.**

The rule of thumb: Put the "office" before the "party." In other words, err on the side of business. First and foremost, no one ever has to drink alcohol or to apologize for not drinking. If everyone else is ordering alcohol, just say, "I'm not having any wine or beer today, thanks, but please go ahead and enjoy whatever you want." Saying "today" removes any sound of judgment about alcohol consumption.

Then cheerfully place your order for bottled water or a soft drink. Let your voice reflect that this is your sincere preference.

*Adapted from Mitchell, M. (Reviewed 2018). Polishing your people skills. Raleigh, NC: Workplace Options.*

## Webinars

**A Personal Guide to Building Resiliency and Coping with Change**

Available on demand  
beginning October 16

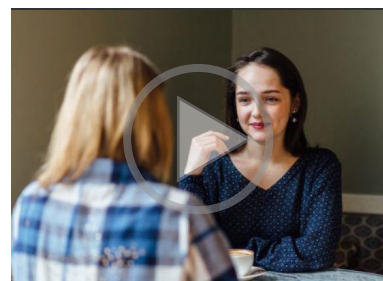
**Avoiding Burnout**

November 15, 2018  
12:00 - 1:00 PM CT  
Proactive steps to prevent stress and exhaustion of burnout.

**\*NEW\*** All upcoming and recorded webinars can be found under Learning and Development when you log in at [www.wseap.com](http://www.wseap.com). Ask your HR department for your organization's access code.

## LifeSpeak

**Learn How You Contribute to Difficult Behavior**



## Poster

**Frequently Asked Questions About Counseling**

**Q: WHAT EXACTLY IS COUNSELING?**  
A: Simply put, counseling is talking with a trained mental health professional to address issues to work through a problem. Counseling is common to students in college, business executives, and anyone who is struggling with a problem.

**Q: WHEN SHOULD I GO TO A COUNSELOR FOR MY PROBLEM?**  
A: People choose to talk to a counselor for many reasons. These include getting assistance with adjusting to life changes, stress management, feeling depressed, conflict at work, anxiety, major life transitions, and so on. Talking to a counselor can help you gain perspective and insight into your problem.

**Q: I HAVE A BIG PROBLEM AND WANT HELP. HOW CAN I GET THE COUNSELOR WHO IS BEST FOR ME?**  
A: The best way to find a counselor is to ask your employer or a trusted mental health professional who is qualified to provide counseling. Counselors cannot provide medication. However, the counselor might recommend that you be evaluated for medication by a medical professional. If you are a medical doctor with specialized training in the treatment of people with mental health disorders, a psychiatrist can prescribe medication.

**Q: HOW CAN I FIND A COUNSELOR?**  
A: A counselor is a trained mental health professional who has a master's degree in counseling or a related field. Additionally, the counselor has undergone a rigorous process to obtain licensure or certification in their state. Counselors are trained to provide a safe and confidential space for you to discuss your concerns. The counselor is also trained to take a confidential number of counseling sessions to help you work through your problem.

**Q: CAN I TELL THE COUNSELOR ANYTHING, AND WILL MY EMPLOYER KNOW I'M THERE?**  
A: The best answer is yes. When specifically, every time you discuss with the counselor is confidential, unless you state that you are having suicidal or homicidal thoughts, or if you believe that a child or adult is being abused.

**Q: IS COUNSELING COVERED BY MY INSURANCE?**  
A: Health insurance benefits vary, so contact your health insurance company directly to discuss your mental health benefits.

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