

Tip of the Month



Defend Your "Ear-Space"

Are you offended by foul language? If so, you are to be applauded for your sense of decency. If you're like most who find gutter talk offensive, though, you suffer in silence while the rest of the world spews forth expletives in every other sentence, spouts tasteless jokes, and turns every comment into a sexual innuendo. When it invades your workplace, however, it's time to stop suffering in silence and defend your "ear-space."

If you are offended by foul language, off-color jokes and sexual innuendos, follow these steps:

1. Ask the offending party(ies) politely to avoid the offensive talk. Most people have no idea you are offended and will stop if you only let them know. They deserve the chance to be respectful.
2. If your personal request is not honored, bring your concerns to the attention of your immediate supervisor, preferably in writing. Send a copy to the human resources director.
3. If your supervisor doesn't effectively handle the problem, take it to the next level keeping this in mind: *You have a right to a hospitable working environment.* If your supervisor is the problem, he or she deserves the opportunity to clean up his/her act just as co-workers do. See Step 1.
4. Be prepared to be scorned, alienated, ridiculed and isolated by those who had a chance to respect your right, but didn't. But fear not, you're not going to lose any friends by standing up for your rights. Real friends will honor your request without making you take the issue to the next level.

If you use foul language, tell off-color jokes and/or make sexual innuendos, you have a right to express yourself in these terms if it's part of your persona. But not at work. If you are predisposed to gutter talk:

1. Don't assume you're not offending anyone just because nobody says anything;
2. If someone asks you to curtail such talk, respect their right to a clean "ear-space;"
3. If you don't take such requests seriously, prepare to defend yourself when your boss confronts you. But keep in mind that you have no defense;
4. Don't scorn those who only want to work in a professional environment and who are willing to stand up for decency. They are a rare breed and are setting a good example for their children and the rest of us.

If you want to be considered a professional, not only do you have to project professionalism, you have to defend it.