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TIME TO BREAK UP WITH YOUR FREMEMY AT WORK

Posted On 25 Nov, 2013 By [Mercedes Cardona](#)



Keep your [friends](#) close, keep your frenemies away. Photo: Scott Griessel

Do you have a frenemy at work? You, know, that person who's always trying to ["help"](#) you with friendly suggestions to do your job better — usually delivered right in front of your co-workers or your boss. Or he or she keeps coming to you for help with work, then "forgets" to mention that help when the result gets praised. Maybe you really were friends when you first started, but



now he or she is undermining you, using you, and making your days at work a lot worse.

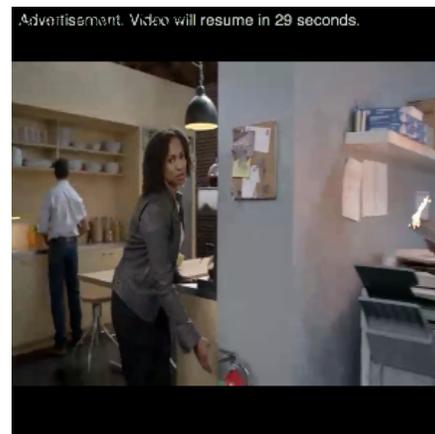
Forget about keeping your friends close and your enemies closer; keeping a frenemy around can only hurt you. A group of researchers recently tested the idea by [following a group of police officers](#) and found that undermining by others at work affected a person's job [performance](#) and even their health. Even if someone else offered support, it didn't completely make up for the negativity.

You need to put an end to that relationship and get the underminer out of your orbit. You need to break up with your frenemy. But how?

Start by putting some distance between you. "There's no need to create drama. If someone at work who you thought was a [friend](#) acts like an enemy, just stop the 'friendship' parts of your interaction and become businesslike," said psychotherapist [Tina B. Tessina](#), author of the book "It Ends With You: Grow Up and Out of Dysfunction."

Don't overreact, but don't linger, either. "The more negative the frenemy, the quicker you should cut things off," said online [advice](#) columnist [April Masini](#). "Stop all communication with this person, stat — outside of the office. In the office, you have an opportunity to practice being polite and being distant at the same time."

And don't escalate the situation by gossiping or drawing other people in, said Tessina: "Don't join in harmful gossip about co-workers — it has a way of getting around, and even being exaggerated.



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If your frenemy is not aggressively hurting you and you want to keep open the option of resuming the friendship, just back away, said Masini. Be busy when invitations come and make a new circle of friends, so you're not lonely, she said.

Putting difficult people in an "adult time out" is a way to deal, said Tessina. Often, the other person will notice a change in your relationship and change their behavior, she said. "Eventually, that person may ask you what's wrong, or why you've changed, and at that point (and only at that point) you have an [opportunity](#) to tell him or her what the problem behavior is, and why you don't like it," said Tessina.

Approach that conversation carefully, said Masini. Have a [chat](#) outside the office to explain your feelings, she said. Ask your frenemy what things he or she would like to change in your relationship, and in both of you.

"If you don't paint her into a corner, or even allow her to perceive herself as painted into a corner, there's a better chance of working things through," said Masini. "If they don't work out, and you've given it a good try, then simply disengage without the [benefit](#) of a follow up chat ... Prolonging the dynamic won't break it off. Disengaging will."

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