

WORK RELATIONSHIPS: THE CO-WORKER YOU USED TO DATE

Submitted by Beth Braccio Hering on Wed, 02/13/2013 - 11:00am

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Sometimes romantic relationships between colleagues work out (just ask the roughly 18 percent of married/committed couples who met in the workplace), but when they don't, things can potentially get messy.

"Working with someone you used to date -- or were married to, or just hooked up with -- can be awkward at best and an impediment to productivity at worst," says relationship expert April Masini of the advice column [Ask April \(http://www.askapril.com\)](http://www.askapril.com).

When work necessitates seeing an ex on a regular basis, it can be harder to heal wounds and move on, especially if there are unresolved issues or emotions. Work life also can suffer. You may focus too much on avoiding one another, worry what the other person is saying to others, or fear that your ex will try to impede your career success.

While getting a new job or transferring to a different department are options, many people find that they can continue to work together without too many problems. Professionalism is key.

"Start out by not referencing your past history with this person. If you can both stay focused on the work at hand, you're home free," Masini says. Being respectful, limiting conversation to work-related or neutral subjects, and avoiding the temptation to provoke jealousy or anger can set a good tone.

Finally, remember that the rest of the office is watching how this plays out. "Gossip is a powerful thing -- especially with electronic media. Keeping your side of the street crystal clear and clean is the key to dispelling possible gossip that will impede your work," Masini says. Refrain from dramatic scenes that get the rumor mill churning, and realize that any time the two of you are spotted alone -- even just coming out of the same elevator -- people may start speculating about reconciliation.

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