

Do you work with a 'serial chiller'?

with

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“Smart training for clever people”

Serial chillers make your life miserable by using passive aggressive tactics – like freezing you out of conversations or giving you the cold shoulder.

Passive aggression is on the rise in the workplace. It includes behaviours like being sarcastic, teasing, refusing to acknowledge you or using body language (like eye-rolling) to express contempt. Most people don't know how to respond to this type of behaviour, so they ignore it.

Unfortunately, ignoring passive aggression just makes it worse. The best way to handle a serial chiller is to turn up the heat and confront their behaviour. In my Assertive Communication Skills training courses, I teach participants three ways to do this.

1. Notice their weakness

Serial chillers try to make you feel bad, in order to feel better about themselves. Remember - their message isn't about you, it's about the serial chiller's poor self concept. Ask yourself, "What weakness are they covering by behaving this way?" Pinpointing this weakness will help you put their comments in perspective.

2. Throw back their nonverbal message

Instead of accepting the serial chiller's message, send it straight back to them. Describe what you've just seen or heard them do. For example, if a colleague rolls their eyes when you make a request say, "I notice that you rolled your eyes when I asked for your help." This highlights their behaviour and passes responsibility for it back to them.

3. Make the covert overt

The serial chiller's verbal message is often 'reasonable' words – but their voice-tone or body language communicates disdain. This is because a serial chiller relies on covert communication. They are uncomfortable openly expressing negative feelings. To handle them, you need to bring their real message into the open. Do this by saying, "I assume you're trying to say..." For example, when dealing with the eye-rolling colleague you could say, "I notice that you rolled your eyes when I asked for your help. So I assume you're trying to say you don't want to help out with this job."

Using these techniques will help you stand up to serial chillers. Persist until the serial chiller understands that you aren't going to tolerate their behaviour.

Book one of our conflict resolution trainers to run a course for your team.

[Contact us now.](#)

Megan Hills interviews

Lisa Elias

Director
Sticky Learning



How to deal with your team's 'bad apple'

“Harry was trouble.” Lisa Elias explained. “Taking other people’s things, bullying and queue jumping, he also happened to be seven years old. As was Austin, Harry’s classmate, who dreamt of moving to a new school to escape the havoc that Oscar wreaked on his daily life.”

“Fortunately their teacher introduced ‘The New Method’ – which meant that the hitting and dobbing of Kindy days were over. Instead, the children were taught new ways to behave. So when Harry pushed in the lunch queue (again) Austin gave The New Method his best shot.”

“‘Excuse me, Harry,’ Austin said calmly, ‘when you push in like that it hurts my chest and my feelings and it’s not fair. Perhaps next time you could try standing at the end of the queue here,’ Austin gestured next to him. Austin then waited to get clobbered by Harry (again). But instead Harry replied, ‘Thanks for letting me know. I’ll remember next time.’”

“You see, Harry had learned The New Method, too, which taught how to reply as well as how to confront. In short,” Lisa explained, “if seven year olds can stay calm, objective and offer a solution, so can we.”

Lisa’s top three tips for dealing with a ‘bad apple’ in a team

1. Remember accountability

Never tiptoe around the issue. Managers are responsible for the team dynamic as well as the result. And team members need to raise the issue if it’s affecting their work performance.

2. Identify the cause

Get to the heart of the matter. Is it poor communication? Poor work performance? A family or health problem? Knowing all team members well means you can identify when behaviour is out of character.

3. Choose the right approach

Let them have their dignity. Give them a chance to explain and adapt. Don’t grill them in front of staff, and don’t wait for the performance review. Get in early and start off informally.

What Lisa Elias says about Eleanor Shakiba

“I’ve known Eleanor for over ten years. We’ve taught on each others’ programs at Sydney University and worked together on corporate projects. Eleanor has a highly structured and analytical approach, where team dynamics are the key to creating positive results. She can tailor her training to any workplace, has excellent listening skills, and cuts through the talk to get to the core issue. I like Eleanor’s interactive story telling approach, which allows participants to see new perspectives.”

Book communication skills training courses for your team.

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Handling smart alocs

Real Life Success Story

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Tony’s mother-in-law constantly made ‘clever’ remarks about his weight. Dreading her next visit to Sydney, Tony wanted to know how to stand up to her.

Tony had been silently accepting his mother-in-law’s teasing remarks for eight years. He didn’t want to be rude, but he was also fed up with being humiliated at family gatherings. Finally, he decided to do something about the situation and enrolled in *Communication Excellence with NLP*. In his training course, Tony learned how to manage his nervousness about standing up to his mother-in-law. You can use the same steps to deal with bullying, criticism, sarcasm or public put-downs.

Feed back the behaviour that upsets you

Openly and directly describe what the other person has said or done. Then explain how their behaviour has impacted on you. Tony completed this step by saying, “I notice you looked right at me when you made that comment about fat people being lazy. That made me think you meant I am overweight and lazy, which upsets me.”

Help them save face

This is an important step because it prevents defensive reactions. The simplest way to help someone save face is to acknowledge their positive intention. Tony, for example, was able to help his mother-in-law save face by saying, “I know you worry about my health and you’re only trying to protect me.”

Describe the behaviour you’d prefer to see in future

It is easier for someone to change their behaviour if they are clear about what they can do differently. Focus on one issue at a time and use concrete language when you’re outlining what you’d like to see change. For example, Tony said, “I’d like you to give me positive feedback rather than making jokes about my weight.”

End on a positive note

Finishing the conversation on a positive note builds your relationship and opens the door to future communication. Ways to close a discussion positively include thanking the other person for listening or pointing out that you appreciate their co-operation. Tony chose to say, “I really appreciate how much you care about me and I want to say thanks for hearing me out today.”

Tony role-played using these steps during his training course so he would feel confident using them. Later, he put his new skills to use in real life. His mother-in-law has now stopped commenting on Tony’s weight.

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What's New

APRIL 2011

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New Courses for Your Team:

Bully Busting at Work

No-one deserves the physical and psychological abuse bullying involves. Find out what you can do to keep your workplace safe and bully-free. You'll also hear how to recognise, prevent and deal with bullying at work.

Read course outline.

News from Eleanor Shakiba

Where to see Eleanor next month:

5 May: **Dealing with Difficult People** [Sydney](#)

23 May: **Beat the Time Vampires** [Wollongong](#)

24 May: **Dealing with Difficult People** [Wollongong](#)

Or book your one to one session with Eleanor. Call 0433 126 841

New Resource For You

Handling Sarcasm Podcast

Do you live or work with someone who uses sarcasm as a weapon? Learn how to respond to their tactics in this month's podcast. *Handling Sarcasm* is a mind-programming session that will help you handle sarcastic comments at work and in your personal life.

Download now

About Think Learn Succeed

We teach people to create, relate and communicate. If you need team training, we can create a customised session. If you want individual coaching, we'll deliver it by phone or face to face.

Contact us now to find out how we can help.