

Office affairs, a boon?

Dating a co-worker might not be all that bad. A few couples, who have made it work, talk about how they do it

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In an office staffed with young people who see each other every day and spend a lot of time together it is inevitable that some of them might choose to date each other. This could spell trouble in certain cases with co-workers talking about their relationships behind their back or complications arising from the relationship affecting the couples' efficiency at work. And seeing an ex at work every day after a break-up can be a nightmare. But that isn't always the case. More and more young couples are showing better judgment and maintaining the divide between work and private life.

For Abhit Prabhu, 25, who met his girlfriend during a department lunch outing, dating a co-worker was almost a godsend. "Even though we worked in the same department, she worked in the morning shift and I worked the evening shift, so our contact time in the office was limited to a 10-15 minute window while she was leaving and I arrived," he says. "We chose to keep our relationship out of the office. Of course, there was some chit-chat among co-workers but it was mini-

mal and it could be easily ignored," he adds. The couple dated for six months while in the same office and has stayed together for a year even after Prabhu quit the company.

Meera Ravi, 54, a marriage counsellor at Prerna Academy, stresses on the importance of drawing boundaries while dating a co-worker or being wed to one. "When a couple works together in the same office they have to understand the implications. Office politics is bound to affect them because people are political beings. There can be a differ-

ence in their perception of co-workers and the boss. One could have a problem with something the boss said, while the other could be okay with it and that feeling of 'you don't understand what I feel' can creep into the relationship. But if their minds are strong it will not affect them," Ravi says.

But then it could work the other way too. "On the other hand a couple working together in an office could mean they have a better understanding of each other. As long as they don't bring their emotional baggage from the relationship into

the office, they can help each other out and work more efficiently as a team. There can be a deeper level of sharing." However, be prepared for break-up blues, Ravi says. For instance, if a relationship goes sour and the couple breaks up but has to work in the same office it can be traumatic. "Especially when one finds out that their ex is dating someone else in the same office or outside. But in such situations one has to be clear about what they want and find closure. They might have to choose between keeping the job or quitting if they feel

they aren't strong enough to see their ex every day."

Rosaline David, 28, met her fiancé while working on the same team at work. "We had been friends for six-seven months and we got along really well before we started dating. At first we didn't tell anybody, but after a while people did ask questions about why we spent so much time together and started teasing us. There is this perception that if you're working on the same team then you aren't really working, that you might spend too much time taking smoke breaks or tea breaks." The key is maintaining a consistent level of performance, she says. "At first my boss did judge me based on my relationship, but as long as you show that it is not affecting your work they can't do anything. And dating a co-worker has become quite common now. If they aren't okay with a couple working in the same team, one of them can be transferred to a different department or work on a different floor."

As Ravi puts it, it finally all boils down to attitude and one's maturity level. Dating a co-worker can be rewarding and fulfilling as any other relationship, if the couple trusts each other completely and doesn't care too much about office gossip.



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