BESTLIFE

7 Things to Do When You Don't See Eye to Eye With Someone at Work
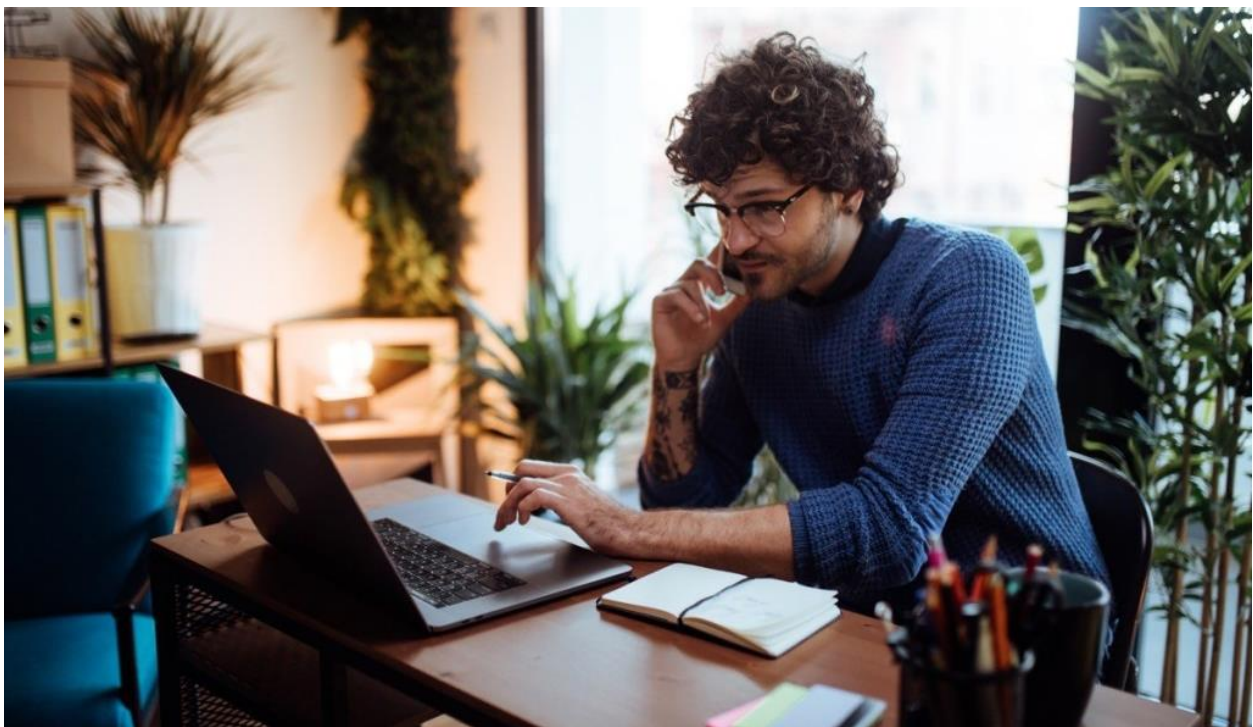
Working in a professional environment often means interacting with a variety of different personality types—and having to consider many different opinions, ideas, and leadership styles. Unsurprisingly, navigating all the aforementioned factors can often be a difficult undertaking, sometimes leading to spats with coworkers, or tension between you and your boss. And even with most people working from home during the COVID-19 pandemic, these factors *still* manage to cause issues. Whether you're at home or in the office, however, there are ways to handle certain professional problems that are better than others. From effective communication to necessary—and sometimes virtual—distancing, these tips will help you minimize conflict at work when you and your colleagues just don't see eye to eye.

1. Identify the type of problem you have.

Start by asking yourself if the problem is personal or professional? If it's something you don't like about the person—the way they drink their coffee during the morning video call, for example—but that doesn't affect how either of you do your job, then it's personal, says **Jon Hill**, CEO of The Energists. However if you're upset with someone because they start work late or use work time to do personal activities—preventing both of you from getting work done—then that's a professional issue.

"With personal issues, I've found the best way to address them is to bring them up with the person in casual, private conversation," Hill says. "If the person doesn't listen and keeps doing what they're doing, it's up to you to fix the situation for yourself, not to demand that the other person change their behavior." Professional issues, however, have an impact on the productivity and efficiency of your company. "In these cases, I think it's warranted to bring them up to your supervisor or manager rather than addressing the issue personally," says Hill. "Often you'll find your manager is already aware of the problem and taking steps to fix it."

2. Minimize your contact with that person.

If you can't pinpoint a "specific source of disagreement," Hill recommends minimizing your direct contact with the person. This may be harder to do in person, but if you're working from home, you can avoid reaching out to them or chatting directly with them in group calls. If that's not a viable option, "keep your focus on the tasks" and not on the "things the other person says or does that annoy you," he says. After all, if you're unable to point to specific things that bother you, discussing why you just don't like someone is likely to "fan the flames rather than extinguish them." Would you appreciate a coworker telling you they just simply found you annoying without reason?

3. Ask questions.

According to **Dušan Goljić**, a board-certified pharmacist with DealsOnHealth, many workplace conflicts arise from "lack of communication and understanding." That's why he recommends asking questions to start a discussion with the person you are having a problem with. When working from home, find a time to directly contact them in a face-to-face virtual conversation, outside of group work chats.

Open communication may help you understand your colleague's background and point of view, which can help you find a middle ground and respect their side of things even if you don't agree with them. And for more ways to make a better workplace, check out the 30 Things You Should Never Do at Work .

4. Find the right time to talk.

Having a dialogue with someone you disagree with is important, but doing it at the right time is essential to the effectiveness of the conversation.

Trying to "mend feelings or disagreements" is only made worse when approaching someone at the wrong time, says **Laura Fuentes**, operator of Infinity Dish. If someone has other urgent business to deal with or perhaps they're helping their kids with school at home—or if they're already in a sour mood—she recommends waiting to discuss your grievances with them.

5. Seek the opinion of a neutral third party.

Talking a disagreement out with someone might not always work. If that's the case, **Katherine Rothman, founder and CEO of KMR Communications**, recommends bringing in a third-party facilitator.

"Many companies have an HR director or a neutral CEO who is trained and experienced at helping team members navigate differences of opinion or other issues," she says. "Depending on your business, it is in the company's best interest

that these issues be brought to a manager or CEO in order to address the situation and keep the team on track to fulfill its duties to your shareholders, clients, or consumers."

6. Remember that you don't have to be friends with everyone you work with.

While many people enjoy making friends with their colleagues, it's important to remember that your main goal is to work. You don't have to be best friends with the people you work with, attending virtual happy hours with them every weekend.

"You don't always have to like everyone that you work with or work for, but you do have to work together for the job to get done," says **Stephanie Lane**, an HR manager and lifestyle coach. "There will always be people with whom you don't see eye to eye, but the real character of a person is how that disparity manifests itself. Being right is not nearly as important as your character, reputation, and job ethics."

7. Remain respectful.

Above all, exercising patience and being respectful of *all* your colleagues is essential to success, **Rothman** says.

"Executives need to understand that we don't know it all, and team members need to understand that decisions are not black or white in business, especially for management," she says. "Maintaining respect for opinions, strategies, and methodology can help both parties analyze a proposal and move forward together with a decision."