

WORK THOUGHTS

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Mom...Is that You?

In the working environment, family members can seem to “emerge” in co-workers, supervisors, or direct reports. In fact, to the most unaware, the workplace becomes an artificial family...with Dad, Mom, a sibling, or even your least favorite extended family member working right across the hall! It could be an aspect of a co-worker’s appearance, your boss’s gestures, a direct report’s personality, or your supervisor’s temperament, but make no mistake, unconsciously imagining co-workers as family members is a universal phenomenon.

So, what can you do to be aware – and to use this phenomenon to your best advantage?

The first step is to “find” your family members amongst your co-workers. Look for family patterns by stepping back and seeing the big picture. Can’t get along with someone? Who does he or she remind you of? Get stressed out when meeting with certain people? Pay attention to that. Love working with others? Notice that also.

Step two is to realize that you can’t see your co-workers clearly when you are imagining them as other people. To envision co-workers reacting to you as your family members might react (or vice versa) puts you at a disadvantage. Working *smart* involves seeing people as individuals. Start by learning about birth order and how your family-of-origin pecking order has shaped your expectations at work. *Performance EAP* counselors have the tools to address this workplace phenomenon.

Step three is to get to know co-workers better. The better you know someone, the less likely you are to make the imaginary switch. What you are looking for is a new perspective on this person, so that you can have a greater range of responses to him or her.

Finally, take the opportunity to consult with your EAP. Working on family-of-origin issues always pays big dividends. Surprisingly, some people make the mistake of changing jobs rather than figuring out the human dynamic. They mistakenly believe workplace conflict is about the place. Imagine the disappointment when they discover “mom” is their new supervisor.

To make an appointment call 337-436-9533.

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