

# USA WEEKEND

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## Workplace

### What to do about a worrisome co-worker

**W**ORKPLACE VIOLENCE results in three deaths daily and thousands of injuries each year. Despite terrorism fears, it's still the No. 1 security concern for American businesses, according to a recent survey by the Pinkerton security company.

And co-workers are feeling the strain.

"It is not unusual for people to take medications before they go to work for the sole purpose of helping them cope with some disturbing person at work," psychologists Alan Caviola and Neil Lavender report in their book, *Toxic Co-Workers: How to Deal With Dysfunctional People on the Job*. In their research, they were shocked to discover how many people had tales of a nightmare co-worker — violent, abused, addicted, crazy.

If you have a problem co-worker, first decide if you care more about the person or the workplace. "Often, that distinction helps resolve the dilemma" of what to do, says Edward B. Kurpis, a management professor and consultant

at Bottom Line Ethics.

If the person is your priority, try talking about the problem, suggests psychologist and workplace specialist Beverly Smallwood, Ph.D. ([magneticworkplaces.com](http://magneticworkplaces.com)). Stick to "what you actually see the person doing. Talk about the employee's specific behaviors and what he or she has done that is causing you and the company a problem, not about him or her as a person."

If you don't want to get that involved, let management handle it. Besides, some problems are too dangerous to tackle solo, and others require special knowledge or long-term commitment.

Whether you opt to report a problem or keep quiet, there's always a price to pay, says Frank C. Bucaro, author of *Taking the High Road: How to Succeed Ethically When Others Bend the Rules*. If you report, you may face retaliation, be branded as a snitch or even lose your job. But day after day of silence isn't easy either. At some point, he says, you have to ask, "Is this job really worth the distress?" **W** — Peggy Noonan

LeAnn Rimes, country singer



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