

A co-worker's rudeness can affect your sleep—and your partner's, study finds

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Rudeness. Sarcastic comments. Demeaning language. Interrupting or talking over someone in a meeting. Workplace incivilities such as these are becoming increasingly common, and a new study from Portland State

University and University of Illinois researchers found this behavior has the potential to not only negatively affect an employee's sleep but their partner's as well.

The study, recently published in the journal *Occupational Health Science*, builds on previous research by examining the relationship between workplace incivility—a common stressful [work](#) event—and employee sleep in the context of dual-earner couples. The researchers surveyed 305 couples in a variety of jobs.

Charlotte Fritz, the lead author of the study and associate professor of industrial and [organizational psychology](#) in PSU's College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, said when one spouse experiences [workplace incivility](#), they tend to ruminate more about work at home and report insomnia symptoms whether it's trouble falling asleep or waking up in the middle of the night. But the study went a step further examining sleep problems in the employee's spouse and found their sleep is also affected—but only if the couple works in the same company or occupation.

"Because work-linked couples have a better idea of what's going on in each other's work, they can be better supporters," Fritz said. "They probably know more about the context of the incivil act and might be more pulled into the venting or problem-solving process."

Fritz recommends that organizations do everything in their power to create a culture of civility by imposing zero-tolerance policies or offering civility training. But given that [workplace](#) incivilities aren't completely avoidable, Fritz also suggests a number of strategies to help employees cope, including mentally detaching from work during non-work hours by spending time with family and friends or enjoying hobbies, and practicing meditation at work and home.

The same is true of the employee's spouse.

"Not talking about work or not supporting your spouse is not the solution," Fritz said. "They can talk about work, vent about it, discuss it, but then they should make an explicit attempt to unwind together and create good conditions for [sleep](#)."

More information: Charlotte Fritz et al. Workplace Incivility Ruins my Sleep and Yours: the Costs of Being in a Work-Linked Relationship, *Occupational Health Science* (2018). [DOI: 10.1007/s41542-018-0030-8](https://doi.org/10.1007/s41542-018-0030-8)

Provided by Portland State University

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