

STUDY SHOWS THAT YOU MAY BE YOUR OWN WORST WORKPLACE ENEMY



Many workers complain that they are finding the workplace an uneasy and uncomfortable place to work. If they look inward and reflect honestly they could themselves be the reason for their anxiety and discomfort. How many times have you been paranoid and suspicious that two co-workers chatting at their desks are talking about you? You spend more of your time finding out who is sneaking about you and are convinced that in everyone's eye you are an outcast, a pariah who is unwanted in the workplace. You work yourself in an unwarranted frenzy and for no reason whatsoever. There may be no enemies at the workplace, but your suspicious conduct may actually create some, is the conclusion of a new study by the journal *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*. The study says that if you go out in search of enemies, you will find what you are looking for. Not because they exist, but because you turned them against you, by presuming they were your enemies, you actually made them so. The study's authors Jennifer Carson Marr, Stefan Thau, Karl Aquino and Laurie J. Bradley, use a series of smartly designed experiments prove that the more you give in to the impulse to bear out that colleagues are ganging up and spreading malicious information about you the more mistrusting, the more suspicious you will become and this will lead to rejection and negative responses at the workplace. Your constant nosing round, probing, and gossiping set colleagues to talking about you and make you unpopular and unwelcome and you create enemies where none existed before. The authors say that worse than facing the initial rejection, this vicious cycle will lead to other co-workers to reject their paranoid co-workers, by avoiding opportunities to collaborate, which will inhibit your growth and promotion chances. However, if you were not in agreement with the study's assessment and countered by asking, "What if someone is really talking about me, undermining me and ruining my reputation?" That is exactly what the study is saying, that all the troublemakers and gossips at your workplace, may really be indulging in hearsay about you, finding fault with your work or avoiding you. But what really made them do that? Was it because your primary behavior and misplaced feelings of intimidation and segregation and your pessimistic behavior, prodded their retaliation? Just because you're suspicious and mistrustful doesn't mean someone's not out to get you. It means they may be out to get you because you're suspicious and mistrustful! Well how do you deal with them? The best approach is to give them the benefit of the doubt and even they are talking about you presume that they are not. Aquino, a professor at the University of British Columbia's Sauder School of Business says that, it takes one to know the other and that, "There is evidence from other research that people often do project their perceptions of themselves onto others." There is yet another, even more humbling reason why you may find yourself a workplace target. It is what is known as the "spotlight effect." Cornell University psychology professor Tom Gilovich explained that the spotlight effect is people overestimating the extent to which others are paying attention to them. "The key lesson is not that fewer people are paying attention to you than you think; it's that you're paying more attention to what you think people are thinking about you than is warranted." The best things to learn from this study are that it pays to ignore impulses that make you feel that you are being conspired against at the workplace. The benefits that you garner, when your colleagues start thinking that you are not such a bad fellow after all, will do far more good than the harm you might incur.