Blurring the boundaries between work and home



Just as we can't keep our home life entirely separate from our work life, we can't detach our personal thoughts and emotions from our day-to-day dealings at the workplace. Even with the most professional outlook and demeanour, the amount of time we spend with co-workers on the job can create deep bonds of respect and affection.

Sharing a common goal, celebrating hard-fought successes, overcoming challenges with others in our workplace can open the door to a range of feelings—and sometimes blur the boundaries between our work and personal lives. Learning to handle these situations can make the difference between a healthy bond and one that is disruptive.

Here are some things to keep in mind:

Check your connections. Become aware of the nature of your relationships at work. Are they based on mutual respect? Are any causing you concern or confusion? Are you experiencing conflict or negativity? Are you comfortable with the content of your in-person, telephone and e-mail communications? Could you be sharing too much personal information with your co-workers, or is someone sharing too much personal information with you? Have you enlisted support from your employer or others to work out a challenging workplace relationship?

Check your messages. How do you communicate at work? Are you sending signals to some co-workers that may be misunderstood or deemed inappropriate, unwelcome or aggressive? Do you relate differently with men than with women? Is friendliness being seen as flirtation? Are there excessive levels of competition between departments?

Check your schedule. Have you built in time for yourself outside of work? Are you spending too much time at the workplace? Do you repeatedly cancel personal appointments for work-related ones? Are you bringing problems at home into the workplace (or vice versa)?

If any of these issues are causing you concern, remember: help is available when you need it. Contact a professional for support to manage your personal and professional lives—before concerns turn into conflicts in either area.