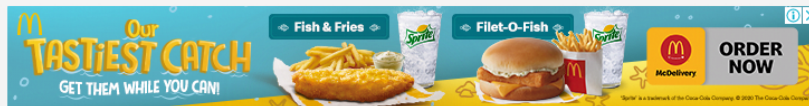


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Should You Have an Office Romance? Here's What the Experts Say

A NEW SURVEY SAYS 1 IN 4 AMERICANS HAVE HAD AN OFFICE ROMANCE. BUT HERE'S THE TRUTH ABOUT DATING COLLEAGUES.



By DIANA BRUK
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→ For a long time, meeting your spouse **in the workplace** was the norm. But as the #MeToo movement forced people to reexamine the dynamics of mixing work and romance, a new light was cast on **office relationships**. Due to the **imbalances of power** and the financial elements at play, it seemed clear that **having a relationship at work** was a bad idea. But even a few years after #MeToo dominated conversations, a new survey released by the **Society for Human Resource Management** suggests that office romances are still incredibly common.

After polling nearly 700 employed Americans, the researchers found that 27 percent of them had previously had or were in a workplace romance. And of those who did date a co-worker, 76 percent dated a peer, 27 percent dated a superior, and 21 percent dated a subordinate. Another 19 percent of those surveyed admitted to having a "work spouse," AKA a co-worker whom they were so close to that it almost felt like a marriage. And—in a statistic that will thrill no **actual spouse**—slightly more than half of those respondents admitted to having a crush on their work spouse.

But the question remains: Is it OK to have an **office romance**? And, if so, how should it be handled? We talked to HR managers, dating experts, and more to find out the answers. Here are the biggest takeaways.

Dating your boss or your direct report is a bad idea.

Carmel Jones, a sex coach who writes about relationships on the blog **The Big Fling**, advises against embarking on a relationship with someone who is your superior. "Not only does it put the actual work in jeopardy, but it also leads to favoritism in



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does it put the actual work in jeopardy or lead to favoritism in the office, it also starts a relationship off in a weird way that involves a bizarre power dynamic," she says. "**Healthy relationships** almost always need to have an equal power dynamic, and that's close to impossible in office relationships unless the two people have comparable positions."

And **Courtney Keene**, director of operations at **MyRoofingPal**, points out that dating a subordinate "sets a terrible precedent for any company," as well. "Even if both parties handle it well, the subordinate's colleagues will understandably assume they are receiving special treatment. Suspicion of bias creates a **hostile work environment**," she says. "The subordinate may feel isolated from their fellow team members, and the manager may feel as if they have to be even harder on the person they're dating to disprove the rumors."



Check your company's handbook.

Every job is different, so check your employee handbook to get informed on your company's official policy on dating a colleague before things continue.

"Some companies prohibit dating co-workers, vendors, or suppliers, and even customers for a good reason," says **Celia Schweyer**, a dating expert at **DatingRelationshipsAdvice.com**. "If such provisions are in place, build up your case and disclose the relationship to your superiors. Starting a dialogue rather than blatantly opposing the company rules speaks volumes about your character and professionalism."

Communication is key.

It's important that both you and the person you're seeing are open and honest about where you each stand. If it doesn't seem like something serious to both of you, then it's likely not worth putting your jobs in jeopardy. "Both parties in the relationship must have a discussion about the risks and whether or not they are worth taking," Jones says. "If the connection feels purely sexual, it's not worth it."

Separate "work time" from "babe time."

If you do decide to pursue an office romance, it's important that work and play don't mix. "Keep two different personas of your partner in your head: one that you can cuddle at night, and the other one that needs to be treated as a colleague," Schweyer says.

"The office is not the place for PDA or too much touching," says **Jagoda Wieczorek**, the HR manager at **ResumeLab**. "Save that for after work and your personal time together. And if things don't work out cinematically, it's imperative that the two parties keep it cordial and objective, as tough as it may be."





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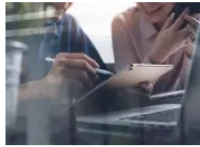
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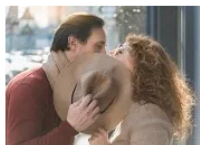
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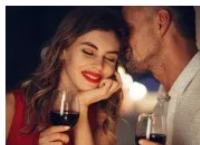
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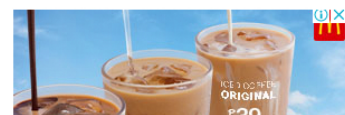


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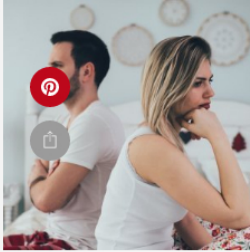


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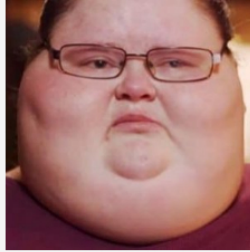


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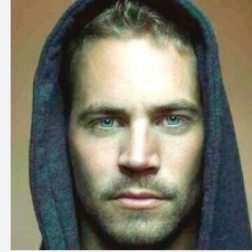
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