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Last Updated: 7:02 am | Sunday, September 7, 2008

Nail clipping tops workplace annoyances

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QUESTION: After reading the article "Try not to gross out your colleagues in the gym", I thought it would be nice to see one titled "Try not to gross out your colleagues in the office" (subtitled ... leave the nail clippers at home).

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ANSWER: It's funny the stories and complaints I hear from employees when I am consulting with companies. The phrase familiarity breeds contempt comes to mind.

According to a study by the National Sleep Foundation, the average American works a 46-hour week. With so much time being spent at work, there is little time left to take care of personal issues such as nail clipping, as noted by the above "grossed out" reader. It should go without saying that the office, no matter how comfortable and familiar it may be, is not your home and that all grooming and hygiene-related issues should be taken care of in the privacy of your own house.

Maintenance of nails is a major offender in the workplace, whether clipping or painting them, and it comes with a high gross-out factor. Men seem to be the main culprit for the nail clipping, while women are the main culprits of the nail filing and painting. It can be distracting for co-workers to concentrate or talk on the phone when a cubicle mate is clipping his nails. The constant clip, clip, clip of the cutters is distracting, not to mention the visual of nail remnants going airborne. Fumes from nail polish are quite pungent and can be offensive and distracting, since many employees work in close quarters.

Other ways of grossing out colleagues are less deliberate behaviors and more happenstance, but still important to address.

For instance, if you are prone to smelly feet, you should be respectful of those around you and wear socks to work. I recently attended a meeting where I could smell the feet of someone sitting very close to me, and it was all I could do to concentrate on the speaker as I was trying not to gag.

And, while we all can be prone to bad breath at times, a little self-awareness goes a long way.

I always recommend that my clients keep mints and gum close by in case of emergencies. In addition, never refuse a mint when offered. Your colleague might be extending a professional courtesy. Take the hint and the mint.

Our goal at work is to be recognized for our high level of professionalism and our excellent work. Having poor hygiene or performing personal grooming at the office can only detract from our reputation and professionalism. So use common sense.

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E-mail me your workplace annoyance experiences, and I'll include in a future column.

Jill Haney, founder of JH Image Consulting, is a certified image consultant. Reach her at 513-505-2732, jill@jhimage.net or www.jhimage.net

In your voice

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mncmcnc wrote:

What about picking your nose and eating it or wiping it on the bathroom stalls. Does that count? I work with some of the worst. Plus there is alot more farting, scratching, picking and the occasional whacking session, you figure it out. Totally freakin' gross.. I would welcome some fingernail clipping as long as there not flying in my food. Sorry but since we were on the subject.....

9/10/2008 12:57:44 PM

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nachi wrote:

What else would one expect from the current generations?? They are cultureless, classless, undignified, uncouth slobs. One has only to gaze upon them. Were it not so utterly disgusting and repugnant, it could almost be comical.

9/8/2008 12:59:57 AM

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JimmyPaisley wrote:

So office nail clipping is worse than office flatulance or obnoxious cell phone ring tones

9/7/2008 7:14:45 PM

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advocatedsp wrote:

For those who use the break-room office microwave, please wipe up the spills left from your aromatic lunch. I do not like having my tomato soup smell of left over tuna casserole. In fact, try something other than tuna.

9/7/2008 6:39:48 PM

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