



Difficult relationships in school

This factsheet outlines a specific situation in which a teacher was experiencing a difficult relationship with a co-worker and some of the suggestions to cope with her situation.

The following study is based on a call to our Support Line and offers some of the suggestions given by the counselor.

Question

I'm in my late thirties and have taught in my high school for about ten years. I'm busy and get along really well with most of the other teachers except one.

My relationship with him is almost unbearable and I am mystified as to why he treats me as he does. We seem to disagree about everything. I constantly feel talked down to, he never listens to what I say and I am starting to lose my confidence when I am around him. I have talked with a close friend at school and she is mystified. She thinks he is fine and is always friendly.

Is it my fault?

Answer

This is not an unusual situation when working in a high pressure educational environment. With long working hours and a heavy workload, it is difficult to develop close relationships and a rapport with all your co-workers on campus. Nevertheless that doesn't mean that poor working relationships and disagreements cannot be avoided or strategies adopted that go a long way to resolving them. Use the links below to explore a range of skills, tactics and strategies that may help.

As far as possible, it is helpful to see the situation from a neutral perspective. When you feel ready, try talking on a personal level to the individual. Tell him how you feel and make your points with confidence. Give him an opportunity to respond. It may resolve the difficulty itself or at least help you understand his point of view and then communicate how you are feeling.

Learn to recognize and control your defense mechanisms. Try not to react immediately in tense situations but respond at a more neutral time when you are able to adopt a less impassioned perspective. While it may seem that you are

making all of the effort, in many situations of this nature it takes a brave person to make the first move.

If you have tried to reconcile the situation but feel that nothing has changed, you may decide to take more formal action. Keep a record of your attempts to deal with the situation and see your boss and explain how you are feeling. Many academic institutions have a harassment policy that provides clear guidelines in more serious conflict situations.

Where can I go for further support?

If you are an educator from one of the districts that have signed up to this service and you wish to speak to a qualified counselor, you can call the toll free Educator Support Line on 1-877-876-4327.