



## Working Relationships

It's intriguing, it's taboo and, according to Psychology Today magazine, approximately 80 per cent of the workforce has either observed or participated in it. It's the office romance, relationships that blossom over the water cooler.

While the office may be an ideal place to find people with whom you have things in common, there are a number of pitfalls and guidelines that should be kept in mind, according to Toronto-area relationship and business consultant Donna Messer.

"Office romances happen quite frequently because the common denominator of having work in common, so you have something to talk about," said Messer. "I think a lot of interoffice relationships happen because of this close proximity, not because they are a perfect fit."

So, to give your foray into office love the best chance, Messer suggests a few office romance Dos:

- \* Take the time to see what else you have in common besides work.
- \* Find out what the office policy is on relationships between co-workers (while some companies have no policy at all, others insist one employee leave to work elsewhere if a relationship develops).
- \* Be cautious if dating a subordinate or boss (in the event of a break-up the subordinate stands to lose more).
- \* Be sure the attraction is mutual before making a move.
- \* Be aware of sexual harassment laws and adjust actions accordingly.
- \* Make sure you both have the same idea of where the relationship is going.
- \* Be realistic about the chances that the relationship will work out.

**Marilyn Belleghem**, an Oakville marriage and family therapist, said there are some real points of caution that should be taken if someone decides to start an office romance. "It's important to be careful because if the relationship crashes, you still have to face them at work," she said. Some of Belleghem's office romance Don'ts include:

- \* Don't kiss, hug or show other displays of physical attraction while working.
- \* Don't tell your co-workers what is going on unless you are sure it's going to be a long-term relationship (gossip can hurt both work performance and the relationship).

- \* Don't bring arguments to work with you.
- \* Don't let the relationship have a negative impact on your productivity at work.
- \* Don't wear clothing to work that is more appropriate for a date.
- \* By taking the time to think your relationship plans through, you can give yourself the best chance at success on the romance and work fronts.

Psychology Today on [toronto.com](http://toronto.com)