

## the ARTICLE (for instructors)

### It Only Takes One Bad Apple

There is an old saying: It only takes one bad apple to spoil the bunch. The idiom can be applied to every day life. A recent research report indicates that "one bad apple" can quickly spoil the atmosphere of the office. An employee with a negative attitude brings conflict and stress to the workplace. A problem employee usually doesn't do an equal amount of work, is always unhappy and complaining, and bullies others.

Negative behavior, the researchers found, is much stronger than positive behavior. As such, several positive employees can't change the mood created by one negative teammate. In fact, it often leads to a downward spiral, with more and more employees becoming unhappier and unhappier as time continues. The news comes out of the University of Washington.

In order to solve the problem, companies need to deal with the negativity immediately. One answer is to have the employee work alone as much as possible. In effect, he should be isolated from other team members work-wise. Better yet, ensure that effective hiring practices prevent the problem from entering the building. Training managers to better determine potential hires helps, as do personality tests. These can identify and remove emotionally unstable or disagreeable people.

Case in point: The wife of the report's lead author noticed that when a problem employee at her office was sick for several days, the atmosphere quickly changed. People began to help one another. They played classical music on their radios. Many went out for drinks after work. However, once the problem returned, the toxic atmosphere returned, too.

**Teacher's Notes:**

\* Underlined words in red typeface are the recommended vocabulary for this lesson.

## WARM-UPS

Select one or all of the following warm-up activities.

1. **Define:** What does "bad apple" mean? Can you use it in a sentence? Can you give examples?
2. **Brainstorm:** Brainstorm with a partner(s) words and ideas associated with "bad apple" for 2 minutes. Spend another 5 minutes or less discussing the words and ideas together.
3. **Title:** Speculate and/or discuss the contents of today's article from its title: "It Only Takes One Bad Apple."
4. **Do you agree or disagree? Why?**

a.	Work is never enjoyable, so it doesn't matter if I like my job or not.
b.	I wish my coworkers and I were better friends.
c.	Complaining relieves stress.
d.	Negative emotions are stronger than positive emotions.
e.	There is an employee in my office who should be fired because...

5. **Dilemma:** You are the department manager of a large section. One of your employees is always unhappy and complaining. His bad mood is beginning to affect your staff. Would you:

a.	do nothing?
b.	sit down and try to be his friend?
c.	give him a verbal warning?
d.	threaten to fire him if he doesn't improve?
e.	fire him immediately?

Why?

## VOCABULARY

Select one of the following vocabulary acquisition activities.

**1. Vocabulary match:** Individually or in pairs/groups, match the words in column A (from the article) with the best choice in column B.

a.	<b>spoil</b>	q.	answer
b.	<b>attitude</b>	r.	useful
c.	<b>complain</b>	s.	outlook
d.	<b>mood</b>	t.	unpleasant
e.	<b>solve</b>	u.	protest
f.	<b>isolate</b>	v.	possible
g.	<b>effective</b>	w.	ruin
h.	<b>potential</b>	x.	poisonous
i.	<b>disagreeable</b>	y.	atmosphere
j.	<b>toxic</b>	z.	set apart

**2. Fill in the Blanks:** Fill in the blank with the correct word.

	<b>complaining</b>	<b>toxic</b>	<b>solve</b>	<b>effective</b>	<b>spoil</b>
	<b>potential</b>	<b>attitude</b>	<b>disagreeable</b>	<b>mood</b>	<b>isolated</b>
a.	"One bad apple" can quickly ( ) the atmosphere of the office.				
b.	An employee with a negative ( ) brings conflict and stress to the workplace.				
c.	A problem employee is always unhappy and ( ).				
d.	Several positive employees can't change the ( ) created by one negative teammate.				
e.	In order to ( ) the problem, companies need to deal with the negativity immediately.				
f.	He should be ( ) from other team members work-wise.				
g.	Ensure that ( ) hiring practices prevent the problem from entering the building.				
h.	Training managers to better determine ( ) hires helps, as do personality tests.				
i.	These can identify and remove emotionally unstable or ( ) people.				
j.	Once the problem returned, the ( ) atmosphere returned, too.				

**3. Define:** Define each word, correctly pronounce it, explain the meaning and/or usage, and offer an example sentence to the class.

a.	<b>spoil</b>	c.	<b>complain</b>	e.	<b>solve</b>	g.	<b>effective</b>	i.	<b>disagreeable</b>
b.	<b>attitude</b>	d.	<b>mood</b>	f.	<b>isolate</b>	h.	<b>potential</b>	j.	<b>toxic</b>

**WORD RECOGNITION**

1. **Word Search:** Find the target words (in bold). Time yourself, and see how many words you can find in three minutes. In five minutes. In ten minutes.

<b>complaining</b>	<b>toxic</b>	<b>solve</b>	<b>effective</b>	<b>spoil</b>
<b>potential</b>	<b>attitude</b>	<b>disagreeable</b>	<b>mood</b>	<b>isolated</b>
F K D J E U V A T V I C M K P D O Q F L I A T M I I O N F B S P R L B R B I O X O G U C G P M O R A I L T O D S Y F N M I Y P T E U G T I Q V P I M I L Y H K E I E U U Y H N O N Q L D E Z R N Z D K P I W S I W C E X I G W T E U A L O A J L M T N I A F C I L T L S V U M J A V D S M J P A A I Z N E D G L A Z I Y M K T L L T J B O K O I W D O G E N T L I T E K Z S N F C E L B I E E G A A O E I S O L V E D Z T Z Q X W L E S G T P E F F E C T I V E H				

2. **Target Word Pool:** Find the target words (in bold) with their exact match. Time yourself, and see how many words you can find in three minutes. In five minutes. In ten minutes.

<b>complaining</b>	<b>toxic</b>	<b>solve</b>	<b>effective</b>	<b>spoil</b>
<b>potential</b>	<b>attitude</b>	<b>disagreeable</b>	<b>mood</b>	<b>isolated</b>
isolating      spilled      isolate      toxically      moods solves      potentiality      complained      disagreement      solving spoil      attitudes      solve      attention      soil      complacent move      potential      spoiling      affection      toxic      potentate      ineffective toxicology      agreeable      solved      effect      intoxicated potent      complaint      isolation      moody      attitudinal attribute      toxics      mood      potentially      disagreeing disagree      attitude      disagreeable complain      solvent      effectively      complaining effective      insulated      mooch      spoiled      isolated				

**pre- or post-COMPREHENSION**

**1. Word Association:** Brainstorm words associated with today's topic for two minutes. Present to the class.

**2. Brainstorm Questions:** Brainstorm questions that you would like to ask about today's topic. Answer the questions without looking at the article.

**3. True or False?:** Guess (before the article) or answer (after the article) whether the sentence is true or false. If false, correct the sentence.

a.	A negative employee can harm the atmosphere of an office.	T / F
b.	Positive behavior is stronger than negative behavior.	T / F
c.	With one bad employee, it's best to have him work alone.	T / F
d.	It's impossible to prevent bad apples from becoming hired.	T / F
e.	According to the article, the bad atmosphere didn't disappear when the bad apple was away.	T / F

**4. Questions:** Answer the questions to check comprehension.

a.	What does a negative employee bring to the office?
b.	According to the article, what is a problem employee?
c.	What happens when an office has a negative employee?
d.	What are some possible solutions listed in the article?
e.	What happened in the example when the problem employee was sick for several days?

**5. Vocabulary:** In pairs/groups, remember how the words were used in today's article.

a.	<b>spoil</b>	c.	<b>complaining</b>	e.	<b>solve</b>	g.	<b>effective</b>	i.	<b>disagreeable</b>
b.	<b>attitude</b>	d.	<b>mood</b>	f.	<b>isolated</b>	h.	<b>potential</b>	j.	<b>toxic</b>

**6. Fragments:** Remember how the fragments were used, and complete the sentence from today's article.

a.	<b>There is an old saying:</b>
b.	<b>An employee with a negative attitude brings</b>
c.	<b>In order to solve the problem, companies</b>
d.	<b>Better yet, ensure that effective hiring practices</b>
e.	<b>However, once the problem returned,</b>

**post-COMPREHENSION**

- 1. **Vocabulary:** Circle any additional unknown words/phrases in the article. In pairs/groups, use your dictionaries to understand the meanings. Present to the class.
- 2. **Class Questions:** Read through the article once more, and write down any questions that you would like to discuss in pairs/groups or as a class. Discuss.
- 3. **Summarize:** Work with a partner to summarize the article in your own words.
- 4. **Discuss (part I):** Talk about the following questions in pairs/groups. Remember to support your answers!

a.	Did you like this article?
b.	What was your general impression after reading this article?
c.	Do you agree, that "one bad apple spoils the bunch?" Why/not?
d.	Have you ever worked with a negative person before? If yes, give details.
e.	Have you ever had a similar experience as the example? What happened when the negative person was away?
f.	What would you do if you worked with someone who drove you crazy with their negativity?
g.	If your office were "toxic," would you consider quitting? Why/not?
h.	What other solutions do you think might work with a bad apple? Why?
i.	Do you think that a bad apple usually knows he creates a negative atmosphere? Why/not?
j.	Do you agree or disagree? It should be legal to fire someone because they are unpleasant to work with?

- 5. **Discuss (part II):** Assume you were hiring people for a new position in your company. What three questions would you ask to determine if they were negative or positive people? Next, go around the class and ask your questions.

a.	
b.	
c.	

- 6. **Google Search:** Type "bad apple" into Google news and read additional articles on this topic. Discuss or write an essay about your findings.

## **STUDENT HANDOUT (the article)**

### **It Only Takes One Bad Apple**

There is an old saying: It only takes one bad apple to spoil the bunch. The idiom can be applied to every day life. A recent research report indicates that "one bad apple" can quickly spoil the atmosphere of the office. An employee with a negative attitude brings conflict and stress to the workplace. A problem employee usually doesn't do an equal amount of work, is always unhappy and complaining, and bullies others.

Negative behavior, the researchers found, is much stronger than positive behavior. As such, several positive employees can't change the mood created by one negative teammate. In fact, it often leads to a downward spiral, with more and more employees becoming unhappier and unhappier as time continues. The news comes out of the University of Washington.

In order to solve the problem, companies need to deal with the negativity immediately. One answer is to have the employee work alone as much as possible. In effect, he should be isolated from other team members work-wise. Better yet, ensure that effective hiring practices prevent the problem from entering the building. Training managers to better determine potential hires helps, as do personality tests. These can identify and remove emotionally unstable or disagreeable people.

Case in point: The wife of the report's lead author noticed that when a problem employee at her office was sick for several days, the atmosphere quickly changed. People began to help one another. They played classical music on their radios. Many went out for drinks after work. However, once the problem returned, the toxic atmosphere returned, too.

**Notes:**

**STUDENT HANDOUT (fill in the blank)**

Fill in the blank with the correct word.

saying	isolated	mood	behavior	complaining
effective	attitude	disagreeable	toxic	however
solve	unhappier	employee	spoil	potential

**It Only Takes One Bad Apple**

There is an old (a. \_\_\_\_\_): It only takes one bad apple to spoil the bunch. The idiom can be applied to every day life. A recent research report indicates that "one bad apple" can quickly (b. \_\_\_\_\_) the atmosphere of the office. An employee with a negative (c. \_\_\_\_\_) brings conflict and stress to the workplace. A problem employee usually doesn't do an equal amount of work, is always unhappy and (d. \_\_\_\_\_), and bullies others.

Negative (e. \_\_\_\_\_), the researchers found, is much stronger than positive behavior. As such, several positive employees can't change the (f. \_\_\_\_\_) created by one negative teammate. In fact, it often leads to a downward spiral, with more and more employees becoming (g. \_\_\_\_\_) and unhappier as time continues. The news comes out of the University of Washington.

In order to (h. \_\_\_\_\_) the problem, companies need to deal with the negativity immediately. One answer is to have the employee work alone as much as possible. In effect, he should be (i. \_\_\_\_\_) from other team members work-wise. Better yet, ensure that (j. \_\_\_\_\_) hiring practices prevent the problem from entering the building. Training managers to better determine (k. \_\_\_\_\_) hires helps, as do personality tests. These can identify and remove emotionally unstable or (l. \_\_\_\_\_) people.

Case in point: The wife of the report's lead author noticed that when a problem (m. \_\_\_\_\_) at her office was sick for several days, the atmosphere quickly changed. People began to help one another. They played classical music on their radios. Many went out for drinks after work. (n. \_\_\_\_\_), once the problem returned, the (o. \_\_\_\_\_) atmosphere returned, too.

## **STUDENT HANDOUT (extended listening)**

Listen and fill in the missing sentences. Compare answers with a partner, and then listen once more.

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Negative behavior, the researchers found, b) \_\_\_\_\_. As such, several positive employees can't change the mood created by one negative teammate. In fact, it often leads to a downward spiral, c) \_\_\_\_\_. The news comes out of the University of Washington.

d) \_\_\_\_\_, companies need to deal with the negativity immediately. One answer is to have the employee work alone as much as possible. In effect, he should be isolated from other team members work-wise. Better yet, ensure that effective hiring practices prevent the problem from entering the building. Training managers to better determine potential hires helps, as do personality tests. These can identify and remove emotionally unstable or disagreeable people.

Case in point: e) \_\_\_\_\_, the atmosphere quickly changed. People began to help one another. They played classical music on their radios. Many went out for drinks after work. However, once the problem returned, the toxic atmosphere returned, too.

**STUDENT HANDOUT (activities)**

## ANSWER KEY

### Vocabulary

#### 1. Vocabulary Match:

a.	r	f.	z
b.	s	g.	r
c.	u	h.	v
d.	y	i.	t
e.	q	j.	x

#### 2. Fill in the Blanks:

a.	spoil	f.	isolated
b.	attitude	g.	effective
c.	complaining	h.	potential
d.	mood	i.	disagreeable
e.	solve	j.	toxic

### pre- or post-Comprehension

#### 1. True or False:

a.	T
b.	F
c.	T
d.	F
e.	F

#### 2. Fragments:

a.	It only takes one bad apple to spoil the bunch.
b.	conflict and stress to the workplace.
c.	need to deal with the negativity immediately.
d.	prevent the problem from entering the building.
e.	the toxic atmosphere returned, too.

### Student Handout

#### 1. Fill in the Blanks

a.	saying	i.	isolated
b.	spoil	j.	effective
c.	attitude	k.	potential
d.	complaining	l.	disagreeable
e.	behavior	m.	employee
f.	mood	n.	However
g.	unhappier	o.	toxic
h.	solve		

#### 2. Extended Listening

a.	"one bad apple" can quickly spoil the atmosphere of the office
b.	is much stronger than positive behavior
c.	with more and more employees becoming unhappier and unhappier as time continues
d.	In order to solve the problem
e.	The wife of the report's lead author noticed that when a problem employee at her office was sick for several days