

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 may be vocabulary unfamiliar to the students.

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Notes:

STEP ONE

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.

STEP TWO

Discuss: 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...

STEP THREE

The Article: Read the article, and work with a partner to understand it. Lastly, summarize in your own words.

STEP FOUR

Discuss (part I): Talk about the following questions in pairs/groups. Remember to support your answers!

a.	What was your general impression after reading this article?
b.	Do you agree, that "one bad apple spoils the bunch?" Why/not?
c.	Have you ever worked with a negative person before? If yes, give details.
d.	Have you ever had a similar experience as the example? What happened when the negative person was away?
e.	What would you do if you worked with someone who drove you crazy with their negativity?
f.	If your office were "toxic," would you consider quitting? Why/not?

STEP FIVE

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.	