

► We All Have to Pull Our Weight

It's a common problem. It happens in most work settings. But that's not much consolation when your co-worker isn't doing his/her share of the work. As a result, you and your colleagues have to pick up the slack and add more to your workload. Teamwork is needed to get the job done.

Of course, you could just do the work yourself. You know the job would be done and be done well. But the real problem isn't getting taken care of and you're left feeling tired and resentful.

If this is really a sore point for you, here are some tips for handling the colleague who isn't pulling his/her own weight:

- Talk to your colleague in private. Don't sound accusing. Talk with sincere concern in your voice. Maybe there's a good reason why he/she isn't doing the job.
- Use "I" statements that won't put the other person on the defensive. You could say, "I really feel like you don't care about your co-workers when you're not here regularly. We all end up having to do two jobs!" It would be hard for the other person to deny your feelings. It gives him/her an opening to discuss the issue without feeling like he/she is being accused.
- Talk to the association about setting up some sort of recognition for employees who haven't missed a day of work for a year. The district might also be interested in such a plan.
- Continue to set a good example. Be on time; do your job well; be supportive. Your good work ethic might rub off on your colleague.
- Ask if your co-worker needs help getting a job done. Maybe he/she really doesn't know all the ins and outs of doing a particular job. Showing him/her a few tips might get him/her motivated.
- Offer words of encouragement when they do a good job. Saying things like, "Boy! Things run so much more smoothly when you're here!" or "We make a good team when we share the work!" can be a subtle way of letting your co-worker know that he/she is part of a team.
- If the situation is putting you and others in danger, you need to contact your association rep before you go to your supervisor. The association rep may be able to talk to your co-worker. If that doesn't help, use the association to help you work with your supervisor in trying to remedy the situation.