



Watch your mouth!

By Jeff “Chief” Urbaniak
COLUMNIST

DEAR CHIEF: It amazes me how much people at work curse and swear. It seems like they don't care who they offend or how unprofessional they sound. How can I bring this to their attention without being cursed at?

FED UP WITH POTTY MOUTHS



DEAR FED UP WITH POTTY MOUTHS: Some people swear so much they don't even realize they're doing it. In some settings, at work or otherwise, I'd cringe when people swore or cursed. I've had many conversations with people over the years about their swearing habits at work. Fortunately, I was able to obtain their cooperation but I know other leaders had a more difficult time with this topic. I wholeheartedly recommend anyone who works in a professional setting to not curse at work, regardless of the occasion.

Most people swear at times. It doesn't mean they're bad people; however, it is important to be conscientious about it and emotionally intelligent enough to know when to do it and when not to do it. People can say what they want when they go home or when they get in their car but they should never swear at work (and I hope they don't swear in front of children). Swearing may offend coworkers, customers, clients, the boss, or people in the general public. And

if it offends someone, the swearer's reputation, as well as the reputation of their company or organization, will become tainted in the minds of those offended. Even if some people aren't offended by it, they may still formulate negative opinions about the maturity of the individual doing the swearing.

In certain fields of work, the climate is conducive for swearing or cursing because it is accepted by or entertaining for those who participate in it. Ravid sports fans do it during emotionally-charged moments. Almost every vehicle driver in America has probably sworn at another driver on the road. And without question, someone will inevitably swear when they stub their toe against a solid object. There are many other scenarios where swearing and cursing are generally accepted, welcomed or encouraged; however, in the majority of life's settings, a bad mouth will usually draw bad conclusions or opinions about the person blurting out the bad words.

Here's my take about swearing or cursing: It's like a minefield. Why bother trying to tip-toe around deciding when it's okay to do it or when it's not appropriate or who you will offend or not offend? It's much easier to not bother with it. Just don't do it.

If you, on the otherhand, are offended by others' swearing and cursing, simply tell them you're offended. Sometimes people just need to know their potty mouth bothers someone and they'll

stop. If that doesn't work, ask your boss or leader to create a policy to prevent or stop it. When I attended a military leadership academy several years ago, we had to drop a dollar in a coffee collection jar any time we used a curse word during the course. After students got tired of pulling money out of their wallets, they began to think before they spoke and swearing practically became extinct.

If none of these tactics work, you'll have to learn to not let someone's swearing impact your feelings. If it's too difficult for you to do this then you may have to consider the option of looking for another place to work where the organizational climate is different. Hopefully you work at a place where people will react in a positive manner to your request and the swearing and cursing stops.



Are you someone striving to achieve your maximum potential, develop your leadership and/or management skills, enhance your professional development or self-improvement efforts, or improve your professional relationships? If so, then get advice from a proven leader and mentor. Jeff Urbaniak is a retired Air Force Chief and current Leadership Consultant with over 30 years of leadership and management experience. For an opportunity to have your issue or concern addressed in the Dear Chief column, go to www.DearChiefAdvice.com and submit your comments or them email to Jeff@DearChiefAdvice.com.