

Your exhaustion might not be due to your tasks or long hours. It may be the actions of your colleagues.

Jon Gordon, author of *Soup: A Recipe to Nourish Your Team and Culture*, said, “While ‘work’ is a convenient scapegoat, the real culprit is often the negativity of the people you work with — their constant complaining, and the pessimistic culture that is the norm in a lot of workplaces.”

Gordon coined the term “drainer” to describe “people who suck the life and energy right out of you.” Here are his top 12 draining behaviors, with tips for how to change for the better:

1. The energy vampire. Gordon calls people who are never happy, rarely supportive and constantly nay-saying suggestions “energy vampires.”

What to do: Respond constructively when someone offers an idea. Even if you think suggestions are off the mark, hear them out. Let employees and co-workers know that when they bring ideas, they’ll be received with respect. Insist that others do the same. Negativity squelches creativity and initiative, but an encouraging attitude keeps creative juices flowing.

2. The out-of-control complain train. It’s a well-known phenomenon: One person’s complaint resonates with someone else, who adds grievances, prompting another to throw in her two negative cents and so on. Soon everyone is complaining, and any work that gets done is marred by a bad attitude.

What to do: Push for solutions. If a conversation heads for Complaint Central, ask the complainers how they would improve things. Turn employees from problem-sharers to problem-solvers.

3. The vicious voicemail (or e-mail). These critiques often seem more vehement than they actually are. Any communication sent electronically can last forever, a constant reminder of supposed shortcomings.

What to do: If you need to talk through a conflict, do it in person if at all possible. You’ll be able to ensure your words and tone aren’t misinterpreted, and you’ll be able to immediately have a constructive dialogue. By talking about ways to improve, you can end the conversation on a positive and encouraging note.

4. The loaded Monday morning inbox. If you’re getting a jumpstart on the workweek, it can be tempting to dish out details and to-dos as you think of them. But coming in to a mountain of e-mail on Monday is draining and makes folks feel like they’re fighting an uphill battle from the start.

What to do: Flag urgent messages so your teammates know which to tackle first. Combine as many tasks and questions as you can into one document. If you do fire off a multitude of messages in a moment of panic, a quick note acknowledging the unusual volume can change everything, Gordon said.

5. The busy bee bamboozle. Some workers confuse activity with progress. They seem busy but don't meet deadlines or accomplish much. When teams are being formed, people hope this type isn't assigned to theirs.

What to do: Set goals and hold yourself and others accountable for results. Goals should be things that matter and that are visible and valuable to your team. Make sure goals are crystal clear — they'll be easier to accomplish.

6. The low-performer look-away. Low performers drag the rest of the team down. They create resentment and generate more work for others. If you allow them to linger, your best employees will move to more productive environments.

What to do: Don't tolerate low performance. Hold everyone accountable for meeting goals and adhering to the same performance standards. If one person consistently misses the bar, take swift action. Let employees know you value their hard work and will not allow others to do less and get away with it.

7. The unclear communiqué. Poor communication can lead to serious mistakes and missed opportunities. When employees, co-workers or supervisors have to spend time pursuing clarification, productivity falls and creativity is stifled.

What to do: Make sure the right people are in the know. For example, if a client prefers to be contacted only by e-mail, tell all the appropriate people. You'll set your team up for success and ensure clients get the service they deserve. Be clear about directions and expectations.

8. The disorganization drag-down. Disorganization impedes productivity. Accidents happen, but not being able to find a report for the third meeting in a row sets a bad example, and it depletes others of the energy they could be putting toward other work.

What to do: Keep up with tasks and responsibilities. If you can't put your hands on what you need, don't automatically ask others for help. Take a few minutes to try finding it on your own. Better yet, develop better processes than the ones you're using (or not using) now. If someone in your office has a particular knack for organization, ask her for tips to help you.

9. The hasty plate clear-off. There's a lot to do, and you understandably want to get your tasks done so you don't hold up others. But doing assignments quickly to get them off your plate can mean piling the work on someone else. Rushing is likely to cause mistakes, which isn't fair to the person who gets the assignment next.

What to do: Get focused and take the time to do your best work the first time. Pay attention to details, double-check your work and ensure you followed the proper guidelines.

10. The chronic deadline dodge. Unmet deadlines throw everything and everyone off-track. Unexpected obstacles can prevent meeting deadlines, but those instances should be few and far between. Chronically missing deadlines is a sign that either people aren't giving it their all or they're truly overburdened. Either way, productivity suffers.

What to do: Set reasonable, clear deadlines, and hold everyone accountable. Unrealistic deadlines set folks up for failure.

11. The unattainable atta-boy or atta-girl. It's easy to get so caught up in what's ahead that you forget to acknowledge what's happening now. When responsibilities give you to-do tunnel vision, you might skimp on the "job-well-dones." That can discourage employees, especially if you ask about another unmet goal or push more work at them to try and make up for losses in other areas.

What to do: Express appreciation when appropriate. Employees don't need a pat on the back and a round of applause at every turn, but they do need to know that you can be satisfied. If employees feel no amount of hard work or long hours will ever garner approval, their energy and motivation will be zapped.

12. The blame game. Pointing fingers is a huge mistake. If others think you don't shoulder your share of blame or are unapproachable when it comes to constructive criticism, they'll start to shut down toward you.

What to do: Accept responsibility gracefully and humbly. Be open to suggestions and criticism. Nobody likes to be the one at fault, but owning up to mistakes, and learning from them are part of working together and being successful.