



BATHROOM BREAKS

Trips to restroom restricted

Boss should update policy on workers taking care of biological needs

By Marie G. McIntyre, Ph.D. McClatchy-Tribune News Service

Q

: My boss just told me that I can only go to the bathroom during my break. He says that I'm supposed to be on the phone all day and must not leave my station. If I need to use the restroom, I have to wait until break time.

This may be illegal, but I'll be fired if I complain. Although firing me also might be illegal, this company has gotten away with it before. I can't afford to lose my job, so what do I do?

A: What century is your boss living in? Even if you were trotting to the bathroom four times an hour, his draconian policy is the wrong solution. This sounds like some kind of sweatshop, so I hope you're looking for a more enlightened place to work.

If you can locate any sane people in human resources or upper management, consider talking to one of them. Or, if that seems too risky, just tell your tyrannical boss that you will only leave your desk for pressing biological reasons. Then keep unscheduled restroom trips as short as possible.

Q: My new job has been very disappointing. I was hired to write communication materials and help support the department, but I seem to have become my boss's personal assistant.

I don't mind ordering supplies or getting the mail, but now I'm expected to tidy up my manager's office and turn on her computer in the morning. Although I try to stay positive and productive, not using my abilities is extremely frustrating.

Several weeks ago, I told my boss that I would like more projects and writing assignments, both of which are in my job description. She agreed, but has given me only two brief writing tasks. When I ask about projects, I get random busy work.

I recently interviewed for a job where I can use my skills, but I feel guilty about leaving after only three months. If I get an offer, should I take it?

A: A new job is like a birthday present. Once you rip off the pretty packaging, the gift may turn out to be a wonderful surprise or a complete disappointment. The reality is hard to see from the outside. For that reason, new hires often experience unmet expectations.

Such misunderstandings can easily arise during the hiring process, because interviewers naturally emphasize the positive aspects of a position. Eager applicants are willing believers, so they fail to ask detailed questions.

You were told that this job involved writing communication materials and supporting the department. But your manager apparently wants 80 percent support and 20 percent writing, while you want the reverse. So I doubt you'll ever be happy there.

If you are offered a more suitable position, don't feel guilty about leaving. Just be sure to scrutinize the new job carefully, because another short stay would turn you into a job-hopper.

Marie G. McIntyre is a workplace coach and the author of "Secrets to Winning at Office Politics." Send in questions and get free coaching tips at www.yourofficecoach.com.