

# Changing Stations: One reader shares workspace with a bigot. What should he do?

*Dear C and Dr. B;*

*I work on an assembly line. It's a hard, brainless job but I believe in the "whistle while you work philosophy." Why be miserable, right? But not everyone there shares my thinking. George, the guy next to me, is miserable. And he seems to want to spread his misery to everyone around him. He is downright hateful, constantly saying awful demeaning things. The crap that comes out of his mouth is racist and bigoted, with no respect for anyone. He complains all night long. I try to ignore him, but it is really wearing, day after day. It's hard to whistle when the guy next you seethes and fumes and whines and grumbles. What can I say to this guy to get him to ease off?*

*Eric Burdened*

**Dr. B says:** People are artists and words are the paint they use. Unfortunately, you have to live in the world you paint. This guy is basically just thinking out loud, but the picture he paints is bleak and desolate. There is probably not much you can say to him without making things worse. Possibly subtle manipulation could have an effect - like wearing a T shirt that says: "Words are the paint and you have to live in the world you create with them," or "Negativity is like a black hole sucking out all the light around you." Or perhaps, "You might not be able to control your world but you can control your reaction to it"

You can also ask the manager to change your station. You can wear ear plugs or get a note from your doctor saying you need to wear earbuds to help your focus, if it wouldn't endanger you to have music on.

**C says:** Are you trying to get poor Eric killed, Dr. B? Nothing enrages an already angry guy like smug, passive digs from someone cheerful. Honestly, even I would want to smack someone who did that. It implies that you know better, and the other person is an ignorant asshole who needs to learn from someone more enlightened.

My recommendation to Eric? Just get the hell out of Dodge. There are plenty of hard brainless jobs out there, especially now, and if you happen to be planted next to some guy who is poisoning the very air you breathe with negativity, it is up to you to get to a better place. You are NOT going to change him.

If your boss is a sympathetic type, you can bring up this problem to him, but I've seen this backfire. I once complained about a fellow worker who chain smoked right next to me - this was before they passed laws against it. The person found out and actually slashed one of my tires. If this dude discovers you ratted him out, you will become a target for the seething anger he is yearning to spew.

In his book *The Fourth Way*, P.D. Ouspensky had the right idea. He believed that we were all human machines of a certain type, and it is wise to figure out who is what. He said, "If you know someone is a Hitting Machine, and you go near him and get hit ... well, what did you expect? He's a Hitting Machine!"

So - the guy next to you is a Racist Bigoted Spewing Machine. If he keeps spewing all over you ... well, what did you expect? Use your brain, dude!

*You can visit Dr. B's blog at [drbrilliantcliche.wordpress.com](http://drbrilliantcliche.wordpress.com)*