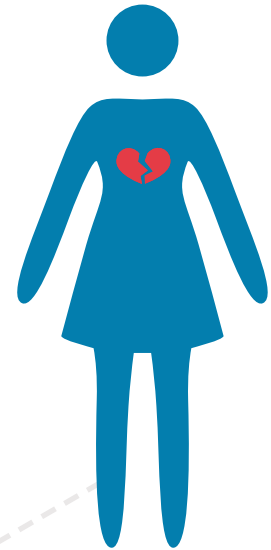


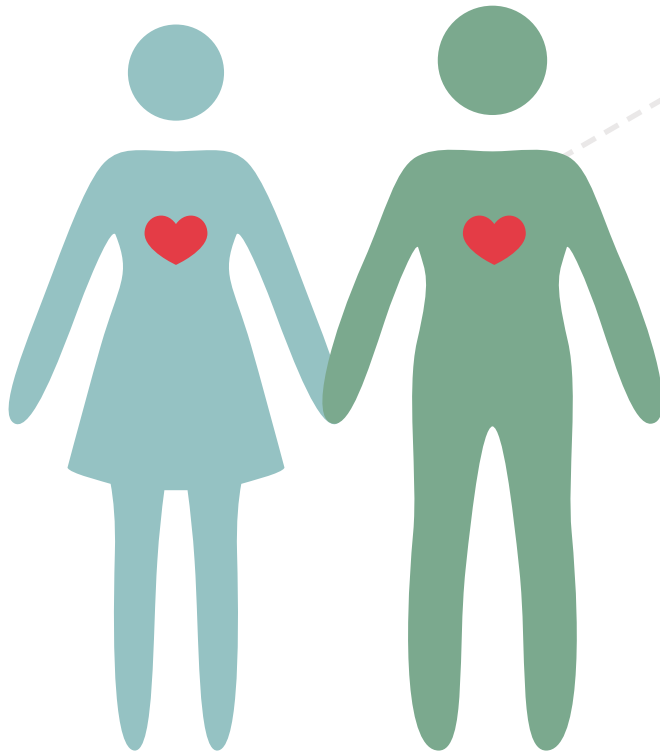
# SETTING BOUNDARIES



LORRIE SLATER,  
LPC-MHSP, HENEGAR  
CBI COUNSELING CENTER

Do you feel your work spouse relationship may be veering off course? Lorrie Slater, a licensed professional counselor with Henegar CBI Counseling Center, suggests setting boundaries in the workplace.

According to Slater, having a work spouse is a slippery slope, and one that you should be open with your real life partner about. If you recognize a work spouse relationship, it is important to talk to both that person and your real life spouse. “Secrets gain power when we don’t share them, so keeping that clandestine relationship from your spouse will push you down that slippery slope a little bit faster,” Slater says. If there is someone at work that you would consider a work spouse, Slater suggests three ways to set boundaries to keep the relationship positive and healthy.



1

**N**ever talk to your work spouse about your real life spouse in a negative way. Don’t discuss arguments or disagreements that you have at home, and don’t let your work spouse discuss these things with you either. Keep conversation light and positive that concerns your home life. At the end of the day, you’re there to work and not necessarily to make friends.

2

**I**f your work spouse talks negatively about his or her real life spouse, bring up some of the positive things you know about their relationship. If that doesn’t divert the conversation, nicely mention that they may need a marriage counselor.

3

**B**e cautious about after-work outings. Invite your real life spouses or other people from work and have more than two people in the car on the way to your destination. And always be aware of your real life spouse. How would it affect your relationship if they heard or saw you?

*If you think you may have a work spouse relationship that is veering off course, create distance by inviting other co-workers to lunch, or partnering with someone else on a new project. “If you hurt your co-worker’s feelings, that’s too bad, but if that relationship seeps into your home life, the effects on your husband and kids can last forever,” Slater says. “Hold tight to your boundaries and remember your priorities. Awkwardness at work is better than an empty house every night.”*