

Work bugging her; scary movie keeps viewer awake nights

Dear Dr. Brothers: You might say my work is bugging me. Or rather, I think I am being "bugged" at work. Don't laugh; I really think that my employer — or rather, one of my supervisors — has put me in an area where she can observe me working and doing other things that lead me to believe that she could be spying on me.

I think there is a camera hidden in the bathroom; at least, I always get this creepy feeling of being watched when I go in there. And I sometimes think this supervisor pulls the worst assignments just for me.

Should I say something to her? I'm really afraid of retaliation, so I am sort of paralyzed.

— L.G.

Dear L.G.: You describe your situation very well — especially the retaliation part. I am not sure where the snoopy supervisor leaves off and a possible incipient case of paranoia begins. That is for you to try to analyze.

Do your fears have any grounding in reality, other than just a feeling? I'm sure spying in the bathroom is not legally permitted, besides just being sleazy. Why would you be spied on? I would be very sure before I made any accusations, if I were you.

It sounds to me as though you might be very stressed out and in need of a good reality check. If you haven't previously been friendly toward your co-workers, try to find two or three you can trust, and see if they'd like to comment on some of the goings-on you are concerned about.

Use this as a listening session, and try to figure out what is really going on there.

I think in very short order you will know if it is likely that you are being spied on. If you are, you and your colleagues should go straight to your human-resources department, or your boss's boss, and complain.

But assuming you aren't, I urge you to get a mental-health evaluation.

Suspicion and paranoia are natural up to a point, but if they start interfering with our enjoyment of life, they need to go away. Poof!

Dear Dr. Brothers: I am a life-long addict of horror movies, scary



Dr. Joyce Brothers

● Ask Dr. Brothers

fantasy fiction and all things frightening.

When I go out with my friends, I'm the only one who wants to see a film-festival version of "The Mummy," while they are all into date movies or comedies.

Is there something wrong with liking to be scared to death (temporarily)?

I don't see any ill effects, except that the night after I see a movie, I often have nightmares or have trouble falling asleep. Is there anything wrong or unhealthy about my tastes?

— A.B.

Dear A.B.: Scary movies are meant to thrill and excite the emotions to the point that if they keep you awake at night, they have certainly done their job.

Most people can handle an occasional fright fest without ill effect, but if you are particularly sensitive, you might find that the feelings these horror movies bring out in you are more unpleasant than thrilling.

In that case, I would urge you to cut down on your consumption of scary flicks and books, and perhaps switch to matinees. Several hours of "real life" before going to bed might help clear those frightening images from your psyche.

If you really like to be frightened by what you read and see but are worried about the side effects, you might try looking at the material from a different viewpoint — that of a scholar or expert. Write some reviews of movies you like and see if you can get them published.

Analyze a particular director or author's style and become well-versed in the genre. Bone up on the latest special effects that make the movies scary.

By seeing these films in a new and more analytical way, you might have more mastery over the emotions they arouse. And try balancing them with light-hearted fare as well.

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