

Nothing gets me more than going into the office kitchen only to find the counter littered with dirty teaspoons and coffee puddles, the sink piled high like the leaning tower of Pisa with dirty plates, and warm milk left on the side a minute short of going sour. This is disgusting and if you disagree, it either means you're a lazy-good-for-nothing and never make the tea, or you're a slob.

I need to know something. Why is it that when we enter the office kitchen we shed our Dr Jekyll personas and become Mr Hyde? I'm saying 'we' but I am not actually including myself as I am a saint and clean up after myself. Seriously, I want to know and beg you to write in with the answer to one simple question: 'Why don't you clear up after yourself in the office kitchen?' You can claim you do, which would be great (but not believable!) or you could write in anonymously and tell us the truth – which would be much more interesting!

If we knew more about the psychology of why people treat their office kitchen differently to their home one, it would no doubt help us ease this area of corporate life. But, in the absence of this, I'd like to make a few suggestions:

**i)** adopt a kitchen monitor policy. Take it in turns to wash up at the end of the day (wouldn't it be lovely if this were shared among the team but somehow I fear it will fall on the same old shoulders) if you have a policy, let us know!

**ii)** for every day the kitchen is left in a state, management take £10 off the Christmas party fund (might only work in December).

**iii)** put up threatening signs all around the kitchen with pictures of public floggings.

**iv)** Get a coffee/tea/water machine with disposable cups.

**v)** get a dishwasher (see 'did you know?').

**vi)** my favourite and the ONLY solution – get a cleaner. If you can't afford one, threaten to reduce everyone's salaries to pay for them (ooh!).

#### DID YOU KNOW?

**1)** The average office sponge carries so many germs that anything cleaned with it is often more contaminated than before it was 'cleaned'.

**2)** These bacteria may not be enough to make a healthy person sick but would certainly send a run-down one to the doctor's (and there are plenty of those in an office).

**3)** Most people who wash out their mugs only give them a quick rinse – see points 1 and 2 above. ■

**Send your answers in to:**  
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**are bold enough, email**  
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# KITCHEN CATASTROPHES

I'm not fussy. I just don't want to get sick from a cup of coffee.

BY CLAUDIA COLLINGBOURNE

