

## Office sharing during the pandemic

Day One, Week Four: the co-inhabitants have reached an uneasy détente. The male reports to his desk and settles into work; the female generally arrives a few minutes later (ok, 15-20-ish) and does the same. They compare schedules to determine if there will be Zoom or conference call conflicts, and then decide who takes priority and who can reschedule a meeting. A distance of roughly seven feet separates them, and at times the chasm seems much smaller. Headsets and earbuds have proved helpful for quiet listening but don't solve the conversation problem. The click-clacking of computer keyboards resonates in the room. The large old dog walks in periodically, sighs deeply, and very loudly plops down. He stays a few minutes, sometimes 30, and removes himself to his chair in front of the living room window. From there, he will alert the inhabitants to any Amazon, UPS, USPS or Fed Ex delivery. Today the female notes that the male is sporting an unshaven look; has he abandoned all work-from-home grooming etiquette?? Sacré bleu! He also leaves the room and returns with a bag of unshelled peanuts. No—is he, is he going to crack the peanuts? While the female continues working, he does indeed start to crack peanut shells, One By Annoying One. This will have to be resolved! Why, she has ZERO annoying work habits (he assures her later that she does, in fact, have one or two)! They continue working with few interruptions unless a dependent pokes their head in the door to ask a question or note a departure. Almost daily now, they will take note of a neighbor couple or two strolling by on their regular constitutional; the office is on the front of the house, affording a lovely Gladys-Kravitz-would-approve area for observing what's going on in their quiet cul de sac. Around 4:30 or so every day, the elderly inhabitant of the home makes her presence known; she stays well away from the other inhabitants during the day. We hear her descend the stairs and head to the kitchen. Soon, we know, we will be asked “what are you thinking for dinner?” and we will know that the workday is coming to an end. Tomorrow, the female silently hopes, perhaps the male will shave.