



15 signs that people haven't grown up at work and 8 ways to make them grow up or go!



Robert J Schout . President, PowerSkills Training & Development. 15 Feb 2025

I learned a long time ago that everyone chronologically ages but not everyone grows up.

Some people want to be called and treated like a ‘professional’ but they don’t want to act like a ‘professional’. They have some wildly distorted view or definition of what the term ‘professional’ means. Somehow, from someone, they received a false impression about work. They still hold on to an impression that a work environment is similar to a home environment or an academic environment in which their social, emotional and psychological *development* was meant to be taken into consideration. That is a false assumption.

The proper assumption is that a person’s social, emotional and psychological development is, to a very large extent, formed by the time they enter the work world. It is not the responsibility of managers, colleagues, or employees to coddle and tolerate immature behaviors; behaviors that appeared in elementary school through high school years. The workplace is not filled with counselors, teachers, therapists, coaches, friends or parents that may have simply empathized with upsets, overlooked eye-rolling and shoulder-shrugging, or tolerated gossip because it was happening in the school yard or hallway.

Some people at work have aged into adulthood and entered the workforce – perhaps for decades – but they have not grown up. They still, unfortunately and falsely believe that they should get away with school-age behaviors.

15 immature behaviors that show up at work.

A person believing that they:

1. should not have to do things that make them uncomfortable
2. should have the right to contribute to every decision or be privy to every decision-making process
3. should be able to make every decisions that affects their work
4. should be able to whine about things until they get their way or be able to end-runs around bosses to, answer-shop or complain until they get their way
5. should be able to engage in constant debate in attempts to prove just how misguided and wrong or out of touch some people are without having the perspective other people have
6. should not have to learn things that they do not want, or think they need to, learn
7. should be able to pout, look away, not respond or glare at a supervisor or colleague when they are upset
8. should be able to vent in the way that suits them...slam doors, scream, storm out of meetings
9. should be able to gossip, spread rumors, snicker passive-aggressively in front of others, spread innuendo, whittle away at other people's reputations, and tear at the credibility of others if they don't like them or don't agree with them
10. should be able to say whatever they want, however they want to say it, to a boss or a colleague while reserving the right to be aggrieved if anyone says something to them in a way that they consider disrespectful
11. should be able to define all definitions of language and engagement and hold others to terms they are comfortable with
12. should not have to listen to or accept feedback if it is uncomfortable
13. should be rewarded or awarded for merely doing the job they agreed to do because they were nice and they smiled while doing it
14. should be able to have their own cliques at work and screen people in and out and judge others
15. should be able to abstain from oversight and engagement simply because of tenure, experience, or personal preferences

Do any of these behaviors resonate with what you see at your place of work?

To be *mature* literally means to be fully grown; to have reached an advanced stage in a process.

- To be emotionally mature it means to have fully grown emotionally: being able to manage one's emotions, understand and empathize with the emotions of others, not take things personally, understand what is motivating and triggering one's own emotions instead of blaming them on situations or other people's actions.
- To be socially and relationally mature means to have fully grown socially and in relationship interactions: to be trusting and trust-worthy with one's behaviors, words and actions; to be able to modulate one's styles of personality, communication, listening to adapt to others and to situations; to engage in mutual support and mutual agreements so that social interactions are fair to all and not one-sided.
- To be professionally mature means to have fully grown professionally: to be proficient with a position's responsibilities, knowledge, skills, competencies; to be proficient with inter-personal servant leadership since one interacts with stakeholders at work and thus must team, communicate, problem-solve, negotiate, learn, accept feedback, be

accountable; be proficient with self-management at work so one can manage one's own temperament, attitude, emotions, stress, work-life, time, etc.

In today's places of work

In today's workplace people get hired and promoted and are allowed to work and progress, all without needing to be mature. Organizational leaders and true professionals, then, wonder why there are fractures in the workplace culture, on teams, and in trust, between employees and managers. Because immaturity is allowed.

Managers will say, "*we can't be their parents or counselors.*" This is true. However, there are things manager can do.

8 things managers can do. Managers can:

1. establish baseline standards for behaviors, attitudinal displays, common interpersonal/internal customer skills to be demonstrated, and common knowledge that will be developed among all professionals.
2. create communities of practice among supervisors and managers to both model mature behaviors and to react, in common form, to immature behaviors across all teams, at all times.
3. set expectations for all transactions between employees and between employees and managers so that the transactions – in person, on the phone, in email, on video – demonstrable of values-in-action (values that the team or organization has agreed to)
4. require that every person who participates in any training or development – seminar, coaching, mentoring, shadowing experience – apply the lessons learned and transfer them to colleagues so that a culture of caring and sharing is instituted
5. publicly recognize displays of mature behaviors, with simple gratitude, without shaming immature behaviors
6. use their managerial authority and practices to engage in on-the-spot feedback to address and reinforce professional practices not just outputs and outcomes
7. stop meetings in their tracks to deal with the process of communication, transactions and behaviors
8. develop a simple mantra that they and an entire team uses: "*is this how a true professional- or how mature professionals - relate or address issues?*"

This type of mantra may trigger extreme discomfort in people who have not grown up. Just as it would a teenager. The person(s) may lash out aggressively or passive aggressively. But by using the mantra over and over:

- The behaviors are named
- The mature people reclaim the authority over the culture and actions of immaturity
- The mature professionals set or reinforce new standards
- The immature people are put on notice that their behaviors are seen, are contrary to professional norms, and must change.

The good news is that these steps and strategies work over time, with consistency and back-up by all stakeholders (i.e., HR, team members, senior leaders). Growing pains can make daily life uncomfortable, but immature behaviors will toxify a culture in the long run. Short term discomfort is worth the long-term gain when people grow up at work...or leave.

Robert Schout is President of PowerSkills Training & Development Inc. and Schout It Out LLC. His companies provide training, consulting and coaching to hundreds of businesses and government agencies each year. Robert is soon-to-be the author of (2) books for business professionals: Performance Management@Work and Leading and Managing Up@Work. See preview chapters and get more information about our professional development seminars at www.powerskillsinternational.com.

Robert is also the author of (2) poetry books and (4) illustrated children's books. More information can be found at www.schoutitout.com