

## Stupid Co-Worker

When I was 16, I was in a play. I was one of the background statues, but I was technically still in the play. It was supposed to be funny and when I say supposed to be funny, I mean supposed to be but it was not. It was the type of play that had dry, sarcastic humor. Humor that some people, depending on who you are, are supposed to get but most people do not. So when I was 13, I thought it was funny. Since we view a behavior as correct in a given situation to the degree that we see others performing it, we had to sort of “make” people laugh. But in order to get most of the people in the audience to laugh, they used **laugh tracks**. Don’t get me wrong, laugh tracks are silly. But they definitely helped. There were scenes that were not that funny, to me anyways. But for some reason, when the director played the laugh track, the entire audience started cracking up. **Social proof**, a problem when our responses are mindless and purely reflexive, was a big part into getting the audience to laugh the way they did. It still shocks me to this day that the audience laughed at the scenes they did. Thank goodness for those laugh tracks.

That same year when I was 16, I worked at a place called Blue sky. It was an indoor soccer facility in Keller, TX. I was only a referee there but I did other things as well. I would help at the concession stands, heat press numbers on the back of teams jerseys, and help sell the products that the store owned. Now don’t get me wrong, the items were good. But they never said anything about the quality of the soccer ball or the quality of the cleats, absolutely no **product description**. All that was written on the outside of the soccer ball was, #1 best seller ball. Nothing about how smooth one can kick it, nothing about what the ball was made out of. Just that it was our #1 sell we had of that specific ball. As well as our soccer cleats we sell. Blue sky has a rule that people can only wear indoor cleats on the field. So, we sold specific indoor cleats that players can purchase before their game. Absolutely nothing was said about the quality of the cleats. All that was written on the package they were in was “these cleats are the best cleats for indoor soccer!” Nothing about which ones are most comfortable or if they form to your feet or not. But since everyone else was buying them, people thought that those were the best to buy. When people are uncertain how to act, people are likely to look to accept the actions of others as correct, and so does everyone else.

A few years later, still working for Blue Sky, I had a co-worker. He was the type of co-worker that always did bad stuff but never really got in trouble for them. He would make others take the blame and he would just walk away as if nothing ever happened. That was until one day he used the **bystander effect**. He was mopping up the dirty floor, since we were getting ready to close and he, of course, forgot to put the wet floor sign up. A little boy, around 5 years old was running with his soccer ball and slipped from the water. He fell so hard that his head has busted open with blood flowing everywhere. Everyone stood around with a **decreased personal responsibility** and asked if the little boy was okay and how he was doing. A lady shouted “someone call 911!” For a split second, I looked around and everyone was looking at each other. They were looking at each other in a way were they didn’t know who should call. Social proof is more influential under **uncertainty**. They all figured someone would do it, but no one was. The **bystander effect**, the assumption that someone else will take necessary action, but no one did. If the little boy slipped and my co-worker was the only one to see it. He would have felt more of a responsibility to call the police and would have done it right away. Rather than everyone looking at each other wondering who was going to call the police and who was going to take care of the boy and make sure he was alright. In the end, the ambulance had come, finally someone called,

and picked up the little boy, took him to the hospital. Eleven staples later, the boy was up and running again. Hopefully not when the floor is slippery.