

## Hallway Survival

It's regrettable that employee manuals say nothing about hallway etiquette, for office hallway manners are in dire need of reform. Office hallways are a jungle. Well, not exactly. There are differences. For one thing, a jungle doesn't have nearly as many baboons. Do I sound bitter? I am! Here are a few survival tips, drawn from hard personal experience.

1. Avoid hallways whenever possible. Stay put. Eat bag lunches in your cube. If you're a government worker, you can skip meetings by feigning sleep and your fellow workers will respect this. Learn to hold it until you get home. Bedpans, however, are not acceptable.

2. If you must venture out, bide your time until someone wider than you happens by (this shouldn't take long if you work for the government) and let this person run interference. Be sure to tip.

3. Those half-dome ceiling mirrors are deceptive and worse than useless. On one occasion, I was so distracted by my own image in the mirror and not looking where I was going, that I walked right into myself. I wasn't hurt, but you can imagine what a shock it was.

4. Avoid peak traffic periods. Know the office feeding and watering habits. Someone once suggested that during rush periods a pitching machine may be set up at one end of the hallway – but I mention this idea only to dismiss it as visionary. If you're a government worker, keep in mind that people leave ten minutes early and that a couple extra minutes get added onto lunch periods, front and back, with each passing year.

5. Employees walking three abreast (for government workers, the physical equivalent would be two abreast) have the mob mentality. Best to yield. If you must pass, create a diversion by pointing to the right and shouting, 'Potluck!'

6. According to a recent study, on an average workday, 20% more people enter office restrooms than exit. There is something vaguely sinister about this.

7. Corners are where we witness human nature at its basest. From corner to coroner is but a short step. Never make right turns. Convert them into left turns by proceeding forward and U-turning.

8. U-turns can hurt you too.

9. With people who won't keep to the right, avoid eye contact and anything else that may be interpreted as confrontational. A good strategy is to feign vertigo. Walk erratically. Nine times out of ten, people will yield. But what about the ten percent who won't give ground? If collision seems inevitable, drop a pencil and at the last moment bend over to pick it up. As the person stumbles over you, quickly stand up to apologize, thus causing him to flip over onto his back. This takes timing. Practice on your family.

These rules may not apply to everyone. Come to think of it, I don't know of anyone else who goes through hallways as I do, dodging, sidling and zigzagging (except, perhaps, those who are trying to get out of my way). I never see other people getting a shoulder bumped or sitting on the floor and refusing to get up. Maybe it's just me.

Never mind about the whole thing.