

She comes from a bad family.

Sharon, a recent hire, has a good record and is doing a good job. She works hard and tries to please everyone. Some of her colleagues, including Debra, don't like her, and Debra finds out that Sharon's family of origin does not have a good reputation. Her father spent time in jail and her sister did also. Debra broadcasts the negative information about Sharon's family and says that Sharon has "bad blood" and is "no good". Debra tells you this also, and seems to feel that she is obligated to tell you. You wonder if Debra's dislike of Sharon influences her actions.

1. How do you assess and think about the situation? Is simply *disliking* someone a justifiable reason for discriminating against them at the *professional* level?

2. What do you think about Debra? What do you tell her? Should you question the basis for her position? What do you think about her using the phrases "bad blood" and "no good"?

3. What about the genetics of behavior? Do our genes influence our behavior? Do they "influence" or do they "determine" our behavior. Do our parents influence or determine our behavior? This may require some research. Should Sharon be concerned about her future behavior?

A justifiable and reasonable position is that genetics do influence our behavior, but do not totally determine it. In drug addiction, for example, biological factors account for only about 50% of the variance in becoming a drug addict. Most people with genetic vulnerabilities do not become addicts, although they would be wise to be careful. Genetics are an influence but not a life sentence. Also, new behavior can influence gene expression – you may want to research epigenetics.

4. How should colleagues handle situations such as these?