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## Conquer your male frenemies

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Conquer your male frenemies (Thinkstock photos/Getty Images)

*I had a friend in high school -- let's call him Dean. One-on-one, Dean and I had great times; we traded stories, shared adventures, confided in each other.*

But in a group, Dean changed. He would dismiss me offhandedly, make jokes at my expense, sometimes even physically shove me aside (not roughly, but still).

Looking back, I see now that Dean was a classic "frenemy" -- he wore the mask of a friend, but was really working against me. The term used to be confined to women, but as my frenemy Dean shows, the concept can apply equally well to men.

**Signs of a male frenemy:** Just as men and women behave differently, male frenemies act a little differently from the female variety. For example, says Chris Illuminati, co-author of A\*\*hole.ol.o.gy:

**The science behind getting your way** -- and getting away with it, while female frenemies know that they're screwing you over, men are more inclined to think that what they're doing is no big deal. "Male frenemies are the guys who you just don't know where you stand with them," says Illuminati. "One day they're your best buddies, and the next they've done something to stab

you in the back. It's usually over a girl but it can be extended to screwing you over in the workplace or with other friends."

Indeed, hiding (or not even fully recognizing) their true nature is a key characteristic of the frenemy. Typically, points out Debbie Mandel, a relationship counselor and author of *Addicted to Stress*, a male frenemy is smooth, alert, and friendly face-to-face, but becomes subversive, undermining, and critical behind the scenes. "He can steal a guy's woman for the fun of it --- to possess her because he can," says Mandell. "He can undermine him in social gatherings with the guys by slinging the barbs or making fun of him... even betray a few confidences."

**Motives of the male frenemy:** If you've been on the receiving end of such behaviour, you've probably wondered: What could possibly motivate such blatant douchery? Why do frenemies act the way they do?

Illuminati thinks it all stems from jealousy. He theorizes that a frenemy probably genuinely likes you, but is jealous of some specific quality of yours that makes him want to see you fail. Mandel agrees, though adds that frenemies are unhappy with themselves and believe that by putting you down, it's lifting them up.

Marc Rudov, the self-described "No-Nonsense Man" and *Fox News* commentator, has a different take altogether. He sees the male frenemy phenomenon as a symptom of a societal trend in which men are acting more and more like women. "A lot of this behaviour is teenage girl behavior," Rudov says. "Today's guys are more like girls. There's a whole wave of feminization of boys, and I think [frenemy behaviour] is the result of that."

**Conquering the male frenemy:** So how do you deal with a frenemy? It should be easy: De-friend him, just like you'd do on Facebook. That's exactly what Rudov recommends. But what if your frenemy is part of a circle of friends? That's clearly a more delicate situation, but there are still a few things you can do:

"Keep it light and superficial," says Mandel. "There will be other guys to hang with in that circle, so concentrate on them."

Illuminati takes it a step further; he suggests letting your other friends know that you don't trust the frenemy. But be prepared. "You've got to have concrete examples of him being a douche," he says.

Rudov's advice is the simplest, and maybe best, of all: Rise above it. "If you have confidence in yourself, and you don't worry about other guys, then you don't really care."

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