

DEALING WITH DIFFICULT PEOPLE



VIEWER'S GUIDE

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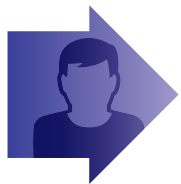
*Healthy conflict resolution strategies for those people
and situations that hit your hot buttons*



WELCOME TO DEALING WITH DIFFICULT PEOPLE

Have you ever been around people who, when faced with a challenging person or difficult circumstance, they seem to have the ability to defuse the situation and bring out the best in people? It's as though they know just what to say, how to say it, when to say it—AS WELL AS when to say nothing at all! Then there are those people who just seem to go looking for a fight—it's as though they just have the ability to rub people the wrong way and say the wrong things and manage to bring out the worst in people!

When it comes to dealing with difficult people and personalities, there are many variables to consider including the people, the situation and even the perceived authority of those involved. The reality is that unless you and I are prepared in advance for these challenges, we will react the way we always have and achieve the results we've always achieved. So as we explore difficult people and personalities, I want you to think about how you currently react to those people and those challenging situations; and then think about how you'd like to feel and think and respond in future challenging situations. You see, responding is different than reacting. When you respond, you have prepared in advance the outcome in your mind. What is YOUR end in mind? What outcomes would you like to see?



PART 1: PINPOINTING YOUR TRIGGERS

A big part of dealing with difficult people and personalities includes pinpointing your triggers when faced with challenging people and situations. As I ask you some questions to determine what types of people and events push your “hot buttons,” I want you to think in terms of a scale from 1 – 10 where 1 means there's no effect, and 10 means your blood is boiling and you are reacting with intensity—write down the number that represents your level of intensity.

Scenario 1: “The Parking Spot”

You are on your way home from work and decide to stop at a coffee shop for a quick end-of-day beverage. As you pull into the parking lot you see a perfect parking spot on the opposite side close to the entrance. Even though it is safe to turn into the spot now, there is a car rushing toward you a little too fast. Rather than cutting in front of the oncoming car, you decide to stop, put on your turn signal and politely wait for the oncoming car to pass. But instead, without signaling, the oncoming car quickly turns into the parking spot YOU were waiting for. To top it off, the person gets out of the car and—without a second look—goes straight into the coffee shop.

Scenario 2: “Office Housekeeping”

In this scenario, you come into work a few minutes early and go to the break room to get a cup of coffee only to find the coffee station a complete mess—dirty coffee cups and spoons in the sink, dried coffee stains on the counter and not only is the coffee pot half full with yesterday's coffee, when you try to remove it, you find it is stuck to the burner as though yesterday someone pulled the coffee pot off the burner while it was still brewing, allowing coffee to pour all over and around the coffee machine. And to top it off, someone didn't refrigerate the coffee creamer but instead left it out overnight on the counter!

Scenario 3: “Sarcastic E-mail”

In this scenario, you are at a professional social networking site where group members discuss tips and techniques to improve the skills of their trade.

Someone asks a question regarding the use of some older, but effective tools to help demonstrate their ideas to clients. Several people in the group respond with suggestions and ways to improve their performance with these tools.

Not only have you used the tools being discussed, you've also found a different tool that's even more helpful. So you decide to jump into the conversation to offer your input. To your surprise, one person in the group gives you a sarcastic response that criticizes your tool and discredits you as a professional.

Scenario 4: “The Intruder”

For this scenario, let's say you work in a company that has an open floor plan where desks and workstations are in close proximity with limited sound dampening dividers. Your issue is with one

person who comes in everyday and is disruptive in one way or another. A typical day with this person may include them strolling into the office either whistling or singing a tune—and greeting everyone with a boisterous “good morning!” Later in the morning they may peek into your workstation just to tell you about their weekend or to tell a funny joke. If they are within earshot of a conversation, they just seem to jump in and give their opinion—even if the conversation doesn’t concern them or their expertise. During the day when they are on the phone, they are so LOUD and unaware of their volume; and at the end of the day, they will often times give a resounding goodbye to everyone.

Scenario 5: The Supervisor and the Employee

In this scenario I want you to imagine that you are either the manager/supervisor OR that you are the person who is taking instructions FROM the manager/supervisor.

Yoko’s manager gives her the task of creating a Web page using Adobe® Dreamweaver® and tells her it needs to be done ASAP. Yoko wonders why her manager gave her the assignment since she has never used Dreamweaver while several of her co-workers have. The next day, Yoko’s manager checks back with her only to find the project is far BELOW the manager’s expectations and Yoko doesn’t speak up as to “why.” Now the manager must work overtime to complete this project before the deadline.



PART 2: CULTURE, UPBRINGING AND PERSONALITY: YOUR RESPONSES TO DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES

Have you ever considered how your upbringing, culture and your personality have formed your perceptions and reactions to difficult people and challenging situations? Experts tell us that the responses we have in our adult life have been formed in us before the age of SIX!

Think about it ... people who were raised twenty, thirty or even forty years ago are now your co-workers, bosses and if you’re a supervisor, they are your employees. These same people grew up with cultural and community expectations—wrapped around upbringing, personalities and even male/female differences.

There are four basic personalities. As I list out the specific characteristics of each personality, write down or be thinking about your dominant style as well as your less dominant styles along with the personalities that are most challenging to you.

1. The Direct Person

Direct people are direct, bottom line and to the point. They are natural leaders and quick decision makers who tend to be vocal and say what is on their mind. Because they base their decisions mostly on logic, not emotions, sometimes they can come across as harsh, abrasive or insensitive to people who are not direct.

2. The Thinker/Analyzer

Thinker/analyzers are also logical in their approach, but unlike direct people they love details. They are natural planners. In fact I like to say that thinker/analyzers are born with drop-down menus in their head. They have a plan A, a plan B, a plan C and a backup plan, just in case. Rather than being vocal they tend to process their thoughts internally while considering all their options.

3. The Social Extrovert

Social extroverts are more emotional or feeling-based. They draw a lot of their motivation, or lack thereof, from their feelings. They are natural promoters or cheerleaders. They are optimistically solution-driven. Social extroverts don’t look at failure as failing, but rather as learning experiences. The word “NO” doesn’t mean “NO” in their world; it means “not now, maybe later.” They are persistent, tenacious and unafraid to speak up even if they are not an expert on the topic. They are extremely teachable as they love the creative process of learning, though they get bored easily if they can’t interact. They often draw their conclusions and voice their opinions based their feelings, hunches or what they believe to be logical deductions. They are quick to decide and quick to change their mind. Social extroverts tend to be impulsive, basing their decisions mostly on feelings and emotions rather than on data or research.

4. The Relational Person

Relational people are ... relational. They are introspective, caring and considerate. They draw a lot of their identity from close relationships. Because they are loyal, helpful and great listeners, sometimes they don’t speak up,

preferring to be “polite” rather than run the risk of offending someone. They tend to be patient and encouraging and will offer people the “benefit of the doubt.” They are peacemakers and cautious when making decisions, doing so only after careful consideration of how new decisions will impact the people around them. Because they base their decisions mostly on emotion or compassion, they will sometimes break the rules or make exceptions to accommodate people or circumstances. By nature they are more nurturing than the average person and they are natural caregivers—often times putting others before themselves, even at the risk of their own health or well-being.



PART 3: TECHNIQUES FOR DEFUSING DIFFICULT PEOPLE AND CHALLENGING SITUATIONS

When it comes to dealing with difficult people and personalities, there is no growth without some conflict. Managing conflict so the resolution is mutually beneficial is part of the process. Two strategies for conflict resolution include:

1. Requesting a behavior change
2. Resolving the disagreement

So let’s look at some healthy and unhealthy conflict resolution techniques beginning with the unhealthy ones first—and let’s have a little fun with this as we look at the top four “What NOT to Do’s” when requesting a behavior change.

1. Don’t generalize
2. Don’t mind read
3. Don’t confuse issues and learning methods or personality styles
4. Don’t address the person when your emotions are involved—otherwise you’ll just become the difficult person!

Think about it ... how often are you in “conflict” and the other person doesn’t even know about it? Many times, “conflict” is not really a one-on-one confrontation, but someone’s unwillingness to ask for behavior change.

Now let’s look at what to do when requesting a behavior change:

Mapping Out a Conflict Resolution Plan

1. Goals
2. Atmosphere
3. During the Meeting
4. Take a Break
5. Implement

Let’s take them one at a time starting with **Goals**. What goals do you want to accomplish during the meeting? Do you want a resolution? If so, what kind of resolution? Do you want to see positive change? Or perhaps it’s an issue of compliance or a willingness for the other person to be more flexible and to compromise? What is your goal for this meeting? How will you know you’ve achieved your objectives? Take a moment to write down some specifics that will show you’ve successfully met your meeting goals.

Step number two: **Atmosphere**. What type of atmosphere do you want to create and where do you want to meet? Perhaps somewhere safe and neutral such as a conference room or a neutral office apart from your work stations. Do you think either of you will need an advocate present during the meeting ... a neutral HR-type person to referee the meeting? What about snacks and beverages? Remember, what are your goals? Choose the items that will best help you achieve your goals.

Now comes the crucial part, step number three: What happens **During the Meeting**? What attitude do you want from the other person? What attitude are you bringing to the table? What about your tone, your tempo and your body language—are you being assertive and talking about the issues? Or are you being passive and avoiding the issue—or are you being aggressive and coming across as defensive? How effective are you being in your communication? Remember to separate the person from the issue. Remember to focus on their needs as well as your needs, and you can only do that by listening, which means preparing time for them to speak and for you to just listen—letting them form their words, finish their sentences and even allow some room for “healthy venting.” If you come to an impasse, listen, ask for recommendations, take good notes, use appropriate eye contact—and even use silence as needed. Allow for some breathing room—even a break for some cookies or biscuits and maybe a decaffeinated beverage.

Let's move now to step number four: **Take a Break**. Not all disagreements have to end in arguments, so when will you take a break?

When you reach an impasse? Or when tempers flare? Or when venting turns into blaming, accusing or even threatening? Yes, as you know, these are all great times to take a break. The issue here is **HOW** will you broach the subject—how will you say “It’s break time”?

The final step in our conflict resolution map is step number five: **Implement** the plan. You’ve taken the time to define what you want, you’ve planned out your end in mind—now it’s time to **DO IT!** This is the secret for bringing about lasting change and making it stick. So at the end of the meeting, make sure to write down what you’ve both agreed upon, the time frame in which the goals will be met and start implementing now.

As you begin to implement these proven strategies, remember to maintain an objective perspective and actively listen to the other person in order to begin to see the other side of the discussion. Remember, it’s going to take time and practice—weeks or even months—for the “break” in the relationship to be healed.

Requesting a behavior change and resolving the disagreements are two quick-tip solutions and proven strategies for constructive resolution.

Take a moment to think about a difficult person or situation that may involve conflict. Ask yourself, have you asked for behavior change? If yes, I want you to think about how you asked for that behavior change ... what words did you use? What was the tone of your voice? What were your facial expressions? What did your body language look like ... hmmm? If you really want to see how effective your current conflict resolution skills are, write down either your thoughts of what you’d like to say during a conflict, or what you’ve actually said during a conflict, and then read those words back aloud to yourself as though someone else was saying them to you. And here’s a bonus—watch yourself in a mirror as you’re doing this action item. How do your words, tone, tempo, facial expressions and body language impact you?



PART 4: WHAT TO DO AND SAY TO DE-ESCALATE VOLATILE PEOPLE AND SITUATIONS

During this section you’ll learn several techniques including how to bring out the best rather than the worst in problematic people, another technique to help you lower the defenses during a confrontation and even a technique to help you stand up to bullies and intimidators—and to know when and how to back down without losing face.

As I give you some great techniques for de-escalating volatile situations, keep in mind that these techniques are most effective when used in conjunction with a sincere and genuine attitude.

With this in mind, I’m going to give you the first technique—this technique is designed to bring out the best in the person instead of the worst. I call this the Respect Most/Improve Upon technique, which allows you to focus on three areas you respect most about the person before asking them to improve upon something. And the ratio is three to one. All that means is list three areas of respect for every one area that needs to be improved. Essentially what you are doing is making positive deposits into the person’s emotional bank account before asking for change.

As you’re mapping out your conflict resolution, remember to keep your goal or the “end in mind” at the forefront of your request and also keep your request focused on one of three categories:

1. Skills
2. Behavior
3. Attitude

Skills can include expertise, specialty training, ability or talent, as well as natural gifting or specific skills that have been acquired.

Behavior can be described as characteristics and habits of a person such as deeds, manner or demeanor. Behavior can reflect their personality in how they conduct themselves, whether in a large or small group or even if they’re alone.

And, finally, **Attitude**. Attitude reveals the condition of the heart—attitude comes out of our eyes, then our body language, then our mouths! Attitude is revealed by a person’s reaction when facing new projects or challenges such as learning something

new or interacting with different people. Attitude can also be compared to temperament; for example, how a person approaches routine tasks and processes such as daily work, meetings and projects. Attitude is different than behavior because attitude is the immediate reaction—whereas behaviors are habits that have been practiced over time. Attitude is a combination of instinctive and learned responses to behaviors that have been practiced for so long in that the attitude sets the tone for the behavior.

The next technique I want to draw your attention to is designed to lower the defenses of even the most difficult person during a confrontation. I call this the “You, I, We” technique.

For every compliment listed, I said “You” prior to the compliment—“you’re flexible, your can-do attitude, you’re creative!” By saying “you,” then sincerely complimenting the person, more times than not their defenses will be lowered. Unfortunately, when you and I don’t plan our responses in advance, we usually react to the situation by saying “you” in a negative context such as “You’re always late” or “You’re never on time.”

Let’s now look at when the word “I” was used. I was expressing either an appreciation or a desired change—“I love your can-do attitude” or “Where I need your help is ...” Also notice that I’m asking for a change, not demanding it. When you and I are in volatile situations, the art of persuading is much more powerful than the doom of demanding. Remember, some people just don’t realize the impact of their behavior and may not be aware that their actions are causing “conflict” in others—mainly you.

As for incorporating “we” statements, the next step would be to say something along the lines of “We need to talk about the best way to resolve this.”

This is where you would either let them know that you really need their help to be on time or if you were the supervisor, you would map out your conflict resolution plan including the implementation portion.

Remember, the “You, I, We” technique is designed to lower the defenses of even the most difficult person during a confrontation.

An advanced communication technique to use when standing up to bullies and intimidating people is called the “Match and Mirror, Then De-escalate” technique.

First, match and mirror the difficult person’s tone and intensity in your communication and then slowly de-escalate it to a calm manner in which you can achieve your desired results.

So there you have the keys to both recognizing different types difficult people as well as techniques for handling them. Remember, responding is different than reacting. Prepare in advance and you’ll reach your goals *and* bring out the best in each challenging behavior you deal with.

Thanks for participating in *Dealing With Difficult People*.

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