

Handling Difficult People & Conflict



Handling Difficult People

What are some words that come to mind when you think of difficult people?

What are your “buttons?”

What are the areas of your life; that when people attack them, makes you mad?

Four Options When Dealing with Difficult People

1. Status Quo
2. Change your Attitude
3. Change your Behavior
4. Leave

Four Intentions:

Get it Done - Get it Right - Get Along – Get or Give Appreciation

Someone you work with on a project wants to ***get it done***. You focus on the task, you're getting it done, and your communications with them are brief and to the point.

Someone you work with wants to ***get it right***. You focus on the task, paying great attention to details, and your reports to them are well documented.

Someone you work with wants to ***get along*** with you. You let them know that you care about them and like them with your friendly chitchat and considerate communications.

Someone you work with wants to ***get appreciation*** for what they are doing. You let them know that you recognize their contribution with your enthusiasm and words of gratitude.

What Happens When the Intent Isn't Fulfilled?

When people want to ***get it done*** and fear it is not getting done, their behavior naturally becomes more ***controlling***, as they try to take over and push ahead.

When people want to ***get it right*** and fear it will be done wrong, their behavior becomes more ***perfectionistic***, finding every flaw and potential error.

When people want to ***get along*** and they fear that they will be left out, their behavior becomes more ***approval seeking***, sacrificing their personal needs to please others.

When people want to ***get appreciation***, and fear they are not, their behavior becomes more ***attention getting***, forcing others to notice them.

The Tank

When you're under attack by the Tank, you've been targeted as part of the problem.

The Tank's Intent: To Get It Done

Their behavior becomes more controlling.

Your Goal: Command Respect. Tanks simply don't attack people they respect.

Action Plan:

- Step 1. Hold your ground. Don't change your position verbally / nonverbally.
- Step 2. Interrupt the attack. Say their name over and over again.
- Step 3. Quickly backtrack their main point. Conveys you have heard them.
- Step 4. Aim for the bottom line and fire. *"The way I see it..."*
- Step 5. Peace with honor. *"When I am through...I will be happy to hear your feedback."*

What if you were wrong?

Admit your mistake.

State briefly what you've learned from the experience.

State what you will do differently in the future to prevent it from happening again.

The Know-It-All

Know-It-Alls are knowledgeable people and extremely competent people, highly assertive and outspoken in their viewpoints.

The Know-It-All's Intent: To Get It Done

Their behavior becomes more controlling.

Your Goal: To Open His or Her Mind to New Information and Ideas.

Action Plan:

- Step 1. Be prepared and know your stuff.
- Step 2. Backtrack respectfully. They must feel like you listened.
- Step 3. Blend with their doubts and desires. \$ / time / specific criteria
- Step 4. Present your views indirectly: maybe / perhaps / what / how
- Step 5. Turn them into your mentor. Openly acknowledge them as your mentor.

The Sniper

There are many motivations for the sniping behavior - anger, holding a grudge, undermining, or getting some attention.

The Sniper's Intent: To Get It Done (Unfriendly Fire)

Their behavior becomes controlling through embarrassment and humiliation.

The Sniper's Intent: To Get Appreciation (Friendly Fire)

Their behavior becomes more attention seeking.

Your Goal: Bring the Sniper Out of Hiding. Deal with them directly.

Action Plan:

Step 1. Stop, look, backtrack. Interrupt yourself, focus on them, and repeat their insult.

Step 2. Use searchlight questions. *"What do you mean?" "What does that have to do with this?"*

Step 3. Use the Tank strategy if needed. Command respect, hold your ground, backtrack, bottom line, and assume you will get along.

Step 4. Go on a grievance patrol. Confront them and clear the air.

Step 5. Suggest a civil future. Problem? Talk to me one-on-one.

The Think-They-Know-It-All

The Think-They-Know-It-All learns just enough about the subject to sound conversant. However, they have a bad habit of exaggeration to get attention.

The Think-They-Know-It-All's Intent: To Get Appreciation

Their behavior becomes more attention getting.

Your Goal: Give Their Bad Ideas the Hook, like a bad act in Vaudeville days.

Action Plan:

Step 1. Give them a little attention. Backtrack their comments with enthusiasm.

Acknowledge their positive intent rather than wasting your time with their content.

Step 2. Clarify for specifics: who / what / when / specifically

Step 3. Tell it like it is. *"What I've heard..." "What I've read..."*

Step 4. Give them a break. Junk O'Logic. *"Thank you for bringing that up. That reminds me of what we were talking about."*

Step 5. Break the cycle. Use gentle confrontation to discuss the consequences. Actively look for and notice opportunities to give them credit where credit is due.

The Grenade

The Grenade is a person whose efforts to get appreciation were thwarted by another's indifference. Their behavior becomes an inescapable and immediate demand for attention. Blowing up or losing emotional control becomes their defense strategy.

The Grenade's Intent: To Get Appreciation

Their behavior becomes more attention getting.

Your Goal: Take Control of the Situation.

Action Plan:

Step 1. Get their attention. Call their name / raise your voice / wave your arms / in a friendly manner.

Step 2. Aim for the heart. Empathize. Show your genuine concern.

Step 3. Reduce the intensity. Lower the volume of your voice.

Step 4. Take time off for good behavior. Take a time out – ask for a break.

Step 5. Grenade prevention. Find the pin and don't pull it.

The Yes Person

The Yes Person's desire is to get along with everyone, to please, and to be helpful. However, they become overwhelmed with all of the tasks they've become involved.

The Yes Person's Intent: To Get Along

Their behavior becomes more approval seeking.

Your Goal: Get Commitments from Them You Can Count On

Action Plan:

Step 1. Make it safe for them to be honest. Two-way communication / like friends.

Step 2. Talk honestly. Listen / clarify / acknowledge them for their honesty.

Step 3. Help them plan. Use the past as a "case study."

Step 4. Ensure commitment. Ask for their word of honor. Ask them to summarize the commitment. Get them to write it down. Weird deadlines. Negative consequences.

Step 5. Correcting: Describe what happened or what they did. Tell them how others were affected. Tell them how you feel. Project positive intent, "*That's not like you.*"

Complimenting: Tell them what they did right. Tell them how others were affected. Tell them how you feel. Positive intent, "*That's just like you.*"

The Maybe Person

The Maybe Person has a hard time making a decision. The downside of each option blinds them. They have numerous reasons for not seeking help, from not wanting to bother anyone, to not wanting to upset anyone, to not wanting to be the cause of anything going wrong.

The Maybe Person's Intent: To Get Along

Their behavior becomes more approval seeking.

Your Goal: Help Them Learn to Think Decisively.

Action Plan:

- Step 1. Establish and maintain a comfort zone. Take time and be considerate.
- Step 2. Surface conflicts and clarify issues. Explore obstacles and options.
- Step 3. Share a decision-making model. Pros/cons, pluses/minuses
- Step 4. Reassure them and then ensure follow through with deadlines.
- Step 5. Strengthen the relationship. Promote the idea of a better future for the both of you as a result of their honesty with you.

The Nothing Person

The Nothing Person is someone you wait to hear from. No verbal feedback. No nonverbal feedback. Nothing. Mouth sealed shut. The Nothing Person stares past you as if you're not there.

The Nothing Person's Intent: To Get It Right

Their behavior becomes more perfectionistic.

The Nothing Person's Intent: To Get Along

Their behavior becomes more approval seeking.

Your Goal: Persuade the Nothing Person to Talk.

Action Plan:

- Step 1. Plan enough time.
- Step 2. Ask open-ended questions expectantly. What / how / where / when
- Step 3. Lighten it up. Make absurd, exaggerated, impossible statements.
- Step 4. Guess the reason for their silence. Look for a change in their behavior.
- Step 5. Show the future. Share the negative consequences: We won't get it right and we won't get along.

The No Person

The No Person is a task-focused individual motivated by the intent to get it right by avoiding mistakes. They see themselves as the only people willing and able to look at what will go wrong. The No Person finds negatives in everything and everyone.

The No Person's Intent: To Get It Right

Their behavior becomes more perfectionistic.

Your Goal: Transition from Fault Finding Toward Problem Solving.

Action Plan:

- Step 1. Go with the flow. Allow them to be as negative as they would like.
- Step 2. Use them as resource. They can be a "early warning system."
- Step 3. Leave the door open. Give them time to think and respond.
- Step 4. Go for the polarity response. Agree with them when you can.
- Step 5. Acknowledge their good intent. Helpful / high standards / details

The Whiner

The Whiner can be helpful by complaining and drawing attention to problems that ought to be addressed. The Whiner can also wallow in their worries and woe.

The Whiner's Intent: To Get It Right

Their behavior becomes perfectionistic.

Your Goal: Form a Problem Solving Alliance

Action Plan:

- Step 1. Listen for the main points with pen and paper.
- Step 2. Interrupt and get specific. Ask them to gather more information and report back to you at a specific time.
- Step 3. Shift the focus to solutions. *"What do you want?"*
- Step 4. Show them the future. Give them something to look forward to. Schedule a meeting for further discussion and progress reporting.
- Step 5. Draw the line. *"Since your complaints seem to have no solutions, talking about them really isn't accomplishing anything for either of us. If you happen to think of some possible solutions, or change your mind about these problems, please let me know."*

What Could You Say So They Know:

You're Going to Get It Done:

You're Going to Get It Right:

You're Getting Along:

You're Appreciated or You Appreciate Them:

Tips for Handling Difficult People

1. Move Closer.
2. Repeat to yourself: *"This is a game."*
3. Picture them in your mind as a metaphor.
4. Don't take it seriously: Laugh.
5. Say something that doesn't mean anything.
6. Don't say anything at all.
7. Repeat: *"That's an idea."* *"That's interesting."* *"You've got a point."*
8. Become a broken record: *"I will need some time to think about that."*
9. Cover your agenda.
10. Redefine winning.
11. Make being a good listener a priority.
12. Get into your "effective listening posture."
13. Focus your attention.
14. Visualize this person as a person who needs your help.
15. Keep an open mind.
16. Do not interrupt.
17. Listen to the content, not necessarily how it is delivered.
18. Use listening noises like, *"I see."* *"I understand."* *"Go on."*
19. Take notes.
20. Provide feedback and verify.
21. When they are angry - don't interrupt – let them vent.
22. Use the person's name to establish rapport.
23. Empathize.
24. Ask "what" or "how" questions to clarify and resolve the situation.
25. Be positive – remember the benefits.

Conflict Resolution and Negotiation Skills

1. Warm and cooperative tone of voice. Deep breathe.
2. Use “I will” statements to build confidence.
3. Use “Will you” questions to reduce frustration.
4. Use “You can” statements to say “No” courteously.
5. Give the reason first to save time. Mission and Value Statements.
6. Call anyway to reduce tension. Have done, currently doing, future.

7. Level with them: especially when they use the dirty tricks

I _____ (describe feeling) _____

When _____ (describe observable behavior) _____

Because _____ (negative consequence or positive benefit) _____

8. Don't bargain over positions. Either / or. Winner / loser.
9. Focus on interests, not positions.
10. Separate the people from the problem.
11. Invent options for mutual gain.
12. Insist on using objective criteria.

“ ^{Helping}
People

Get More Done in Less Time ”

AND

“ ^{Helping}
Organizations

Get Their People to Work Together Better ”

Chaos & Change Management • Customer Service • Difficult People • Gender Communication
Generations at Work • Interpersonal Communication • Leadership • Listening • Persuading & Influencing
Problem-Solving/Decision-Making • Self-Esteem • Stress, Time & Procrastination • Team Building



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