

Helping Hands

TWU 563 EAP Newsletter

Spring 2010



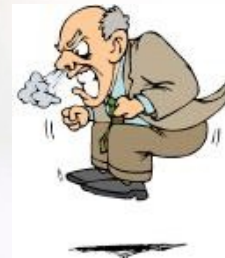
Dealing with Difficult People

Everyone is irritable or indecisive at times. But some people are so difficult that they make others' lives and work a strain. Dealing with difficult people is easier when you learn to recognize some common personality types. Then you can develop coping skills for dealing with each without trying to change them.

Difficult Personalities

There are seven behavior types with whom most people have difficulty.

- *Bullies* are hostile and angry, throwing tantrums to get their way.
- *Grippers* complain about things they don't like, but rarely try to change their situation.
- *Silent types* don't say much: you can beg, yell, or talk to them, but they don't say more than "yes" or "no"
- *Very Nice* people seem to agree with you, but won't do what they say they will.
- *Just Say No* types respond to new ideas with "that won't work"
- *I Know Better* types think they know everything. They're condescending and full of themselves.
- *Stallers* put things off until someone else takes over, or until the decision is made because of the delay.



Inside this issue

Dealing with Difficult People....	1
Conflict Resolution.....	2

Important Dates

3/13	New Bid Starts
3/14	Daylight Savings Time Begins
3/17	St. Patrick's Day
4/4	Easter
4/15	Income Tax Due
5/9	Mother's Day
5/31	Memorial Day

How to Cope

These behaviors are annoying and upsetting. They keep everyone but the difficult person off balance. This can be true even though they may not be trying to control others. Coping balances the power between people. It helps everyone get things done without stalling at the roadblocks difficult people set up.

How to Cope cont.

When someone practices difficult behavior around you, try these techniques:

- For *Bullies*, stand up for yourself. Use phrases like “I believe” or “I feel”. Don’t try to fight them. Instead, make your point firmly.
- Let *Grippers* know you’ve heard their concern. Directly ask, “What is it you want?”
- For *Silent types*, ask questions that must be answered by more than “yes” or “no”. If you get no response, let the silent type know your plans.
- *Very Nice* people have a strong need to be liked; show them that you do. Then dig to find out what is really happening.
- Don’t argue with *Just say no* types. Instead, suggest what won’t work before they do.
- For *I know better* types, have all the facts before you meet. Raise possible problems, and be ready to follow through.
- Listen to *Stallers*; find out what the real reason for the delay is. Help them, and ask them for help.

Worth the Effort

You can’t always avoid difficult people. Learning to cope with them is worth the effort. You’ll get more done and be less frustrated if you do.

Source: Parlay International 1989

Resolving Conflicts

Conflicts are bound to happen in the workplace. Recession, added security, layoffs, downsizing, are all things that have elevated our stress levels and can make us irritable and difficult to deal with. Here are some conflict resolution methods that might work for you.

Discover the other Point of View.

The first step in resolving tensions could be determining the other person’s perspective of the problem or issue. Ask for a sit-down meeting (perhaps over coffee or lunch, in a location with no interruptions) to talk about the confrontation, the resulting communication problem and how things can be patched up. Presuming a meeting can be arranged, start by asking about the other person’s perception of what’s happened. However, regardless of what’s said, don’t argue and/or interrupt. There may be emotions, even obscenities. But listen. Don’t think about retorts or answers while listening. Try to understand the situation from another perspective. Once emotions are spent, begin talking out the conflict and move into a problem solving mode.



Asking this question can be the next step in healing a relationship wound. Admitting that you screwed up may seem like eating humble pie, but it also may cause your co-worker to accept some of the fault. In fact, there's an old adage, "when you point your finger at someone else, three of your fingers are pointing back at you." Try saying something like "tell me what I've done wrong." This is usually quite unexpected by the other party, and can soften the response. An apology or a compromise can then be made, or a continuation of the conflict resolution process.

Take a Break

If the hatchet still can't be buried, suggest that both parties take some time to sort things out. Often, after an emotional venting on both sides-and a good night's sleep-things don't look so one-sided. This doesn't mean postponing a resolution. Just take some time, and agree to meet again at a specified time and place.

Ask for Help

If the logjam simply can't be broken, suggest that a trusted third party help. Of course, this must be someone who is knowledgeable and neutral.

Consider the long view

If, by now, little or no progress has been made and prospects for resolution look dim, think about the consequences of no resolution, and ask the other party how important the problem will be down the road-in several weeks or months. Perhaps time will heal the rift between the two parties. "This too shall pass" is both an old saying and the end to many an argument. However, some differences won't evaporate over time, but it's usually because the two parties want them to continue. In that case things will escalate, and then nobody wins.

Source: David Bowman HR Consultant.

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