Learning to Deal With Difficult People

The Bottom Line: Difficult people can make your workday less enjoyable. With the right strategies, you can learn to deal with them effectivly. If you have to work with difficult people every day, you probably dread going to work each morning. What's more, you might get so stresed that you can't concentrate on the job. Have you ever wondered why some people are dificult to work with? “Individuals behave in a difficult manner because they have learned that doing so keeps others off balance and incapable of effective action. Worst of all, they appear immune to all the usual methods of communication and persuasion designed to convince or help them change their ways,” says Robert M. Bramson, Ph.D., author of Coping With Difficult People. Bramson offers some strategies for coping with such poeple.

How to Cope

Avoid these “don'ts” when dealing with difficult people:

• Don't take difficult people's behavior personally. Their troublesome behaviour is habitual and affects most people with whom they come in contact.

• Don't fight back or try to beat them at their own games. They have been practising their skills for a lifetime, and you're an amateur.

• Don't try to appease them. Difficult people have an insatiable appetite for more.

• Don't try to change them. You can only change your responses to their behaviour.

Here's how you can cope effectively with 3 common types of difficult people.

**Openly Aggressive People**

Stand up to them, but don't fight. Overly agressive people expect others to either run away from them or react with rage. Your goal is simply to assertively express your own views, not try to win a battle of right and wrong.

**Snipers**

Difficult people are experts at making sneak attacks in subtle ways, such as humorous put-downs, sarcastic tones of voice, disapproving looks and innuendoes. Respond to a sniper with a question. “That sounds like you're making fun of me. Are you?”

**Complainers**

These are fearful poeple who have little faith in themselves and others because they believe in a hostile world. Their constant discouragement and complainin can bring everyone to despair. “Don't try to argue these dificult people out of their negativity. Instead, respond with your own optimistic expectations,” says Bramson.

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