

Dealing With Difficult People



Usually, the difficult person is someone who is working from the negative side of their personality, rather than a conscious desire to be difficult. The person is often unaware of their behavior and the adverse effects of their actions.

The display of negative behaviors is typically a manifestation of arrogance or defensiveness. There is a fear of being hurt, rejected, humiliated or appearing to be weak. The behavior is a defense against vulnerability and insecurity. The person is so afraid of being seen as unworthy or incompetent, that they immediately throw up a defensive shield against any possible attack. This defense protects them for a while, but in the end they lose credibility and respect – the thing they fear most.

Common Negative Personalities

“KNOW-IT-ALLS”



- Bombard you with facts and figures
- Feel they have all the answers
- Become upset if you question their judgment

“BULLIES”



- Display abrupt and intimidating behavior
- May use abusive language
- May become loud angry or hostile
- Overwhelm you with their presence

"COMPLAINERS"



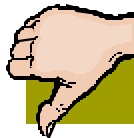
- Freely talk about things they don't like or what is wrong, but seldom try to change their situation
- Concentrate on how others "should" behave
- Feel powerless to determine their fate

"SILENT TYPES"



- Unresponsive
- Respond only with "yes" or "no"
- Tough to read

"NEGATIVIST"



- Respond to new ideas with "that won't work"
- Expect the worst
- Reluctant to change

How To Cope With Negative Personalities

We are often required to work with others who may challenge our ability to get things done. Everyone is irritable or indecisive at times. But some people are so difficult that they make others lives and work a strain. These negative personality behaviors cause stress and program us to react.

- Separate the people from the problem. Communicators have two interests – the relationship and in the message substance. The message substance and the relationship are easily entangled. The relationship aspect plays out in the manner in which the message is

being delivered. The substance refers to the actual message content. In dealing with difficult people, separate the manner in which the message is being delivered from the actual message content.

- Recognize and try to understand the emotions behind the delivery. Avoid being reactive to the delivery and focus in on the message content. Avoid arguing.
- Get into a problem-solving mode. Listen, and show respect. Put energy and attention into understanding fully what the other person is saying. Ask open-ended questions. Avoid taking on their problem. Keep your own sense of self-confidence.
- If necessary, get the right people involved.

There is great value to be gained when we take the time to try to understand another's viewpoint. By changing our attitude toward them and changing our viewpoint about what makes them display this negative side of their personality, we improve our own ability to work with people. We can develop coping skills for dealing with these negative personality factors without trying to change them.

Tips For Overcoming Negative Aspects In Yourself

- Learn to recognize when your defensive mechanisms come up. Realize that you are probably not really being attacked.
- When you catch yourself feeling defensive, avoid reacting so quickly.
- Learn how to listen when someone asks a question or makes a suggestion.
- Ask people to re-state their question/comment/suggestion.
- Try to understand what others are saying by repeating back what you think you hear.
- You may want to ask for more time to respond, and then get back to them. This will give you time to work on the question/comment/suggestion without the pressure of being on the spot.
- Do consider that other people have good ideas that are just as valid as yours.
- Recognize that changing learned patterns of insecurity and defensiveness may take years of work.
- Learn to understand your own personality and your unique strengths and weakness.