

Dealing With Difficult People

A Discussion /Workshop Tool for Team Meetings

Why are they "difficult"?

- The person is operating from the negative side of their personality.
- Rare is the person who consciously wants to be difficult.
- The person may be unaware of their behaviour and effect on others.
- They do not realize how damaging their actions are to their own career and personal success.
- They may have developed negative behaviour due to work or personal stress, mental health issues, sexual, physical or mental abuse, and a myriad of other reasons. No baby comes into this world planning to be negative.

Reality Check:

- We will commonly be faced with working alongside others who may challenge us, and even our ability to complete work assigned to us.
- Taking the time to try to understand the other's viewpoint is highly valuable.
- Changing our attitude toward them and changing our perception about what makes them "wrong" can give us knowledge to improve our own ability to work with people.
- Occasionally, we find ourselves in situations where we-they are not a 'match', and never will be ... we have many choices to deal with this scenario. However...if the person in question is truly a 'bully', their goal may be to get *you* to leave, and maintain a workplace environment where they control all others.

Notes

Types of Difficult People... there are others.

Miss TheSkyIsFalling: a Gloomer Doomer type, whiny, fearful, negative, cup is half empty

The Wet Blanket: makes it his or her job to point out all that is wrong with just about anything anyone comes up with

Mrs I'mNoGoodAtThatYouDoIt: has many techniques to get out of work and responsibility

The Bully: goal is to control, gain special treatment and even eliminate stronger, threatening forces. It's my way or else!
Biggest fear: losing control.

The know-it-all: don't dare to question them. Especially prevalent in technical people. Many other professions share the trait. We see it often in computer programmers, software developers, engineers, doctors and attorneys. Arrogant - defense against vulnerability and insecurity. Greatest fear: losing credibility and respect.

Notes

The results of Difficult People's behaviour:

1. People refuse to deal with them
2. People don't believe what they say
3. People think they really don't know their job
4. They may be fired eventually because of their attitude.
5. Eventually, people give up trying to work with them.
6. People will not tell them the truth or provide them with vital information that might help them make better decisions
7. People learn to ignore or discount their opinions or decisions
8. People will avoid implementing their ideas and subvert their authority (consciously or unconsciously)
9. They may be fired because of their bad decisions and poor abilities.

Notes

Strategies:

1. When someone verbally attacks, excessively defends, just observe, and move on.
2. If the irate one is a client, 'take in' what they have to say – take notes if you can, and let them know that you want to ensure their ultimate satisfaction. Ask if you can have someone else participate in the discussion. If you made a mistake, follow your company policy – (Apologize or not? Seek a resolution?). If the person is verbally abusing you, tell them you realize they are upset, but you need to withdraw from the conversation until they can speak to you in a respectful manner. You may state that you feel threatened by them, and end the scenario abruptly if necessary. Speak with your supervisor as soon as possible and document all that you can remember about the incident.
3. Realize that the person is feeling very insecure at that time.
4. Don't continue to push them.
5. If the behaviour occurs when the person is under stress, wait until another time to pursue the discussion.
6. If they are always overly defensive or always attacking others, look for another person to work with who does not have the same problem.
7. Remain positive in your interactions & be confident: don't allow yourself to be verbally abused.
8. If the difficult person is your boss, reconsider whether it's time to find a job elsewhere. Maybe this one is no longer 'a match'.

Supervising negative people?

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1. Help the person see how much their negative behavior is damaging their career potential.
2. Set goals for them to learn to work better with others and monitor their behavior until it improves.
3. If it does not improve within a reasonable time, help them find a more suitable employment area.

Notes

Overcoming negative aspects in yourself:

1. **If your negative side is 'how you are' most of the time, it is and will seriously impact all aspects of your life.**
2. Learn and practice positive thought and visualization techniques, including scenarios of 'you being positive, happy, fulfilled, liked', etc.
3. Recognize when your defensive mechanisms pop up: you are probably not really being attacked.
4. Catch yourself feeling defensive: react more slowly, calmly.
5. Practice listening when someone asks a question or makes a suggestion.
6. Ask people to re-state their question/comment/suggestion.
7. Try to understand what others are saying by repeating back what you think you heard.
8. You can ask for more time to respond, then get back to them. You're off the hot seat.
9. Do consider that other people have good ideas, like you do.
10. Study or take courses in listening skills and team-building.
11. Find someone who can help you work on this negative aspect of yourself.
12. If your helper is someone that you interact with regularly, ask them to let you know when you are being a jerk and call your attention to what you are doing. That will help you learn to see what situations and events trigger your insecurity.
13. Recognize that changing learned patterns of insecurity and defensiveness may take years of work.
14. Don't give up on yourself.
15. Explore and understand your own personality and your unique strengths and weaknesses.
16. Your effort will be rewarded as you find more career opportunities open up for you, and more joy in your life.

<i>Questions and Issues to Discuss at Team Meeting</i>	<i>Ideas for Positive Change</i>

This VisionarEase document is for 'starter info' only. . It is meant to elicit thought and positive reflection as well as discussion. It is based on information in the public and academic domain, and common traits observed through the leadership experiences, and life-long academic studies and research of the author. A detailed exploration and educational seminar on "Dealing with Difficult People – The Healthy Thinking Approach" is available as a ½ day classroom-style VisionarEase event.

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