

Difficult People: You Can Deal With Them

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

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.

Difficult Personality Types

The following are some of the behavior types with which most people have difficulty:

- Bullies – are hostile and angry, throw 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 by saying, "That won't work."
- "I know better" types – think they know everything, and they can also be very condescending
- Stallers – put things off until someone else takes over or until the decision is made because of the delay

Ways to Cope

These behaviors are annoying and can be very 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 that difficult people set up. When someone practices difficult behaviors around you, here are a few suggestions that may help:

- For bullies, stand up for yourself. Use phrases like "I believe" or "I feel." Don't try to fight them but instead, make your point firmly.
- Let grippers know you've heard their concerns. Directly ask, "What is it that 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's really happening.
- Don't argue with "just say no" types. Instead, suggest what 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 to find out what the real reason for the delay is. Help them, and ask them for help.