



## Dealing with Difficult People – Secrets and Strategies You Can Apply

*“No one can get your goat if they don’t know where it’s tied up.” Zig Ziglar*

Everyone encounters difficult people, and experiences the frustrations of interacting with them. But frustration, and the outcomes of conversations with difficult people is at least partially under YOUR control. By learning and applying various difficult and annoying people tips and strategies you can make your life easier, and have less problems.

### **1. Listen more effectively.**

Listening is the number one tool in communication, especially when dealing with difficult people.

### **2. Step back and analyse the situation from an outside perspective.**

When we are less emotionally involved and “cool our jets,” the answers come for how to effectively deal with them. Whether dealing with a difficult boss, dealing with a difficult co-worker, or spouse.

### **3. Ignoring often doesn’t work.**

The tension becomes so thick you can cut it with a knife.

### **4. Choose your battles.**

There are times when you have to “let it go.” Know when to speak up and when to pick your battles.

### **5. Criticise in person, praise in public.**

Never publicly criticise someone as you will look like the bad guy and the difficult person will only become more upset.

### **6. Maintain respect for them – even if you disagree or dislike them.**

At least acknowledge what they say. Think about how you would want to be treated.

### **7. Seek first to understand then to be understood.**

Especially when dealing with difficult people.

### **8. People often won’t care what you think unless they think you care.**

At least attempt to see it from their perspective.

### **9. Maintain high expectations and standards if you are managing this employee.**

If you don’t do this you will be seen as enabling their unacceptable behaviour.

### **10. Strive for greater communication.**

Often, it’s not that there isn’t enough communication, it’s that it’s bad communication. So work on improving your conflict resolution skills. If you are a manager, consider training everyone in conflict

resolution. One of the main reasons teams fail is because some of the people on the team don't like each other, or aren't skilled in handling conflict.

**11. Invest in communication skills courses and conflict resolution skills courses.**

Improve the part you can control – you.

**12. Don't lose emotional control.**

Antagonists and “passive-aggressives” will often try to push your buttons.

**13. Avoid being around difficult people when they're in a bad mood.**

If they're always in a bad mood, try being around them when they are in a “better” mood!

**14. Accept, change or reject. Know that ultimately you only have three choices.**

- i. Accept the situation knowing it won't change.
- ii. Attempt to change your relationship with them by changing how you react.
- iii. If it's really affecting your well being, it may be time to “reject” the situation and move on.

**15. Avoid "but." No “but's” allowed!**

For example, don't follow giving them positive reinforcement with, “But on the other hand...” The word “but” only negates everything positive you just said.

**16. Non-verbally position yourself at their eye level.**

For example, if they are sitting when you talk with them, sit. If they are standing, stand. Converse at their level.

**17. Avoid the word “need” when possible and use “want” instead.**

Saying politely and tactfully, “John, I want to have the project in to me by noon so that we'll meet our deadline. “Want” is more assertive as long as it's in the right tone.

**18. Watch your tone of voice.**

Avoid an autocratic or sarcastic tone. The Latin root of the word “sarcasm” is “sarco” meaning tearing of the flesh!

**19. In face-to-face communication, words account for 7% of what people notice and believe about you.**

Tone is 38% and body language 55%. So a full 93% is tone and body language.

**20. Give sincere positive reinforcement when they do something well.**

Show genuine appreciation. Often difficult people are difficult because they feel unappreciated.

**21. Avoid absolutes such as, “You always” and “You never.”**

It puts difficult people further on the defensive.

**22. Don't take it personally.**

Often they're difficult because of something going on with them.

**23. Watch your mental state.**

Don't let them drag you down. A little of that can be normal but don't allow it to go on.

**24. Remember the person who constantly angers you or intimidates you, controls you.**

**25. Mutually agree to move on.**

Agree to disagree. If this isn't possible, at least "move on" in your own mind.

**26. Attempt to understand what's driving that difficult behaviour.**

Get at the root cause, even if you only try to figure it out in your own mind.

**27. E + R = O. Event + Reaction = Outcome.**

You can't control the event, but you can control the outcome based on how you react or respond. Be careful how you respond.

For example, there's the story of the couple who were divorcing. A neighbour said to the wife, "Do you think you'd ever get back together?" She replied, "No, because we have said things to each other that are so horrible, that even after apologising they could never be taken back. There's no way we'd get back together." The moral of the story...be careful what you say. Once those words are out they're hard to take back.

*Article by Colleen Kettenhofen*

## Organisational Symptoms of Compassion Fatigue

- High absenteeism
- Constant changes in co-workers relationships
- Inability for teams to work well together
- Desire among staff members to break company rules
- Outbreaks of aggressive behaviors among staff
- Inability of staff to complete assignments and tasks
- Inability of staff to respect and meet deadlines
- Lack of flexibility among staff members
- Negativism towards management
- Strong reluctance toward change
- Inability of staff to believe improvement is possible
- Lack of a vision for the future

“In the  
Midst of  
movement  
and chaos,  
keep  
stillness  
inside of  
you.”

- Deepak Chopra

“He who  
knows  
others is  
learned. He  
who knows  
himself is  
wise.”

- Lao-Tzu

“We shall  
draw from  
the heart of  
suffering  
itself the  
means of  
inspiration  
and  
survival.”

- Sir Winston Churchill

“What lies  
behind us  
and what  
lies before  
us are small  
matters  
compared  
to what lies  
within us.”

- Ralph Waldo Emerson