



DEALING WITH DIFFICULT PEOPLE

We've all encountered our fair share of difficult people. People who don't turn their work in as promised, people who don't show up for meetings, people who stick vehemently to their views and refuse to collaborate, people who push back on work that they're responsible for - and more. There are times where there are difficulties in getting a consensus because everyone is so firm in their views.

No matter where you go, you can never hide from them. Hiding isn't a permanent solution. What's more, in the context of work, it's usually difficult to avoid or hide from someone, unless you quit from a job totally. Here's some tips in dealing with such people:

1. Be calm.

Losing your temper and flaring out at the other person typically isn't the best way to get him/her to collaborate with you. Unless you know that anger will trigger the person into action and you are consciously using it as a strategy to move him/her, it is better to assume a calm persona.

Someone who is calm is seen as being in control, centred and more respectable. Would you prefer to work with someone who is predominantly calm or someone who is always on edge? When the person you are dealing with sees that you are calm despite whatever he/she is doing, you will start getting their attention.

2. Understand the person's intentions.

No one is difficult for the sake of being difficult. Even when it may seem that the person is just out to get you, there is always some underlying reason that is motivating them to act this way. Rarely is this motivation apparent. Try to identify the person's trigger: What is making him/her act in this manner? What is stopping him/her from co-operating with you? How can you help to meet his/her needs and resolve the situation?

3. Get some perspective from others.

In all likelihood, your colleagues, managers and friends must have experienced similar situations in some way or another. They will be able to see things from a different angle and offer a different take on the situation. Seek them out, share your story and listen to what they have to say. You might very well find some golden advice in amidst of the conversation.

4. Let the person know where you are coming from.

Let the person know your intentions behind what you are doing. Sometimes, they are being resistant because they think that you are just being difficult with them. Letting them in on the reason behind your actions and the full background of what is happening will enable them to empathise with your situation. This lets them get them on-board much easier.

5. Build a rapport.

With all the computers, emails and messaging systems, work sometimes turn into a mechanical process. Re-install the human touch by connecting with your colleagues on a personal level. Go out with them for lunches or dinners. Get to know them as people, and not colleagues. Learn more about their hobbies, their family, their lives. Foster strong connections. These will go a long way in your work.



6. Treat the person with respect.

No one likes to be treated as if he/she is stupid/incapable/incompetent. If you are going to treat the person with disrespect, it's not going to be surprising if he/she treats you the same way as well. As the golden rule says, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."

7. Focus on what can be actioned upon.

Sometimes, you may be put into hot soup by your difficult colleagues, such as not receiving a piece of work they promised to give or being wrongly held responsible for something you didn't do. Whatever it is, acknowledge that the situation has already occurred. Rather than harp on what you cannot change, focus on the actionable steps you can take to forward yourself in the situation.

8. Ignore.

If you have already tried everything above and the person is still not being receptive, the best way might be to just ignore. After all, you have already done all that you can within your means. Get on your daily tasks and interface with the person only where needed. Of course, this isn't feasible in cases where the person plays a critical role in your work.

9. Escalate to a higher authority for resolution.

When all else fails, escalate to your manager. This is considered the trump card and shouldn't be used unless you've completely exhausted your means. Sometimes, the only way to get someone moving is through the top-down approach, especially in bureaucratic organisations. Be careful not to exercise this option all the time as you wouldn't want your manager to think that you are incapable of handling your own problems.