

Dealing with Difficult People



DO YOU RECOGNIZE THESE PEOPLE?



The Know-It-Alls

They're arrogant and have an opinion on every issue. When wrong, they get defensive.



The Passives

These people never offer ideas or let you know where they stand.



The Dictators

They bully and intimidate. They're constantly demanding and critical.



The "Yes" People

They agree to any commitment but rarely deliver. You can't trust them to follow through.



The "No" People

They are quick to point out why something won't work and are inflexible.



The Gripers

In anything ever right with them? They prefer complaining to finding solutions.

How to Deal with Difficult People

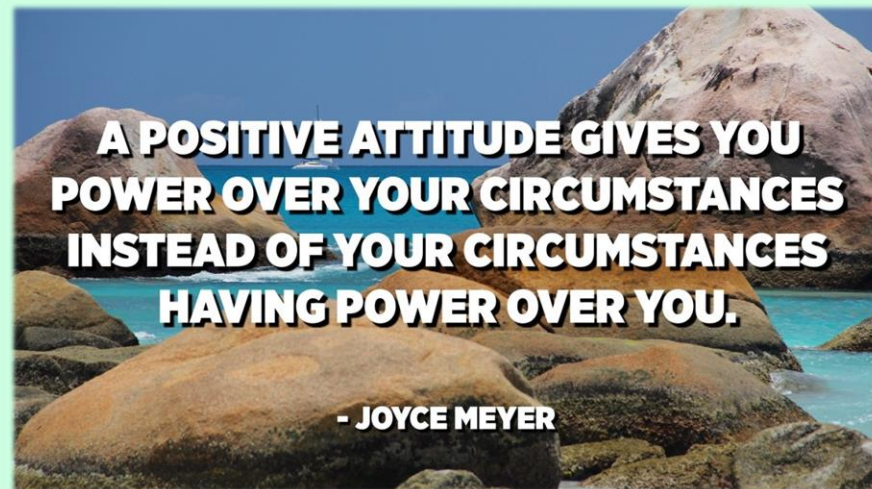
- ▶ Stop wishing they were different.
 - They are who they are. You can't change or control them.
- ▶ Stop making assumptions about intent.
 - When you constantly assume the worst about why they are difficult, you are doomed to fail.
 - Difficult people often don't see themselves as difficult.
 - Don't overreact or take it personally.
- ▶ Try to understand them.
 - Privately ask if there's something you've done to upset them. Even if it's not you, it can lead to conversation.

How to Deal with Difficult People

- ▶ Build rapport.
 - Find common ground and build small bridges to develop trust. Having genuine interest and understanding can motivate them to treat you with respect.
- ▶ Use kindness, don't be difficult in response. Be empathetic and open to listening.
- ▶ Document any negative incidents immediately after so you can objectively analyze the situation.
 - Be critical of yourself – Is there something you are doing that makes dealing with the person more difficult than it needs to be?
 - Look for patterns and triggers to better handle things in the future.

How to Deal with Difficult People

- ▶ Get support from someone you trust for guidance.
- ▶ Keep a positive attitude. Staying positive will prevent the person from affecting your own personal/professional life.



Work Behaviors of Difficult People

- ▶ Poor job performance
- ▶ Doesn't work well with others
- ▶ Doesn't respond to coaching
- ▶ Resistant to change
- ▶ Doesn't take responsibility for own actions
- ▶ Negative attitude
- ▶ Poor work ethic
- ▶ Poor communication skills

How to Manage Difficult People: Discipline/Issues

- ▶ Devise a game plan
 - Before you meet, know your talking points
 - Be aware of your normal reactions to the person and prepare yourself to react differently
 - Don't do it when you're angry
 - Do it in private
- ▶ Keep it all in perspective
 - Difficult people generally want something different than you do.
 - What is the hidden need or what are they trying to avoid that caused the problem?
 - Focus on the person and LISTEN

How to Manage Difficult People: Discipline/Issues

- ▶ **Control your approach**
 - Always be respectful and professional
 - Stay on topic
 - Be as fair as possible
 - Provide support and empowerment for improvement
 - Don't get defensive or match anger with anger
 - Avoid blame
 - Avoid demeaning comments like “lower your voice” or “calm down”
 - Saying “I understand” usually makes it worse, instead say “tell me more so I can better understand”
 - Don't smile or joke
 - Don't talk over the person
- ▶ **Know when to call it**
 - Recognize when the conversation is no longer productive
 - Back away and try again later, or
 - Escalate to HR or your manager

And, Finally...

- ▶ While challenging, dealing with difficult people can be overcome by staying calm and in control.
- ▶ Remember, you can't change others, but you can change how you deal with them.



Click on the button below to take the quiz for this session.

QUIZ