

Leadership Tips May 2006

In This Issue: Dealing with Difficult Behaviors

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Dealing with Difficult Behaviors

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Communicating with "difficult" people requires patience, understanding and empathy. Most of us don't consider ourselves to be difficult people, but we all tend to react with difficult behaviors under certain circumstances. Illness and stress are two common triggers for negative reactions. Those are the times that we appreciate someone who will listen to us with understanding, not criticism or confrontation.

Some people get overly defensive when their efforts or work is criticized. Others will agree with everything to your face, then later express their real feelings behind your back. Some individuals always think they are right and everyone else is wrong. When we encounter any of these behaviors, we tend to want to run the other way and avoid the situation.

Seven Difficult Behaviors

By identifying key difficult behaviors, and by responding appropriately, you will be a much more effective communicator. People with difficult behaviors may not be getting their needs met. They may need to feel validated, understood, respected or recognized. Instead they feel frustrated. Look for opportunities with each of these behaviors to understand the need and to truly understand their point of view. Park judgment and don't personalize. Here are seven common types:

Aggressor

Egotist

Sneak

Victim

Negator

Super-agreeable

Unresponsive

Although no one is totally Unresponsive or completely Negator, most difficult people demonstrate one trait more strongly than others. Learning the communication strategies for dealing with people who demonstrate a particular difficult trait can assist you in developing valuable coping skills.

Aggressive Behaviors

Aggressor

Egotist

Egotists and Aggressors have angry, confrontational and sometimes even abusive behavior. They are not able to appropriately handle their frustrations, but their attacks are usually not personal. They have a pattern of reacting harshly to certain stimuli when their need for validation goes unmet.

Try to call the attacker by name: "Keri, let me hear your side of the issue. I'd like to hear what is upsetting you." Using the person's name and speaking with understanding, can help move the conversation into the positive. Once he or she has a chance to vent and feel validated, attackers are often open to finding a resolution.

Egotists are generally experts in their field or subject. They want acknowledgment and recognition for their expertise. However, they can also be intimidating and aggressive. Since the Egotist likes to talk about what they know, if you are attentive, show them respect, and listen well, they usually calm down.

Other Behaviors

Sneak

Victim

Negator

Sneaks will take potshots, are often sarcastic, and want attention. Use direct communication and comment on the issue. Don't react to any personal attacks or comments. You might say, "Terry, do you have a different point of view?"

Victims see everything as negative. They complain, whine, and seem to be powerless, feeling pretty defeated from the beginning. To meet their need for empathy, you might say: "I'd like to work with you to improve things. Could we try this together?"

Negators are negative and distrustful, especially of any authority figure. They are very stubborn and stuck in their narrow beliefs. Try to stay positive, but realistic. Don't engage in an argument, but hear

	<p>them out. Let them vent so you meet their need for respect and trust.</p>
<p>Some Very Difficult Behaviors</p> <p><i>Super-agreeable</i></p> <p><i>Unresponsive</i></p>	<p>Super-agreeable and Unresponsive people may be the most difficult behaviors to communicate with because they tend to be passive-aggressive. The Super-agreeable might appear friendly and approachable, but with a very strong need to be liked, they can act out in destructive ways to meet their need. They hate to say "no," tending to over promise and under deliver. Be careful to get very clear agreements with them. Show personal interest to help build trust.</p> <p>Unresponsives need to be drawn out and feel included. Be patient and learn to ask the right questions. Don't be tempted to finish their thoughts. Just wait in silence. Give them time to prepare their answers or solutions. Don't expect them to react on the spot.</p>
<p>Try Strategies, but Know When to Give Up</p>	<p>Write the strategies on post-it notes or cards. Review the appropriate strategy before meeting with a difficult person. Practice patience and empathy. Keep in mind that you may not know the whole story and some behaviors may be long standing patterns that are slow to change. You may need to consider using some professional coaching, teamwork or facilitated mediation.</p>

Getting Help

Whether you are a seasoned executive, or if you are just starting your career there is no greater skill than being able to recognize that you need help.

Working with difficult people can be extremely complex and challenging. You may find that you need outside assistance to get your group back on track, or that you need some coaching for yourself to be able to deal effectively with people.

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About Dr. Manning

Dr. Marilyn Manning, CSP, CMC, the founder and CEO of The Consulting Team, LLC, and international author of seven business books, resolves difficult people problems.

She specializes in interactive speeches, workshops, and consulting in the areas of Leadership, Teamwork, Conflict Mediation, Executive Coaching, Meeting Facilitation, Strategic Planning, and Communication.

82% of Dr. Manning's work is repeat business.

For more information go to: **www.theconsultingteam.com**.

Drawing

Send us an e-mail to leadershiptips@theconsultingteam.com, describing your favorite "Leadership Tip" and your name will be entered in a drawing to win a copy of Dr. Manning's latest book, *Developing as a Professional*.

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About Leadership Tips

Leadership Tips is a periodic newsletter aimed to help individuals deal with the difficult issues they face in today's busy and often hectic work environment.

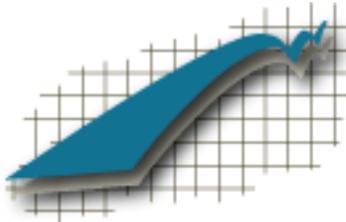
We deal with topics such as conflict, anger and stress management, team building, change management, how to become a better communicator, and how to developing leadership skills.

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