

Dealing with Difficult People

Difficult people can sabotage any conflict resolution session. But often the trouble arises when we overreact to these people. Here are seven difficult types and some do's and don'ts for working with them. Add your own notes on what works with these people.

- **Aggressive types** want to force their viewpoint on you. They like to blow off steam. They may attack verbally.
 - Don't attack back.
 - Do ask them firmly to sit down and explain calmly what they have to say. Just listening without returning the anger seems to calm them.

- **Know-it-alls** are "experts" who have no patience for other people's input.
 - Don't be intimidated, or let them take over a meeting.
 - Do listen to them and try to benefit from their knowledge.

- **Victims** often complain and feel they are being treated unfairly.
 - Don't try to become their protector.
 - Do ask them for suggestions to improve the situation. They need practice giving positive ideas.

- **Sarcastic types** use words as weapons, often destroying harmony in a group and causing resentment. They can be poor team players.
 - Don't let them get away with this behavior. Let them know that sarcasm is unacceptable.
 - Do compliment them when they say something positive or show team spirit.

- **Nay-sayers** have nothing good to say about others' ideas.
 - Don't try to reform them.
 - Do invite them to suggest alternatives. Many times they will back off if asked to say something constructive.

- **Yay-sayers** will go along with anything just to gain approval.
 - Discourage them from making more commitments than they can handle.
 - Do make sure they follow through on what they agree to do.

- **Withdrawn types** seem to have nothing to contribute and are difficult to draw out.
 - Don't nag them to open up.
 - Do ask open-ended questions that require them to produce more than a yes or no answer. Be patient about waiting for their answer.

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