

DEALING

WITH

DIFFICULT PEOPLE

GETTING THE BEST OUT OF EVERYONE



PAUL ENDRESS

Dealing With Difficult People

Getting the Best Out of Everyone



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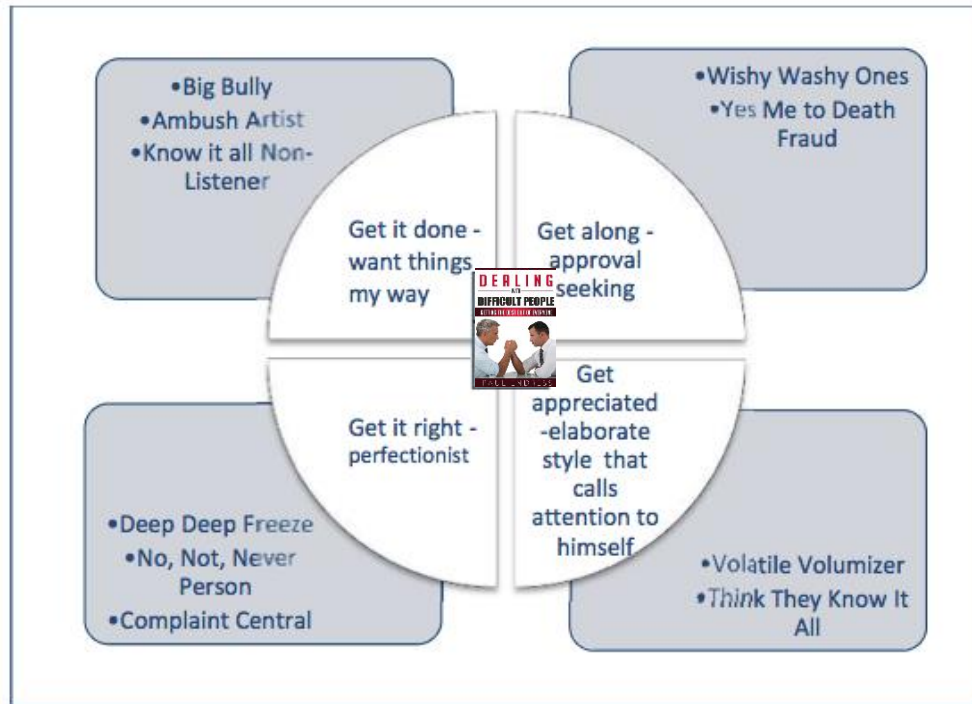
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INTRODUCTION

We all know some difficult people, don't we? It's frustrating enough when there are people that we deal with casually, but it is worse when they are members of our family or a boss. If these people are coworkers, it's irritating, but we can possibly keep interaction with them to a minimum. If they are people we can't get away from, it takes a little skill to deal with them and come out unfrazzled.

How many of these types are familiar to you?



These fairly familiar types show up in all walks of life as coworkers, family, neighbors and friends. They can terrorize and paralyze you. You don't like working with them or even talking to them.

Luckily, you can outsmart them and help them. If you understand them and then use some easy strategies, you have a good chance of keeping peace and getting what you want done.

No longer do you have to suffer in silence while your frustration builds up. You may have thought this was your only option, but it isn't.

Another tactic you might have used in the past is to walk away. Sometimes, that really is the only thing you can do when you try to be reasonable and nothing gets through to the difficult person. In some situations if you stay and try to do or say anything else, it will only make matters worse. But a lot of times there are tactics you can use that will work well.

This book will discuss the difficult personality types mentioned above, as well as several others. It will give you explanations for their behavior so that you can understand why they act the way they do. It will be easier for you to change your attitude about them because you'll see them

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differently. Finally, you'll learn some strategies for dealing with their difficult behavior. Armed with this understanding and some strategies, you'll be in a much better position to take charge in these situations and guide them to a more favorable outcome.

DIFFICULT TYPES YOU MIGHT KNOW

Braggarts and blowhards, whiners and naysayers -- they're hard to work with and hard to live with. Here are ten of the most common types. One thing to remember when you read through these types is that these are behavior patterns people resort to when they're feeling threatened or frustrated. All of us resort to these once in a while.

THE BIG BULLY

These people can ruin any day and any project. Whether they've contributed anything themselves or not, they come on full blast with criticism and accusations. They have only negative things to say about you and what you've done, and they think they've come to save the day.

As people stand paralyzed around them, they take over and start to bark orders. Soon, however, they lose interest and move off in another direction. With everyone demoralized around you, you are left to pick up the pieces.

THE AMBUSH ARTIST

If you've spent any time in business, you probably know this type. You've worked hard and long on a project for weeks and are unveiling it to the group. Out of nowhere the Ambush Artist shows up and begins to tear your presentation apart. This person specializes in saying just the right thing to destroy your credibility with a comment or a snicker. She seems innocuous, but she's double-barreled trouble.

THE VOLATILE VOLUMIZER

This person is disruptive and confusing because he takes an ordinary situation and blows it out of proportion with hostility that is inappropriate to what is actually going on. This is the person who throws a fit when they get his coffee order wrong at Starbucks for his lunch order wrong at McDonald's.

THE KNOW IT ALL NON-LISTENER

This person knows the answer to a problem without ever hearing about the actual problem. He might ask for advice, but he won't listen when it's given. He won't be corrected, and when things go wrong, he knows who to blame - you.

THE WISHY WASHY ONE

You've probably met this person at least once. This person can't be pinned down no matter how hard you try. She's hard to work with because she won't meet project deadlines; she's just as hard to have a bake sale with because she can't decide on her share of the goods.

THE YES ME TO DEATH FRAUD

These people are infuriating because they seem to be the nicest people around. They'll offer to do anything for anyone. They want to keep everybody happy. They'll do anything to avoid confrontation. But when it comes to delivering on the things they said they would do, what they deliver is excuses. They over-commit themselves so they have no time to actually do what they promised. Then they're surprised when you resent them for it.

THE THINK THEY KNOW BUT DON'TS

These people love to dominate meetings or parties. They believe they know what they're talking about, and they sound so sure of themselves that it takes someone with some real expertise to know that what they are saying is empty and wrong. Their goal is to get attention, and they fool enough people so that they usually succeed.

THE DEEP, DEEP FREEZE

This person is the strong silent type in a bad way. It's impossible to get them to hold up their end of the conversation. They have no opinion, good or bad. They are like the little boy who didn't talk until age six and when asked why, he said, "Up till now I've had no complaints." These people are hard to work with and hard to live with.

THE NO, NOT, NEVER PERSON

These people approach life with such futility and hopelessness that they give up before they even try. They are the ones who shoot down every good idea, whether it's at a meeting or presentation. They are so sincere in their belief that things won't work; they can't understand why you don't see it, too.

THE COMPLAINT CENTRAL PERSON

We all know at least one of these. These people complain about everything. Life is very hard for them, and they feel overwhelmed. This is because they are perfectionists and reality never measures up to what they have in mind. They complain to you and everyone else, but what they want is not so much solutions as to vent.

WHAT MAKES SOME PEOPLE DIFFICULT?

The first thing we need to do to improve relationships with difficult people is to understand where they're coming from. People behave based on what they're thinking. Their behavior can change very quickly as their thoughts change, but understanding their frame of mind is the place to start.

Everyone has a wide range of behavior including normal behavior and behavior under difficult circumstances. In their book *Dealing with People You Can't Stand*, Dr. Rick Brinkman and Dr. Rick Kirschner talk about intent being at the root of behavior. They believe there are four types of intent: getting it done, getting it right, getting along, and getting appreciation. Depending on what they want at the time, difficult people can shift from one of these states to another.

You can easily tell where people are coming from by looking at their communication style. In the "get it done" mode people are focused on a task to be completed. Communication is brief and to the point.

In the "get it right" mode focus is on the details of the task, with documentation to prove the task has been done correctly.

In the "get along" mode the person is considerate of others' feelings and opinions.

In the "get appreciated" mode the person has an elaborate style that calls attention to himself.

Clearly, if people who are working together have the same communication style, it would be smooth sailing. Problems arise when people with different communication styles or intent are working together.

For instance, when people want to "get it done" and it's not getting done, they become more controlling. The Big Bully, The Ambush Artist, and The No It All Non-Listener all become more controlling when they feel threatened.

When people want to "get it right" and are afraid it's being done wrong, they become more perfectionistic. The Deep Deep Freeze, The No, Not, Never Person, and The Complaint Central Person all become more perfectionistic when they feel something is being done incorrectly.

When people want to "get along" and think they're being left out, they become more approval seeking. The Wishy Washy One and the Yes Me to Death Fraud become even more approval seeking when they feel they are being ignored or rejected.

When people want "to be appreciated" and think they're not, they become more attention seeking. The Volatile Volumizer and the Think They Know It All's try harder to get attention when they feel they are not being appreciated.

Have you noticed that while you're reading through this list of the 10 most difficult behaviors, you might have run into yourself? If we're going to be honest, don't we all whine, complain, procrastinate about making a decision, and all the other behaviors from time to time? The difference is probably that we don't do it as often as difficult people and we don't do it with the intensity they do. When we see ourselves acting this way, we often deliberately change our behavior.

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Difficult people become more difficult when they feel threatened and not understood, so how we interact with them is key to them behaving at their best, not their worst.

In the next chapter will take a look at how we can communicate with difficult people to bring out the best in them.

SUCCESSFUL COMMUNICATION

There is less conflict and more cooperation between people who feel they are on the same page. There is a technique called blending where you mirror the other person's volume and speed when talking. We often do this automatically with people we like and trust. We can do this deliberately with difficult people to make them feel more comfortable.

In the workplace there's very little blending with people who work together. People want to know that you are listening and understanding what they're saying. A communication technique to let people know you are listening is to nod your head occasionally and make a sound like you understand, and then repeat back what they've said. Through this they know clearly that they've been heard.

The next step is to repeat back some of the actual words that the other person is using. Using their actual words relate strongly to them that you have been listening.

The third step is to clarify what's been said. Now you can start asking questions to get further information. This will give you more specifics and asking the right questions can help the difficult person become more rational. Asking questions demonstrates that you are taking the other person seriously; asking the right questions can more quickly lead to a solution.

The fourth step is to summarize what you've heard. Repeating the discussion to the difficult person shows that you are both on the same page and gives the person a chance to fill in any blanks, any details that are missing. Since it shows once again that you are making a serious effort to understand, it increases the likelihood of the difficult person's cooperation.

The final step is to confirm the conversation by asking outright, "Do you feel understood?"

This process is so deliberate and so focused on the difficult person and the issue, there's a great chance that you will receive cooperation from the other person.

THE POWER OF LISTENING

Most of us would like to be thought of as clever or intelligent. Some people -- we all know one or two -- think that the way to make that happen is to be a smart aleck with lots of wise cracks. Actually, the opposite is true. The surest way to make the other person think you are the most intelligent person he knows is to listen to him and pay attention to what he has to say. After all, if you're listening to him, you must be smart!

Listening gives the listener power in a few ways. This is even truer with difficult people. Most people, even difficult people, want you to know what their position is. We need to listen to learn his needs, but the problem is that difficult people set up uncomfortable situations with the result that we are even more likely to tune out.

If you give people a chance, they will tell you what they want from you. In fact, since the days of Freud, psychologists have believed that if you can get the other person to talk enough, she will not be able to stop herself from telling you what's on her mind. The reverse is also true. If you don't want the other person to know what you're thinking, don't talk very much.

Listening can also help you overcome self-consciousness because if you're completely involved in what the other person is saying, the focus is off yourself.

Here are some techniques that will make you a good listener in the eyes of the person talking:

1. Look at the person speaking. It helps you concentrate on what he's saying, and it becomes clear that you are listening with total attention.
2. Appear very interested in what is being said. Nod your head, smile when it's appropriate, and make a comment when asked.
3. Lean toward the person speaking. It's a natural tendency to lean toward an interesting speaker.
4. Ask questions. That's a clear indication to the speaker that you're listening.
5. Don't interrupt. Do the opposite -- ask him to tell you more. People are complimented when you draw them out.
6. Stick to the speaker's subject. This is another indication that you're interested.
7. Use the speaker's own words to get your point across. It shows you're listening, and it's a good way to get the speaker to agree with you.

SECRETS FOR INFLUENCING DIFFICULT PEOPLE

Do you want to know a powerful secret that everyone should know but few people do? Whether we know it or not, the most precious possession for every human being is his ego. This does not mean that the person is "egotistical" in the pejorative sense of the word.

What we are talking about is a sense of human dignity that we are all born with. It's a knowledge deep in each man or woman's heart that he or she is important and deserves respect. This is the true basis for self-esteem. It's a healthy force and a birthright. People who don't understand this often try to become significant through making money, becoming famous, or gaining power or significance in many different ways. This can cause a person to become an egotist in the negative sense, but that never satisfies the hunger for true inner self-esteem since it doesn't get to the root of real self-esteem.

This unsatisfied yearning for self-esteem creates most of the trouble in the world and also in the psyches of difficult people. If we remember a few truths about ourselves and everyone else, it will help us have much more successful relationships and encounters with others. Remember,

We all care more about ourselves than anything else in the world. There's nothing wrong with this. It's how we survive.

Every person wants to feel significant.

Every person craves approval by others, so that he can approve of himself.

We need to have some self-esteem before we can be kind to others. We need to like ourselves, at least to some extent, before we can like others. Knowing this helps us to understand why others act badly sometimes, and possibly why we do, too.

When self-esteem is good, people are easy to get along with. Their positive qualities dominate. They are tolerant and willing to listen to others' points-of-view. They can admit to being wrong sometimes since this is not crushing to their healthy self-esteem.

When self-esteem is low, people are difficult to get along with. People who come on as bullies or blowhards do so because of low self-esteem, not high self-esteem. When self-esteem is low, even a critical glance or slightly negative remark can have a severe sting.

Can you see the lesson here? The way to deal with this difficult person (all difficult people) is to help him like himself better. And do it in a genuine, authentic way, not in a superior, patronizing way. We all have good qualities as well as bad. Can you find the good qualities in the difficult person? If so, you will be able to treat him with respect. He will recognize that you have respect for him and will be easier to communicate with, now and in the future.

Remember, we all have a deep hunger for respect, and if you treat others with respect, they will be much easier to get along with.

BUILDING YOUR PERSONAL POWER

When we're talking about personal power here, we're not referring to force or intimidation. We're talking about the power we have to validate each other, and to satisfy each other's natural, universal ego hunger through acceptance, approval, and appreciation of each other. When we use this power successfully, it opens doors to everything we desire.

In this chapter we'll take a look at your personal power. Most of us never understand that we have any power -- not over ourselves or over other people.

A person who values other people will

Acknowledge the value of others. Think of it this way: 1. if you were the only person in the world, how much could you accomplish? 2. How much more could you accomplish as one among billions? Does that drive the point home? Did you ever consider that power is about how others see you? If you want power, people must see you as powerful.

Make more of others -- this will make more of you. Give people credit when it's due. It doesn't take anything away from you. On the contrary, it shows that you are strong and generous. This makes people in general admire you, especially the ones you are giving credit to.

Accept people for who they are. That doesn't mean that you necessarily like them, but if you want others to give you the power you seek, you must give it to them as well by allowing them to be who they are without judging them.

Work on approval, even of people you don't like. Everyone has something about him or her that you can admire. Everyone. When the other person feels your approval, he or she will give you the power you seek.

Appreciate others. Respect them and their time. See their individuality.

When you give others the acceptance, approval, and appreciation you want yourself, you are improving your life. This is a self-fulfilling prophesy, and they will give acceptance, approval, and appreciation back to you. When you're dealing with difficult people, they will recognize your positive attitude toward them and reward you with their cooperation.

HOW TO HANDLE THOSE DIFFICULT TYPES

Now that we have a general approach to discussions with difficult people, let's talk about the best way to handle each specific type.

THE BIG BULLY

The big bully is usually the type of person who is driven to get things done. When he feels thwarted in accomplishing something, he strikes out in general. Very often it's not personal at all, it's just his way to get something done. If you are under attack by the big bully it is because he sees you as part of the problem. Whether the bully is your boss at work or your spouse, he sees nothing wrong with his actions. He's forging ahead to complete a task. To the big bully, the end justifies the means.

When you are in the bully's line of fire, you might be tempted to counterattack. This is not the best idea since you might only incite him further.

Justifying your position at this moment won't work well either because the bully doesn't want to hear your explanations. He wants results, and you sound like you're giving him excuses. That could infuriate him even more.

When faced with an overbearing bully, many people shut down, say nothing, and slink off. This is a very bad reaction to the bully because it solves nothing. This reaction makes the bully believe that he is justified.

Your best approach in this situation is to hold your ground because bullies will not attack people they respect. You want to be assertive without becoming a bully yourself. This will impress the big bully and he will respect you now and in the future.

Second, the next thing to do is to repeat the bully's name to him. Say his name firmly and clearly until he stops attacking - now you have his attention.

Third, learn the bully's main concern. Quickly and clearly make it known that you understand what his complaint is. Then answer the complaint with a clear brief explanation. Finally, let him know that you're open to further discussion when he can speak to you with respect.

THE AMBUSH ARTIST

This difficult person is a backstabber when he feels threatened or left out. This person often attacks out of envy. Since it's not a frontal attack, you might not even know it is happening. But if you do happen to walk into an ambush, here's the way to handle it.

First of all, not all ambushes are equal. Sometimes the ambush is just attention-getting or trying to make people laugh at somebody else's expense, and sometimes it is more serious. Either way, this sniping is easier for some people to take than others. But it would be a mistake to either strike back or run away. The best way to deal with the Ambush Artist is to learn to have no emotional reaction because if you don't react, it's no fun for the Artist.

The best way to handle the situation is directly and assertively. If you hear a remark about you, stop what's going on, find the person who made the remark, address her directly, and say something like, "I think I heard you say... What exactly did you mean by that?" Be matter-of-fact

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but firm. If you're in the middle of a presentation, go through the same process and say, "How is that relevant to what we're talking about here?" Again, you're being matter-of-fact but firm.

At this point, the Ambush Artist will either back off, keep sniping, or become aggressive. If she backs off, go on with what you were doing before the interruption. If she keeps sniping, keep confronting her directly and asking what the point of her remark is. After a few of these confrontations, she will very likely stop sniping. If she comes out more aggressively with some comments, at least you brought it out into the open. Handle this the way you would Big Bully. Hold your ground, reply to the accusation, and ask to meet about it at an appropriate time. Then go back to what you were doing.

THE VOLATILE VOLUMIZER

The Volatile Volumizer is an exploder. Like the Big Bully, his eruption frightens the people on the receiving end of the explosion, and they either explode back or disappear. The Volumizer feels unappreciated and powerless. Some people explode infrequently; others do it on nearly a daily basis. Losing control like this results in self-loathing for the Volumizer, but, nevertheless, the cycle begins to build again.

Your best approach with the Volatile Volumizer is to get some emotional distance and take control of the situation. Be friendly and calm as you say his name to get his attention. As you repeat his name, he will start to calm down and begin telling you his immediate concerns. Address these concerns clearly and quickly.

The Volumizer will probably calm down fairly quickly because he is as uncomfortable with his behavior as you are. As he begins to calm down, you can decrease your own intensity. Take a time out so he can calm the rest of the way, but tell the Volumizer that you will discuss his concerns in the near future. Finally, during your later discussion, try to discover what sets the Volumizer off. If you can find the cause, you may be able to prevent future outbursts.

KNOW-IT-ALL NON-LISTENER

This difficult person is often an expert or very knowledgeable in her field, and assertive and outspoken. She has grown used to basking in her expertise and considers any question to be a challenge to her authority. She has next to no tolerance for new ideas she hasn't presented. Being wrong is a humiliation to her and she protects herself by avoiding questions.

With the Know-It-All Non-Listener you might be tempted to confront her by throwing her attitude back at her or you might be inclined to resent her for her arrogance. This type of difficult person requires you to be patient and flexible and to present your ideas in a way that won't threaten her. Realize that this closed-off person is doomed to fight a losing battle since there will always be new ideas to threaten her. Think about your previous experiences with this difficult type. What worked?

Your goal here is to open her mind with new ideas while remaining non-threatening to her. You must be very knowledgeable about the ideas you are presenting or she will not hesitate to shoot you down. Then, you need to present your ideas with the utmost respect since this person has a very fragile ego. Present your ideas clearly and quickly but deferentially. Soften your statements with words like "maybe" and "What do you think?" so that it doesn't sound like you are presenting your ideas as a challenge to her.

Your approach certainly demands patience, but as you continue to use this method, it becomes easier. As time goes on and your ideas are accepted, you will gain respect in her eyes.

If you manage to turn this Know-It-All Non-Listener into a mentor, it can be a win-win situation for both of you. You will have a better relationship with her, and she will benefit from your good ideas.

THE WISHY-WASHY ONE

Decisive people are realistic about making decisions and know that every decision has an upside and a down side. Indecisive people like Wishy-Washy are so afraid of a negative result that they can't bring themselves to make a decision. They procrastinate about making a decision until it's too late to make one, and the entire project suffers.

If you are managing the project or a coworker with Wishy Washy on the project, anger and impatience on your part is only natural. But that approach won't get you far with Wishy Washy. He will only stall and come up with more doubts.

You need to approach Wishy Washy with patience and a sincere desire to help. This will allow him to trust you so that he can relax and think clearly. At this point, he'll be much more able to make a decision. He'll be in a better mood to go the next mile -- to allow you to teach him a system for making decisions.

Provide a comfort zone for Wishy Washy where he feels your genuine concern. Patiently discuss with him his conflicts about making a decision. Try to understand the basis for his objections. Show him a few systems that will help him make decisions. It could be as simple as a list of pros on one side of a page and a list of cons on the other. Reassure him that the decision he is making is a good one and no decision is perfect.

Let Wishy Washy know that you'll be happy to have these discussions in the future while he is learning decision making. This difficult person can turn out to be an excellent decision maker with a little practice.

THE YES ME TO DEATH FRAUD

Yes Me To Death Frauds usually are sincere when they agree to do something, but if you've ever been sabotaged by somebody who promised to do something and didn't deliver, you know how infuriating it can be. Yes people over commit because they're trying to fulfill the desires of others. They don't think beyond the present moment so they don't realize that they can't possibly fulfill everything they've committed themselves to do. They just can't say no. Yes Me to Death people are nice people. They want everything to work out. When it doesn't, they make excuses and wonder why people are angry.

It's natural to be angry about broken commitments, but blaming and shaming the Yes Me To Death Fraud will only bring forth more promises and more excuses.

Your approach with this person has to be one of kindness. You must realize that this person does not really mean any harm but is a people pleaser with no organizational skills. You need to make the Yes Me To Death person feel safe so she can be honest with you while you discuss her problem together. Then give this person some training in how to be organized. It will take a little of your

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time to show her some specific action steps and processes, but with some training this person is capable of saying no to too many projects and managing her tasks.

A good way to ensure commitment from this person is to ask for her word of honor. That's a deep level of commitment and will be meaningful to her. You might want to ask her to write the commitment down and sign it. If there's a deadline involved, she should write that down too. If there are any negative consequences for not completing the project on time, you should make her aware of those.

Build a relationship with this difficult person so that if and when she overextends herself, she can feel safe coming to you and discussing it. This person is a genuinely nice person who can be turned into a staunch ally with the little training.

THINK THEY KNOW BUT DON'T PERSON

Above all, these people want to be appreciated. They want attention and are very assertive about getting it. This is the type of person who knows just enough to be dangerous. When you first listen, he sounds like he knows what he's talking about. He's pretty convincing too since he himself believes he knows what he's talking about. Sometimes listening to this type of difficult person can be funny, but if something needs to be done correctly and it's crunch time, this person loses his charm. Then it becomes a vicious circle. People don't have the time to listen to him, and the less they listen to him, the more he craves attention.

It's natural to be infuriated by this difficult person with his exaggerations and lies, but that won't get you anywhere. If you confront him aggressively, he will only exaggerate more and become louder.

Your best approach is to catch him when he's giving out misinformation and, without putting him on the defensive, put a stop to it. Ask him questions that will clarify some specifics and show that he doesn't know what he's talking about. Be sure to ask in an innocent manner since if he feels humiliated, your approach will backfire.

The next step is to correct what this difficult person said with the facts as you know them. At this point give him a way out by saying something like, "That's fairly new information and maybe you haven't read it yet."

If there's something you can thank him for, you should do it. He will appreciate being appreciated. Then get back to a discussion of the facts. This tactic can work out well for you because when this difficult person sees that you know what you're talking about, he may become a fan of yours.

The final step with this difficult type is to quietly let him know that his behavior has negative consequences for the group. At the same time, continue to give him reinforcement with the good things he does. That's really what he is looking for.

THE DEEP, DEEP FREEZE

This difficult person can be infuriating as she silently stares past you as if you were not there. This Deep Deep Freeze is a passive person, afraid of rocking the boat. She can also be a perfectionist who thinks that nothing measures up and withdraws in frustration. She seems to withdraw from confrontation but could be full of hostility inside. Children are good at practicing this behavior. When a parent is intense about trying to correct a child, the child often withdraws into complete

silence. The parent's behavior escalates in frustration, and the child goes further away and may even become completely unaware of what the parent is saying.

This difficult type exhibits similar behavior. Your goal is to get this person to talk. This will not be quick and easy, so if you need information from her, get it when you have some extra time.

The first step you should take is to ask open-ended questions because these are more likely to elicit an answer. Ask questions that start with who, what, where, when, and how, since these words and open up topics for discussion. As you ask questions, make sure that you look and sound like you expect an answer.

If everything else fails, you can try some humor. You could make some exaggerated guesses about why this person is the silent. That might break the ice. You could also make some guesses about what the person is thinking – all in a humorous way so that the person might break her silence. Whether you try this tactic depends on your own intuition about the situation.

Finally, you should gently try to show the Deep Deep Freeze that there are consequences to her silence. Show him what his silence is costing in terms of time wasted and lack of input from him. When the Deep Deep Freeze finally begins to talk, you should listen. You might get a lot of insight into why he's silent. This information could fend off these situations in the future.

THE NO, NOT, NEVER PERSON

The No, Not, Never person is usually a perfectionist who wants to get things right and not make mistakes. This person has high standards for what should be done, when it should be done, who should do it, and how it should be done which are not measured up to in life. So this difficult person believes everything will go wrong now and in the future.

This difficult person has a wide-ranging effect because negativity affects everybody around him. He is not intentionally trying to ruin things for everyone; he genuinely believes that things are as hopeless as he thinks they are.

Your goal in working with this difficult person is to move him from fault finding and negativity to problem solving and improvement. It's probably very tempting to come out and tell Mr. No Not Never that things aren't nearly as bad as he thinks they are. But that would be a bad idea. Studies have shown over and over that when you try to make this person more positive, you only end up becoming more negative yourself. He will drag you down.

One way to look at this person is to see him as an early warning signal of trouble. Many times the No Not Never person sees flaws that really there. As for dealing with his negativity, you can try one of two tactics: bring up the negatives before he does or agree with him about the hopelessness of the situation. Tell him that he couldn't possibly sell this product – he might surprise you, and give it a try.

Appreciate this difficult person for his good intentions and for having such high standards and for his willingness to speak up about details he's concerned with.

COMPLAINT CENTRAL

The complaint central person is a lot like the No Not Never person because they both want to get things right. But Complaint Central has no idea about what to do to make things right. This gives him a feeling of helplessness which inspires his customarily whiny voice.

If you have complainers in your life, you know how frustrating it can be. You can't agree with them because it makes them complain all the more. You can disagree with them, but they will only repeat what they said before. You can't solve their problems for them because they won't let you.

Although it may be difficult for you, the best approach is to have patience, compassion, and commitment to the process of getting them to look for solutions. First, you should listen to the complainer's main points. This shows them that you are interested. The next step is to get specific about the complaints. Let the complainer know for sure that he has been heard. Then shift the focus to finding solutions. This is the time to ask very specifically what he wants. If the solutions are completely unrealistic, show that to him and ask again what he wants. Do this until he comes up with a reasonable answer and then ask him what he's going to do to make that solution come true.

If the complainer is incapable of coming up with solutions, put an end to the meeting at that time, saying, "You don't seem to have the solutions right now, but let me know when you come up with some." Complaint Central needs to understand that constant complaining is not acceptable and that solutions do exist.

CONCLUSION

Dealing with difficult people isn't easy. It will, no doubt, require patience because you often have to repeat the process several times. Keep the final goal in mind. Each time you interact with the person, analyze how it went and then modify your approach.

Your confidence will increase as you repeat these interactions. You'll get better at it, and the difficult person will probably respond to you more positively each time.

Of course, it's not your first choice to have to resort to these tactics. But if you want a better relationship with the difficult people in your life, you don't really have a choice. These tactics do work, and when you see that for yourself, you'll know that the result is completely worth the trouble.

BONUS - DIFFICULT PEOPLE ACTION PLAN

Whether it's a boss or a relative, you might have someone in your life on a somewhat permanent basis who repeats the Difficult Person pattern again and again. In this case, your best defense is to spend some time thinking through this person's motivation and behavior so that you have an action plan ready when you need it. Ask yourself these questions to come up with your plan:

1. Describe the difficult person's behavior. Be as detailed as possible.
2. What is the motivation behind that person's behavior?
3. When you interact with that person, what is it like? Is there a pattern that repeats? Are some interactions better than others? Why?
4. Based on the techniques in this book, which one will be most successful in dealing with this person? Is the person a combination of more than one type? What, if anything, has worked with this person in the past?
5. What do you need to practice before your interaction with this person?
6. What steps will you take in your Action Plan? Choose a date by which you will have completed this interaction. And don't put it off.