



DEALING WITH DIFFICULT PEOPLE

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Difficult people are everywhere. Learning to deal with them effectively is a valuable life skill that can be used at home, work and in social situations. Each of us has a "difficult" person hiding inside, but of course it is much easier to recognize when someone else is being difficult.

Usually a difficult person is someone who is working from the "negative" side of their personality rather than intentionally trying to be difficult. The person is often unaware of themselves and how they affect others. We often jump to conclusions about why others do what they do. The fact is that people's behavior is mostly about them and *not* about you. It is important to remember that we usually react not to what somebody does, but to our understanding of it.

For example; you come into work and say "Hi" to a coworker, but the greeting is not returned. You feel hurt and insulted which comes not from the coworkers lack of response, but from what *you* think it means. It would be helpful to consider other possible reasons, such as: they didn't hear you, they are preoccupied about work, they have a personal problem weighing on their mind or they were just in a hurry.

See how easy it is to jump to conclusions and misinterpret other people and how we react not to who they are but to our interpretations and judgments of them. So learning to deal with difficult people can start with changing our minds about how we relate and understand people and situations. Given that unfriendly people, waiting lines, flat tires, deadlines and other problems are a part of daily living, it makes sense to learn how to react to them in way that keeps us calm, happy and feeling good about ourselves.

Here are some tools to help you face and deal with difficult people:

- **ACCEPT AND MAKE THE MOST OF DIFFERENCES** – Everyone is different and there is a tendency to attract people who are our opposites. These differences, however, can also cause friction. If we accept these differences instead of seeing them as difficulties, we can make the most of them.
- **ANTICIPATE THAT THE OTHER PERSON ALSO WANTS HARMONY**- If you approach a difficult person with the belief that he/she is as eager as you to restore harmony, you can make the first move, knowing that the result will be something you both want.
- **RECOGNIZE THAT CONVERSATION DOESN'T HAVE TO BE CONFRONTATIONAL** – It is often thought that when there is a disagreement there is also a confrontation. Conflict is a part of life and is not necessarily bad. Focusing on talking things over and promising to listen can result in victory for both parties.
- **LEARN FROM OTHERS AND ALLOW THEM TO LEARN FROM YOU** – Remain open to other people's opinions and viewpoints and share yours as well. Even if you don't like the person, getting to know them will lessen the feelings of tension. It is surprising, but when people feel your support, they will be drawn to you naturally – forgetting about your differences.