



**Annette Estes**

## **How to Deal with Difficult People**

*Here are seven tips on how to handle difficult people. You know, the ones who drive you up the wall, across the ceiling, and out the window!*

German writer, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe said, "For many people, one of the most frustrating aspects of life is not being able to understand other people's behavior." If that's true then we'd all be less frustrated if we *could* understand behavior.

There is a way to do that, as I write in my eBook, "*From Can't Stand to Understand - How to Handle Difficult People.*" Here are seven steps you can take to improve your people skills by understanding - and adapting to - people whose behavior can drive you crazy.

### **Understand DISC**

Learn the characteristics of the four DISC behavioral styles first defined by Harvard psychologist William Moulton Marston in his book, "*The Emotions of Normal People*" (1928). The four behavioral factors all people have in different degrees are:

- D-Dominant (how we handle problems and challenges)
- I-Influencing (how we influence others)
- S-Steadiness (how we respond to the pace of the environment)
- C-Cautious, Compliant (how we respond to rules set by others)

### **Know How to Identify Each Person's Core Style**

A person's core style is his/her highest behavioral factor and the one that dominates their behavior. People who have the core D and I styles are extroverted; those with the core S and C styles are introverted. High I's and S's are people-oriented; D's and C's are task oriented. Once you've determined someone's core style, you're better equipped to know how to communicate and relate to them to build rapport and have a more positive relationship. So, identify a person's core style this way:

- Extroverted and task-oriented: Core D
- Extroverted and people-oriented: Core I
- Introverted and people-oriented: Core S
- Introverted and task-oriented: Core C

## Learn How to Communicate with Each Style

Core D: They admire efficient, confident people. DO be clear, specific, brief and to the point; stick to business, be efficient. DON'T waste their time, be disorganized, ramble, socialize, or chit-chat.

Core I: They want to socialize, so DO be friendly and outgoing, let them talk and share experiences, smile and laugh with them. DON'T patronize or talk down to them, be too businesslike, unfriendly or impersonal, or take credit for their ideas.

Core S: Tone down your speech and body language with them. DO be patient, sincere, logical, soft-spoken, and non-threatening. DON'T be loud, abrupt or rapid, threaten or pressure them, force quick decisions, touch or move things on their desk.

Core C: They need a lot of data, facts, and time to make a decision, so DO be straightforward, accurate, and realistic, present specifics, be organized and follow through, give them space, keep your distance. DON'T be disorganized, messy, casual, informal, abrupt, chatty, or try to convince them with feelings and opinions.

There's a lot more to understanding how to relate to each style, but these guidelines will go a long way in helping you improve your communication with others.

## Know Your Own Style's Strengths and Weaknesses

The goal is to capitalize on your strengths and work to improve your weaknesses. Ironically, a weakness or limitation is usually a strength overdone.

Core D strengths: Makes quick decisions, efficient, gets things done, and likes to be in charge.

Core D weaknesses: Can be domineering, intimidating, abrasive, impatient, makes decisions without thinking of the consequences.

Core I strengths: Good conversationalist, friendly, optimistic, trusting, good at giving presentations and mediating conflicts.

Core I weaknesses: Can over-control the conversation, poor listener, rambles, can be unrealistic and too trusting.

Core S strengths: Quiet, friendly, helpful, methodical, good worker and team player.

Core S weaknesses: Clams up, avoids conflict, becomes passive-aggressive, is resistant to change, slow to make decisions.

Core C strengths: Analytical, organized, detail-oriented, precise, accurate, follows rules.

Core C weaknesses: Too low-risk, requires too much data before making a decision, can be fearful, pessimistic, a perfectionist.

Being aware of your limitations is the first step. Pick one right now that's holding you back and begin to work on eliminating or at least improving this negative behavior.

## **Don't Take Bad Behavior Personally**

No one likes to be chewed out, criticized, ignored, or otherwise mistreated. While we shouldn't allow people to treat us badly, we need to understand where people are coming from and realize they're behaving in the way that's most comfortable for them.

If you're the type who likes to talk things out, *ad nauseum*, and you're dealing with someone who's uncomfortable showing their emotions it can make both of you unhappy. We should set clear boundaries with people about what they may and may not say or do around us. Yet we shouldn't accuse people during conflict. Don't say, "You make me so angry when you won't talk to me." Use "I" messages. Say, "It makes me uncomfortable when you won't open up to me; I feel you're ignoring me and it's hurtful." That takes the pressure off of them and they'll be more open to listening to you and changing their behavior.

Adopt the attitude that if someone has a problem with you it's their problem, not yours, and don't get all bent out of shape about it. Moliere said, "A wise man is superior to any insults which can be put upon him, and the best reply to unseemly behavior is patience and moderation." Good advice.

## **Adapt to Other People's Styles**

The way to improve communications with others is to do three things: Understand your own behavioral style, understand the styles of people who are different from you, and adapt your style to theirs. If you treat people the way they like to be treated, they'll warm up to you and treat you better. The real magic begins when both people adapt their communication styles to each other. This formula is great for developing better personal relationships and for team building.

## **Be Non-Judgmental**

Oscar Wilde said, "Selfishness is not living as one wishes to live, it is asking others to live as one wishes to live." When you think about it, it's egotistical to get upset with someone for just being who they are, even when they're not on their best behavior. People generally aren't trying to upset you; they're doing what they feel is best for them, which most of the time is moving toward pleasure or away from pain.

These are some of my best tips for handling people who drive you up the wall, across the ceiling, and out the window. Get more tips below and good luck!

Get more tips on how to deal with difficult people at <http://www.coachannette.com/cantstand.htm>

and sign up for the author's free behavioral based interview newsletter at <http://www.behavioralbasedinterview.com>

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