

# Responding to difficult people

As long as you are in the workplace, you will interact with people who challenge you. An underlying truth to keep in mind is that people are just being themselves. Just like you are yourself. Most people are not trying to intentionally be difficult. Use these strategies for success.

## **Control your attitude**

When dealing with difficult people, the most important thing to remember is that you have ultimate control of your attitude. You always have a choice as to how to respond to a given individual. You can get upset and frustrated, or you can remain calm and handle that person with tact.

## **Stay calm, cool, and collected**

Try counting to 10, taking a break, walking away from the situation, or even putting the person on the phone on hold for a short time. These techniques work because they break you away from the situation, giving you time to think what to do.

## **Use your brain and not your heart, but have heart**

In other words, do not use emotions to handle a difficult person. When you use emotion, you are just reacting. Instead, use your mind to deal with the negative person or situation. When you do this, you are in control.

## **Weigh the situation and consequences**

Evaluate the situation and think about the consequences of your actions. See beyond the immediate. Anticipate what could happen and whether you can live with that. Then act in a positive, confident manner.

## **Attack the problem and not the person**

It never does any good to attack people. Obviously something happened that caused the conflict. Get to the issue and focus on it rather than on the person.

## **Listen**

Listen carefully in order to understand the other person's point of view. Block out your own thoughts, judgments, and priorities and listen to the other person's concerns and feelings.

## **Define the problem**

Are you clear on the real issue of conflict or is it just your perception? Ongoing communication helps clarify each person's perception of the situation, ensuring that the problem is clearly defined.

## **Use facts only**

Stick to the facts when confronting someone. You will get more positive results when you deal with the facts

than with the emotions around them.

### **Maintain each other's self-esteem**

It's harmful to belittle others, and diminishes your professional image. When confronting colleagues, make sure you communicate in a way that allows them to save face.