

Dealing with Difficult Personality Traits

Imagine how valuable it might be to have the skills and expertise to quickly and effectively address others who present with difficult personality traits.

Individuals with threatening, intimidating and negative personality traits undermine healthy organizational development.

Individuals all around us have their own unique personalities. Undoubtedly, we all encounter individuals from time to time with personalities that are challenging, negative, and even aggressive. When we better understand individuals with difficult personalities, it keeps us from taking things personally, and enables us to help create a safe and productive environment for others.

Some of the more dominant difficult personality traits include:

- **Hostile people** – These individuals are often abusive and intimidating, finding pleasure in the fear they create. They enjoy reacting, so they'll wait for others to challenge them.

- **Narcissistic people** – These individuals are interested in being the center of attention as often as possible. They want to look like the expert who can do everything better than you.
- **Passive-aggressive people** – These individuals are sly and cunning when they undercut authority. They will insult people in a sarcastic way and claim they are just joking.
- **Negative people** – People with this personality trait distrust anyone in power or authority. They are the only ones who know the right way and can find a downside to anything.
- **Antisocial people** – These individuals resist attempts to be engaged socially, making it impossible to know what they are thinking or doing. Antisocial people typically distrust others and assume everyone is against them.

ACTION STEPS

When interacting with hostile people:

- ✓ Find ways for them to let off steam and calm down without becoming abusive.
- ✓ Address them by name, and calmly state what you want to discuss.
- ✓ Set boundaries and avoid engaging them in front of an audience.

When interacting with narcissistic people:

- ✓ Refuse to argue or act like you know more than they do.
- ✓ Explain that you would like to use your knowledge too.
- ✓ Set clear boundaries, expectations and consequences.

When interacting with passive-aggressive people:

- ✓ Focus on the issue, not the person, and limit potential for personalizing.
- ✓ Meet with the individual in private or with one of your managerial peers.
- ✓ Let them know you will not tolerate their sarcasm and undercutting.

When interacting with negative people:

- ✓ Focus on the facts of a situation and what needs to happen next.
- ✓ Avoid engaging in discussion or debate about possible solutions.
- ✓ Instead, ask them what would be different if the problem was solved.

When interacting with antisocial people:

- ✓ Use open-ended questions when you speak to them and engage them.
- ✓ Be comfortable with silence and wait for them to respond.
- ✓ Build rapport casually rather than engaging intensely too quickly.

KEEP IN MIND

Dealing with difficult personality traits in the people we love or work with requires effort, and it can be frustrating and discouraging. Remember, you're not alone when it comes to figuring out how to work with those who have some of these traits. Consider engaging a life coach or counselor for guidance on next steps.

What steps will you take today to start learning how to address those with challenging personality traits?