

# **SUCCESS SERIES**



## **How to Conquer Difficult People** **Win and Change the Hearts of People Who Make Your** **Life Miserable!**

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## Introduction

I bet you will agree that there are people around you who make life miserable for you. They may even dominate or control you. As you rub elbows daily with such folks at home and in the streets, you are constantly deciding on how to act properly towards them. These minute decisions are being made by almost everyone. We don't want to mess up with difficult people and so we are always wary of our actions.

Troublesome people lurk everywhere. They are not really criminals, but they give others "a pain in the neck." They are the ones whom we might call the **difficult people**. And most of us deal with them everyday - without knowing who they are, why they are so, and how to deal with them. Answers to these questions equip us in dealing with them, and even in helping them.

You opted for this book because you don't want to be counted among the difficult people, and you want to help them in some way. If we all become true to these desires, we can make a lot of people happy, difficult or otherwise. We can start to spread the spirit of happiness around us and help make this world a better place, even in a limited sense. Conflicts throughout history, whether small or large scale, local or global, were attributed to difficult people who went out of bounds and affected the rest of humanity. Hence, the atomic bomb in Hiroshima, the genocide in Europe in World War II, the Holocaust, and even the Fall in the Garden of Eden took place.

This book will give you the necessary methods to help you conquer difficult people effectively.

## Chapter 1

### The Mechanics of Being Difficult

They are out there. They may either be your boss, college professor, business partner, landlord, or even your own spouse, children, siblings or parents. Anyone can be a difficult person to someone else.

You may not admit it - but at one time or another, all of us have been difficult people to other people. Who knows, you may be seeking a remedy for difficult individuals you know without being aware that you're a difficult person yourself.

It is vital to see if you are in a situation with a difficult person or if you yourself are beginning to be one. The first solution to any problem is recognizing the problem. There was this guy who held on tightly to a stem in the dead of the night deep in the forest, thinking he was hanging on a cliff. When the sun was up, he found the ground below him was a mere foot away from his feet. Had he known his real situation, he wouldn't have had to dangle there all night.

Most times, difficult people do not realize they are difficult. They don't see that they are demanding too much from other people. They think their attitude is just normal. Likewise, some of their victims may not see that they are dealing with difficult people. The earlier the problem is detected, the smoother the sailing will be.

#### **Smooth Sailing, But You're Still at Sea**

It's vital that at this early point, we grasp the fact that avoiding difficult people does not solve the problem in question. As earlier mentioned, these people are everywhere. There is no privacy they cannot invade. You might as well leave the planet and settle on Mars to get rid of them totally. But that will only mean you're going to start a new race of difficult people there.

If you like the sea, you have to get used to its moods. The key is not to stay out of it but to learn to sail smoothly through thick and thin. Likewise, it is learning how to deal with a difficult person that gives you smooth sailing amid a storm. Once you master this, difficult people will start liking you, and your new problem will be "how not to be liked too much" by difficult people. There is great reward in taming a difficult person. Remember *The Little Prince*?

**Why Are Difficult People Difficult?**

So what makes a difficult person difficult?

Everyone out there is fighting a life battle of some kind, even guys with the sweetest smiles. The battles may be fierce or slight, and people take these things according to their **level of toleration** or **LOT**. Some have a high LOT and simply take life's battles in stride, calmly accepting them as they come. Some, however, have low LOT and fail to contain the pressure that life's challenges present. The pressure spills over in whatever activities they engage in and affects whomever they get in touch with.

## **Chapter 2**

### **How Pressures Affect Difficult People**

When pressures in life start to get out of control, a difficult person is born. Babies are cute even when they start to mess around with things. But when they grow up, it's a totally different story. The same thing holds true for difficult people. They start out amusing, even witty, but most of them turn into monsters later—some overnight.

Life pressures are common. We all encounter them in certain measures, and the degrees vary each day. They help us mature gracefully, if handled well. But the moment it controls us, we tend to pass the pressure on to others and we become a pain in the neck, so to say.

The day you were born, the womb was pressured to the maximum and your mother had to be rushed to the delivery room. When the pressure was too much, a major operation was needed. When you were transferred from the womb into this world, you were grown through a series of pressures: the pressure to eat, to sleep, to stop crying, to lie on your belly, to sit, to crawl, to stand up, and finally to walk. Your parents had to force you to do these things as a part of growing up. Then there's the pressure to eat nutritious things like vegetables and fruits. As you continued to grow, you were pressured to talk and pronounce words properly.

Then, you were sent to school. There, the teacher introduced new pressures to you to help you learn more and be updated. The higher the schooling, the stronger the pressures became. Exams, projects, recitations, competitions, and the like were introduced to you, because more of those pressures will meet you in the future, they said. You were born and grown through pressures.

These pressures are all necessary. They are all good. They are designed to bring out the best in us. But somehow, when taken out of context or in the wrong perspective, they become negative pressures that, instead of bringing out the best, bring out the worse. Pressures ought to be faced maturely. This means the soul (mind, feelings, and will) is nurtured as pressures are overcome. But when the ego takes in all the beatings (the soul succumbs to the pressures), a difficult person emerges and takes over.

### **Types of Pressures**

More often than not, life pressure is the culprit in the emergence of difficult people. Other types are:

1. Peer pressure - when being difficult becomes a trend (glorified in movies and on TV) and your peers go with the flow.
2. Illness pressure - which is due to a mild illness.
3. Disciplinary pressure - when having a difficult attitude is assumed to test the loyalty and perseverance of subordinates, like in offices, in fraternities, and in the military.

These pressures are often momentary and feigned. Disciplinary pressures seldom result to a bad attitude because it is used to mold the character.

Pressures brought about by everyday life and which becomes ingrained is the focus of this study. These pressures may shock an individual and enter the system. As it hits bottom, it starts to build up and gather steam. Eventually, it is contained no longer and erupts into a destructive attitude.

### **Overt Pressures**

Some pressures in life are obvious. They attack from the outside. Piled up work in the office, a very demanding boss, deadlines to beat, school or board exams, and a nagging wife are examples of these pressures. They are often temporary and manageable, cut by rest periods when the cause of the pressure is allayed. But they show nonetheless, sometimes in slightly heightened degrees. And yes, some difficult people may also be a result of other people's being difficult to them. It's like a vicious cycle – in most cases it is attributable to attitude transfer. Wrong attitudes can be imparted.

Overt pressures are mostly "skin deep" and can rarely affect the total person for long periods. More so, it is seldom permanent. Bad attitude from this pressure feeds on the periodic onslaughts of minute pressures, and without such feeding the bad attitude subsides. But if ignored, such bad attitude may worsen as the ratio of pressures and rest periods become



disproportional. In such case, the bad attitude recovers quickly from the rest period because the latter is cut short by a new overt pressure.

For instance, a student is pressured by both financial problems and the submission of a school project due soon. He is irked by financial woes and lack of time. Such double or even multiple pressures produce low LOT. He starts to be prickly with his group mates. After rushing to finish the project the night before the deadline, the professor announces a long surprise quiz. The first pressures have hardly gone by when the second one comes in. The rest period is terribly cut short, leaving the battered emotions unrelieved, and the temperament all the more irritated. The LOT drops to its lowest point.

When a person is pestered by overt pressure and he has the will to initially overcome it, he tends to be *mildly difficult* at first. LOT slightly lowers. If symptoms persist and complications are added, he goes halfway to being extreme. It becomes extremely difficult to stop when the pressures start to really build up. The LOT dives as a result.

When the pressure increases the LOT decreases, and vice-versa. If a guy has control of his LOT and is able to even boost it, he has mastered the art of self-control and proves to be a strong, patient person we all admire. Most pressures are uncontrollable, but our levels of toleration are - if we master them. And once we do, we are able to help difficult people.

So the game is really all about LOT mastery. And winning the game means keeping the LOT high up. A high LOT is a sure way of determining that you are not a difficult person, and a high LOT is a sure tactic for conquering difficult people.

Take this case. When a demanding boss or professor (probably a difficult guy himself) is appeased, or a deadline is met, or an exam is passed, or a nagging (difficult) wife is momentarily pacified, then things quiet down and the difficult person relaxes and exhibits tolerable manners. And often, the ease periods that occur between pressures are relief well taken by him so that he may sometimes be strangely benevolent to people. You may see him being nice even to people he despises. He may buy everybody a free lunch. But don't be deceived. Such transitions are temporary. If you are caught with this person, brace up for another round of challenges soon.

Overt pressures are at times easy to escape from. Difficult people who meet such pressures usually resort to other activities to divert attention and be temporarily relieved from the pressures that beset them. They may busy themselves with some charitable works, games, leisure or hobby. They may take up a new school course, or socialize and hold positions in clubs. Initially, this seems a good way of “channeling energy” to other “positive” activities, but this is a mere escape route that can change or solve nothing except give short relief.

There are crucial factors affecting overt pressures. Among them are:

1. **Escapism.** As Karl Marx puts it, anything that diverts attention from the root cause of a problem is an “opiate” of the people. Escapism is not only an opiate. It drowns its victims in a whirlpool of falsehood and lies which later transforms and becomes real in a victim’s eyes. Many difficult people worsen when they resort to mere escapism to ward off pressures without confronting and remedying their situation. The brief relief diminishes in effectiveness; otherwise, higher doses of relief are required to produce a more potent “anti-pressure” in the same way that antibiotics become ineffective when over-used. Thus, you see some difficult people becoming harder to please. When difficult people resort to escaping, they are building their own world of lies. Worse, they impose such world on other people, so that meaningful relations are only possible when others adapt to the world of these difficult people.
2. **Crossing Over.** Some overt pressures, if taken positively, can actually serve as “stepping stones” to help difficult people overcome their adverse attitudes. These are called stepping stones because they can slowly change a difficult person from being difficult to being tolerable or considerate. It’s like crossing over from their false world to the real world.
3. **Pressure Reversal.** When you fight your negative tendencies, you reverse the pressure effects and come out a different person if done consistently. This takes a lot of self-control. It works pretty much like reverse psychology. Child psychologists say that instead of making a child obey you, you can talk to them in forms of suggestions that make sense to them based on their interests; for instance, telling them running

can make them stumble and hurt themselves rather than plain ordering them to stop running. Their interest is to avoid getting hurt. In pressure reversal, you convince yourself to always react positively especially in adverse situations. What is your interest here? It is not to become like the difficult person you are dealing with. You don't want to turn into an unreasonably demanding boss someday, so you assume exactly the opposite attitude your difficult boss is showing you. It takes an apple tree to produce an apple. If you want a banana, then don't plant an apple tree. Tell yourself, what's the use of passing the board exams and getting a degree if you have a rotten character and be infamous for it? As you take pressure from reviewing for the exams (or during exam day itself) and see you're bent on being touchy, persuade yourself not to give in. Fight it off and bear in mind your goal of becoming agreeably different.

### **Covert Pressures**

Pressures that are imbedded attack from within. They are the more subtle pressures that make for a more difficult and often defiant or resistant character. Difficult people born out of covert pressures seem to disagree with everybody and everything. They seem to hate the world. They seldom find respite from their pressures because the pressures are deep within. It has been built into their system. Unlike difficult people with overt pressures who still enjoy intermediate (though temporary) cessation of pressures, victims of covert pressures live a life of being difficult. They stay hurt and irritated, and are quick to react negatively to many situations.

Covert pressures are often things in the past that were impressed during childhood, like abusive or damaging words from parents, scenes of violence, fierce sibling rivalry, discrimination, and persistent financial problems. Some may be incurred in adolescence or even in adulthood. Covert pressures either push people to compete for recognition or to withdraw by blaming others. These people try to live a dream wherein everything is perfect due to their designs and doings. They see themselves as heroes who always know the right things to do. They dictate their ways and opinions on others while fully convinced they are here on a mission to correct others.

People react to covert pressures in 2 ways. They either:

1. **Compete for recognition.** Covert pressures may goad people to compete for recognition. Aching to be recognized is one highly motivational pressure that has either made or broken lives in history. A classic example is a boy who, due to poverty, suffered discrimination and banishment. His relatives made him feel that he would never amount to anything. As he grew up, the boy vowed to do everything to prove his accusers wrong. He later became a self-made man. Over the years he became successful materially but his hurt emotions had been imbedded within his ego. Now, life to him is one big competition. He constantly strives to show himself as right, and others as wrong. Of course, he does not announce this as a creed, but without being aware it becomes the foundation of all he does. It becomes the engine that runs his life, the inspiration that gives him gusto. So he goes about his daily routine correcting everybody, giving his unsolicited advice, and making sure everyone listens to him. After all, he is a self-made man, and people ought to learn from his example. And thus the difficult life begins for those close to him and around him. Of course, any man under covert pressure can opt to react differently and apply a little pressure reversal. He may still do everything to win in life, but he must also consider those who are not as successful, and those who do not want to be too successful.
2. **Withdraw by blaming others.** Covert pressures can also send people to the depths of despair; and being in a helpless state, they hate others for it. They may opt to appear defeated too, and may show how much a loser they are by refusing to engage in anything worthwhile. Yet they maintain that they are mere victims of circumstances beyond control, of which others are to blame. It is often a life of endless searching for reasons to despair more. These difficult people see nothing but failure and doom, and urge you to see things likewise. Yet, they may also opt to appear normal like everybody and pretend to undertake worthwhile things. But they lead a life of constantly blaming others for everything wrong and claiming authorship

for everything right. Often, these people will offer little help or suggestion, if any, unlike those who opt for competition for recognition. These individuals will only blame and put down people. They love to see failure mushrooming around people. They want to prove that everybody but them is stupid.

Covert pressures take charge of their victims' lives. They damage the emotional foundations of people. When ignored, they go deeper and settle in the egos. The ego, or inner person, is the one within that controls and operates the person outside. The visible person outside is a mere puppet of the person inside.

### **When Overt and Covert Pressures Strike Together**

Worst scenario comes when both overt and covert pressures attack difficult people. Imagine a guy with a serious, latent pressure imbedded in his heart which grows as the years pass by. Then add the outside pressures that worsen the pressure inside, and hot steams begin to spill out of breaks in the walls. When the whole thing finally gives way, you have a volcanic eruption in your hands. And in real life, there are such people.

Pressures do a lot of wonders to people. Geological pressures beneath the earth either create or stir up violent upheavals, or both. Same with pressures on humans. They can transform them to better and stronger individuals, or they can stir them to chaotic impulses that create deadlier pressures. People who are able to break through barriers of pressures unharmed come out like diamonds. (Diamonds come from a terrible build up of pressure from super red-hot rocks below the earth.)

## **Chapter 3**

### **Attitude Transfer**

To further understand the mechanics of being a difficult person, it is necessary to know that some attitudes may be transferred, and any such transfer may result in a worse or better attitude. It is a law of nature. Good cells always produce better, healthier cells. Bad cells produce worse cells, and worse cells produce dead cells later. A good tree produces good fruits, and a bad tree produces bad crops.

Now, by putting the pressure reversal to work, the vicious cycle can be interrupted and can produce the exact opposite. A good attitude can spring up from a bad attitude if the bearer simply decides to be different and works it out. A bad tree may be treated with reversal treatments like grafting and spraying to make it bear good fruits.

A difficult person is difficult probably because he got it from someone close to him. A difficult father may inadvertently transfer his personality to a child who either idolizes or abhors him. A professor may transfer his attitude to his students. You may acquire the characteristics of your friends.

#### **Hero-worship Transfer**

When a successful person is a difficult person, those who idolize him and follow in his footsteps may also turn out to be difficult individuals too. They will see that a factor in his success is his dealing with people. People always attribute their success partly to management skills. And to others, “management skills” is the style of talking to and treating people; or worse, putting pressure on people for them to work harder.

Likewise, a person who ends up in tragedy may appear “successful” to others as a hero because he personifies the cause they are fighting for. For example, a janitor, while trying to save his boss, dies in a fire. He may be idolized by his sons who would also become janitors loyal to their bosses.

It is good to emulate really good heroes; but even difficult people can appear “heroes” to some people, and thus people imitate their attitude. Dictators have always left behind followers of more ruthless dictators.

### **Abhorrence transfer**

World history is replete with people who deposed dictators only to become worse dictators later. There are two reasons for the transfer of this attitude:

1. **Revenge.** Some people who suffered from difficult people tend to repeat everything to their subordinates or to the next generation. Here works the *Principle of Substitution*. The absence of the object of vengeance (say, if the person for whom vengeance is intended is already dead), or when the avenger is powerless to execute retribution, he takes on instead those under him who are more powerless than him. Those under him become *substitutes* for the real object of vengeance. Hence, the child who suffers from his difficult father might release his frustration on his younger brother, and the younger brother might take on his pet dog.
2. **Holding on to power.** A sales manager who hates his difficult sales director desperately holding on to power, might someday make it as director. He begins to love the position so much that he begins to understand the attitude of his ex-director and be as difficult (or worse than) his predecessor. He is a victim of a difficult person and he hates it, only to become a worse copy because of greed for power.

## Chapter 4

### Will Power to Deal with Difficult People

Now that you have a basic knowledge of the different causes and characteristics that govern difficult people, let us now learn how to master and, even enjoy, such difficulties.

#### **Willpower to Deal**

First things first. If you do not want to deal with difficult people, or any difficulty for that matter, then you're wasting your time reading this book. You will run away all your life. No place on earth is safe from difficult people. You really have no choice but to learn how to face them squarely and effectively.

A run-away once dived into the deepest depth of the ocean floor hoping to evade all difficult, smart alecks on earth and vowed never to return on dry land. He found two underwater tunnels and stopped to decide which one to take. As he went for one, his thoughts told him, "Wrong choice, silly!" Not long after, there beneath the earth, he finally learned to live with the worst difficult person he has ever known - himself.

Here are some practical steps to develop the willpower to deal with difficult people.

1. **You must like people.** All people take all sorts of attitudes. Liking people is the first sure step to triumph. Avoiding them, especially the difficult ones, is a sure road to becoming difficult yourself. So the first natural thing to do is go out and meet people. Very soon, you will meet difficult people. Greet them and genially accept whatever reaction they give you. Don't be discouraged but greet more of them regularly until you get used to them, and until your LOT skyrockets to record-breaking heights. They may be rude and cruel, but no one's ever heard of getting shot or killed by greeting difficult people.
2. **Smile.** Most touchy people can be neutralized by a friendly smile. So practice putting on a pleasant, simple, friendly smile in front of a mirror. Public speakers and actors study their facial expressions facing a mirror. Political and beauty aspirants take time with a



photographer just putting on the best smile that exudes confidence and friendliness. A smile, they say, says it all. Regardless of how your face looks, a smile always puts on warmth and comeliness. A good smile always arrests the temper, even that of difficult people. So always smile.

3. **Be sincere.** A smile helps a lot, but sincerity gives your smile credibility. A mere smile is a matter of facial muscle flexing. When this alone is involved, the smile becomes unnatural. Put your heart into it! A sincere heart will automatically show if you live a life of sincerity. Practice sincerity. Always be sincere in all you do daily. When your heart gets used to being sincere, smiling sincerely becomes natural. Difficult people can see right through you, and sincerity melts their hearts.

4. **Listen well.** Almost every difficult people want to talk much more than they listen. This is the main problem in communication. Difficult people love to talk and want people to listen to them. In a nutshell that's what they are. Basically, you cannot put two difficult persons together and have them talk. Difficult people avoid each other once they recognize each other. If they are made to sit down and listen, they won't stand it. They will either stand up and steal the scene, or just walk out. If you are working for or with a difficult person, or worse locked up with him for life, practice becoming a good listener. You must learn the wisdom of enjoying listening. Few have this wisdom. Most people think there is wisdom in monopolizing a conversation. As in business, this only results in unfairness and silent protests. You can make difficult people happy when you just listen to them. Not many can do this. When you are a good listener, even the most difficult people tend to trust you with their secrets. Then you begin to know them as they reveal who they really are. You begin to understand them deeper; thus, you will be able to help them better. As they open up their secrets, understand and love them more.

5. **Be agreeable.** This does not necessarily mean agreeing to anything difficult people say, but it is more about agreeing not to argue. If you don't agree with the opinions of difficult people, just listen and send everything to your mental bin. Delete. It's your right. But never argue. Never mind if they say you are not confrontational. So what? Nobody

dies because of that. But arguments often kill. Nations go to war because of arguments. See the wisdom? Remember that every seed of kindness you plant now will surely reap a harvest of favors soon. It happens each time. Valuables are often left to agreeable people, never to aggressive ones. Very few trust contrary people. If you are known for your politeness, even the most difficult folks will give you special favors. Always remember that the most difficult people are strivers. They are workaholics. They feed on pressure to hit their goals. Oftentimes they get promoted to positions that confer favors on “worthy” men. They often rake in more valuables than the average guy.

6. **Be honest. Never flatter anyone insincerely**, especially difficult people. Insincere flattery always traps its users, and it sure is hell to get trapped with a difficult person. Hence, it always pays to just listen and be agreeable. See? When difficult people ask your opinion or ask if you agree with them, tell them honestly but nicely. If you agree, agree. If you don't, make sure you stress that it is your opinion, not a statement of fact. Most likely, they will not agree with it and even make you realize how stupid it is. Just listen and be polite. Or, if possible and truthful, quote somebody's opinion that agrees with yours. If they mock it, at least you save your dignity. Then you can smile more easily. If you insincerely flatter difficult people and they get to like you for it, woe to you! You will find it more difficult, and later, impossible to be free from them.

7. **Praise.** Take note of their worth and achievements, even if you think differently and have a different idea for success. Appreciate their efforts. Share their triumphs and sad moments. At times, a smile or tap of congratulations or sympathy is enough and speaks volumes. But never overdo it.

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Practice the steps above daily until you make it your habit. You will soon possess a healing power that countless people need and crave for, the power that will launch you to untold successes in whatever endeavor you engage in.

### **Willpower to Change**

It is now obvious that the willpower to deal with difficult people becomes realistic only if you have the willpower to change. Yes, the first person to change is YOU before any difficult person can be dealt with. If you cannot or will not change, it only means you are also a difficult person, and an adage goes that the blind cannot lead another blind. They will both fall into a pit. And if you settle at being a difficult person, though mildly at that (mildly or otherwise, a difficult person is still difficult), think of the people who will suffer because of you, among them your family.

And it's unthinkable that a difficult person can help another difficult person. They won't be able to stand each other, remember? And you can't avoid difficult people. So the best option is to learn how to deal with them. The first step is to make sure you are not a difficult person yourself.



If you're not currently doing the "7 steps to developing willpower to deal with difficult people" as stated above, you need to change your attitude. These pointers will help you identify and eliminate bad attitudes to ensure you are not becoming a difficult person yourself:

1. **Respect people always.** Be aware that people, young and old, are entitled to their rights, beliefs, and opinions. Without being vocal about it, don't consider yourself to be better than others. This will get rid of self-conceit which is the root of disrespect and being inconsiderate. Respect authorities in their jurisdictions, whether in the office, school, malls, public buses, homes, or lands. Be aware that you cannot impose your own standards and you have to adjust to their policies.
2. **Don't compare yourself with others aloud.** You may do so in your mind, but never actually say it. Different people mostly do things differently and you must not feel superior with your methods and style. Likewise, do not compare people with other people verbally. We have tendencies to compare people, but keep it to yourself.
3. **Follow a schedule but don't be too rigid with it.** If you are an employer or supervisor, you will surely have work schedules and deadlines for your employees or subordinates. But don't be too harsh on the implementation. Remember that we are

only humans - even machines and computers fail. People err, get tired or sick, and at times get burned out. They need encouragement. Give them workloads equal to what you pay them. Be kind to them. If you are in business, don't get too absorbed in hitting goals or quotas. There will always be tomorrow, and tomorrow will yield better results. Learn to let go of things that pressure you. Drop everything and go out for a while. Meditate. Look at your surroundings and enjoy them. Smile at people. There's more to life than just doing your business or anything else that keeps you stressed out.

4. **Enjoy what you are doing**, and make sure those working with you also feel the same way. Work must support life, and not the other way around. When work becomes a burden, life merely supports work, and that will be painful for everyone. Then, sooner or later, everyone becomes a difficult person. Every job must become an adventure where every turn makes you excited to go further.
5. **Never assume to know everything**. Even if you do, always consider what others have to say, even if you're a boss. Accept the fact that there are things you are utterly ignorant of, no matter how smart you think you are. If in a meeting among peers you are knowledgeable about a topic and they are not, it is safer to wait to be asked for your opinion. It is also good to politely offer your opinion, but do so more on a note of *sharing* rather than *lecturing*, unless you are a lecturer in the said meeting.
6. **Never give unsolicited advice**. Don't give pieces of your "good" advice to people who don't ask for them, more so to people who don't look like they need them. Unless you are closely related to such people, or you are asked for your advice, keep your suggestions to yourself. You may need them more than anyone else does.
7. **Learn to admit fault and apologize**. It's not important anymore to determine who is right and who is wrong. When you see that you have hurt a person, whether you are on the right or wrong side, admit your fault and apologize. Admitting your fault does not always mean you are wrong. It may mean you said the right thing at the wrong time in the wrong place. And that's your fault. It's definitely your fault when you come

into a funeral wake and tell the bereaved that the dead man was a crook and a liar (difficult people can do this). You may be right, but your rightness will hurt the feelings of the aggrieved family, and that's your fault. But it's different when the truth needs to be revealed in the name of justice. If you have to testify in court that the dead man was a crook and a liar, though it may hurt the relatives of the deceased, you must say so without hesitation.

8. **Love must override rules and regulations.** True leaders love their followers and always seek after their welfare. They do not just put things in order. Many administrators and managers merely want order and to see to it that rules and policies are obeyed. This makes many of them difficult people. Rules and policies are good, but they seldom benefit anybody except maybe the ones who made them. Don't decide on matters in a way that negates the personal choices of other people, like in choosing a lifetime partner, a career, or things to buy. Guide them but never dictate them.
9. **Don't be unreasonable.** Make sure your instructions and requirements are within reach and capacity of other people. You may be able to do certain things other people can't, and you have to consider this. Remember that you yourself also have limited potentials.
10. **Never humiliate people.** Don't shout at people, or scold them, or curse them, especially in front of other people. It's normal to be angry at times when there is a valid reason. But be careful not to turn anger into hatred. Anger lasting for more than an hour is a potential hatred. Once hatred sets in, a difficult person is born within you; and you may soon find humiliating a person as a normal, or even delightful, activity.
11. **Nurture a sense of humor.** This is very important. It will keep your sanity intact amid the fiercest pressure attacks. Humor keeps your LOT very high, not to mention a healthy heart and lasting youth. It keeps everything light and easy, even in the worst scenario. Always find something funny in whatever is happening. As the adage goes,

laughter is the best medicine. A sense of humor can change persons and tight situations.

12. **Watch your health and diet.** It's hard to control your anger when you're sick, especially with hypertension or heart ailments. So eat healthy foods, especially those high in fiber. Avoid too much fatty and salty foods, unhealthy drinks, junk foods, and those high in cholesterol. Take natural food supplements high in micro-nutrients, and exercise regularly. Try to maintain your ideal weight. Your LOT can cope better with pressures if your health doesn't get in the way. Get enough sleep to get ready for tomorrow's new pressures.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Practical Examples on How to Deal with Difficult People**

Difficult people are not impossible people. You can talk sense into them, if you know how. There are ways to get them to stop being obnoxious and to listen for even just a while - and this moment is crucial. You must put in your best rebuttal and convince them to put down their defenses, or else lose them forever.

Difficult people are real people, so dealing with them must be practical and out of common sense. Here are some tried and tested approaches to capture their attention:

#### **A Difficult Self**

As a Chinese proverb goes, the first enemy to defeat is the self. A Jewish proverb mentions that conquering the self is greater than conquering a city. And if anyone fails to conquer the self, says the proverb, he is like a city whose walls have collapsed. When the self is controlled, any difficult person becomes a piece of cake. So be disciplined to ignore the cravings of your ego. Practice the 7 practical steps and the 12 pointers in the previous chapter.

When you have ascertained that you are not a difficult person yourself, you have every right and strength to come to the rescue of one who is.

#### **A Difficult Spouse**

Unless you are contemplating divorce, your spouse is a lifetime partner. It's easy to give up on a difficult spouse, but doing so may mean you are a difficult person too. Re-marrying may either get you a new difficult partner, or a helpless victim.

Pressures melt away when you are a good listener to any complainant. Often, pressures need release. Listening to your spouse complain while you keep mum and sincere will do wonders for both of you. Difficulties rise when both parties complain and no issue is brought to light. To bring light, both parties cannot be stuck in the darkness. One must provide the spark. If you opt not to be the difficult party and just listen intently, you're already providing that spark.

Though a heart-to-heart talk cannot pay pending bills and buy groceries, it can clear

minds to think positively for a temporary alternative or refuge, if not a lasting solution. Clear minds are necessary when there's no money in sight to answer financial woes, or in any dilemma for that matter.

Aside from lending an open ear, a little gift won't hurt. Buy your spouse a little something or treat yourselves to a refreshing drink or snack after the heat dies down. Best of all, heal wounds by passionate love-making. Love conquers all.

When a partner is difficult because of a third party, the more you should strive to be the exact opposite of your spouse. Opposites attract. You can still save the marriage by not adding fuel to the fire. You can actually pour water on it through your calmness and composure.

Should worse comes to worst, you might lose your spouse to a third party, but not your dignity. Just imagine the agony of losing both.

### **Difficult Parents**

Parents can be demanding. The pressure can come from a frustrated ambition they want their children to fulfill for them. It may be an ambition they have planned for their children, which the latter may reject. It may also be a desire to have their children outdo the children of a neighbor, friend, or relative. It may also be a work or money related pressure. Whatever the reason, their children carry the brunt of the problem. If neglected, the kids can carry the problem as they grow and it becomes a vicious cycle passed on to succeeding generations.

Grandparents can play a special role in neutralizing the pressure suffered by the children, but the best antidote is for them to be agreeable. This can strengthen the character of these children as they grow, or this can frustrate them, resulting in these children becoming withdrawn.

Having a strong character is healthy, but being withdrawn has some temporary setbacks. However, any setback can be resolved when children opt to be different from their difficult parents as they grow up, without detesting them.

At the right age when children develop right judgment, they can begin to deal positively with difficult parents. They can start by being more intimate with their parents, by showing more concern and love, and by being more sincere and thoughtful. Opposites attract. They can show



more respect for the opinions and feelings of the parents, even though the latter may fall short of it. With such contrast, the faulty parents will slowly detect the difference and realize the wrong.

Rebelling against parents will only make the parents worse. Difficult parents see control as a first and last resort. And when you fight difficulty with difficulty, that's difficult to resolve - as simple as that. Difficulty cannot be countered unless one party gives in.

When your parents start to see your good attitude despite their unfair treatment, you become a precious gem to them. They will see that you are dependable and trustworthy. You can then begin to share your own dreams and ambitions, or the pressure you get from their insistence on their plans for you. No responsible parent can resist a good child. They may do so for a while, but they will give in soon.

Remember to be always tender and polite in your conversations with your parents. Even if they remain difficult, stay cool. Even if you get turned down often, pursue goodness. Water has sculptured landforms through the years, and can destroy the hardest steel.

### **Difficult Children**

If you are a parent experiencing problems with difficult children, then this section would be of great significance. Before dealing with your difficult children, ask yourself first where your youngsters got the attitude. Check yourself and your spouse. Make sure your children didn't acquire the attitude from either of you. If your children did acquire their behavior from any of you, deal with the source first. After the attitude has been dealt with in you or in your spouse, then the children come next.

Children can also become difficult by lack of proper discipline. The parents may not have it, but the difficult attitude may get developed if the parents give everything that their children demand. In other words, the children would become spoiled brats.

Then again, children can become difficult because of wrong discipline. Harsh and cruel discipline can screw up the emotions of children. These children might then develop selfish animosity towards others.

Difficult children are easy to deal with if you start disciplining them early. Right training at an early age guarantees excellent results. Children will almost never depart from the system you have ingrained in them if you start teaching them at the earliest stages. Like in walking. We train children to walk after a few months from their birth. Otherwise, it may adversely affect their way of walking if you delay.

If you notice a difficult attitude in your children, make sure to deal with it right away. But make sure you do it right. Don't be cruel or harsh. This will only aggravate the situation and you will end up being a difficult parent. The safest way to start is to make sure you practice the *7 practical ways and 12 pointers* explained earlier here. If you are a gentle, loving, but firm parent, dealing with difficult children is peanuts.

When correcting your children, make sure you clarify firmly that a difficult attitude is wrong and harmful. Explain to them that the discipline, more so the scolding they get, is for their own benefit, and it is out of love. Again, love conquers all. Make sure the scolding and disciplining is done in private. If you embarrass children in public you push them to become rebellious.

Avoid pacifying your kids, especially those having tantrums, by giving them what they want. The impression this makes is that difficult attitude is rewarded, and that difficult children always get what they want. The right way to pacify grumpy kids is to assure them of your love, and that the discipline you are giving them is an act of love. Embracing or kissing children will help a lot. Children are rewarded more by the tender touch of parents, as adults are touched more by the affection of those they love.

Some people refrain from disciplining their difficult children, or simply pretend the problem does not exist, because they think doing so is showing love for them. If they grow up with the difficult attitude, it will carve out a miserable life for them and those around them, and it will all be the parents' fault. Real love is helping the children grow up loving others as well.

It should be stressed that just because some kids become mischievous or naughty, does not mean they are already difficult. Children are apt to be so. They are children. Children are difficult when they demand others to recognize that they alone are right. It is one thing for kids to think they're right; it's quite another for them to demand others that they alone are right.

**Difficult Siblings**

Difficult brothers or sisters can mar your image and the image of your family. Now, before anything, make sure you yourself are not difficult. After you are cleared of this, then you can begin to examine and deal with difficult siblings.

Difficult siblings are so mostly because of rivalry. When parents or people exercising authority on them show favorites, or often, when there is rivalry in courtship, siblings can become difficult especially to their fellow siblings, especially when they succumb to the pressure. Often, these are overt and covert pressures combined, working within and without. These combined pressures are usually prominent in sibling rivalries.

Your first and last line of defense is humility. Quit trying to prove anything about yourself and start honestly praising your difficult siblings. Even if things seem to favor you more than your siblings, stress your equality. We all have positive and negative traits; it so happens that your positive qualities mostly outshine your negatives, and that your time to be in the limelight seems scheduled in the present. Tell them that everyone has a day in that limelight and theirs may come soon.

Once your siblings see that you pose no threat to them, the rivalry ends and harmony starts to evolve. The pressure subsides markedly, and may even die once the threat perception is totally dismissed. LOT will be at an all-time high because everything, even tight situations, will become tolerable in the absence of any threat or rivalry. When a challenge occurs, it won't be a contest of "who's going to solve it first and solve it better" anymore, but it's going to be a "let's solve it for the family" thing.

**Difficult Relatives**

Difficult relatives do not pose much of a problem because you're likely to see them only in family reunions - except if you live in said relatives' house. In this case, you can apply the strategies to counter difficult siblings as explained above. Your first and last line of defense is humility. You may also establish clearly that you are not a threat to your relatives. Prove that you are an ally, not an adversary.

A little research on your relatives' background might help. Find the reasons why they ended up that way. But do the study secretly; don't go around asking their families and friends regarding them. Whatever you find out will help you in figuring out ways to relate with them. If the cause of their being difficult is a result of pressure from:

- a) Parents – They need support in pleasing their parents.
- b) Siblings – They need to receive honest praises and to have a positive outlook to neutralize sibling rivalry.
- c) Friends – They have to eliminate their low self-esteem. Perk up their spirits.
- d) Bosses – Treat them out on weekends. Try to help them look for better jobs, if they are constantly complaining about their work.
- e) Themselves – Be patient and show sincerity.

Act natural. The last thing difficult people want is to get help from other people. They think they know everything and that they are always right.

*Sample situation:*

*All his close friends have found their respective girlfriends and your difficult relative still has not. He begins to feel the pressure and he opts to pass it on to you - because you're just a free boarder in his house, and it's incumbent upon the "master" to pick on his "slave." To ease the situation, don't start telling him how handsome he actually is, and that the pretty girls are just too blind to see that. Start small by appreciating his new haircut, his new shoes that fit him well, or perhaps his good penmanship. Appreciate his books or collection of tape-recorded films or music. He may react negatively, and even besmirch you for being nosy about his things. But just keep on, and make each appreciation more polite and sincere, until he realizes that you are his ally. When he realizes that and starts to trust you, neutralize the pressure by stressing other things that give self-confidence other than having a girlfriend: Like having a pure heart, for instance.*

**Difficult Friends**

Many among us are often closer to our friends than to our relatives. Difficult relatives are nothing compared to difficult friends. So if you get caught up with such friends, rather than dilly-dallying and working out a painstaking process of convincing them that you are an ally, give it to them straight. That's what friends are for. The painful words of friends are better than the flattery of fools. Tell them how you actually feel. If you can't tell them that, they're not really your friends. They're just acquaintances.

Real friends are often reflections of another "you." They can even be regarded as your alter egos. Acquaintances are those you know, for a long time or recently, but whom you still sometimes distrust, or size up. They are those people who you can live without, though you also care for them.

But remember that as you deal with difficult friends, make sure you exercise some measure of tolerance for their imperfections. Give them enough time to adjust. Some healing processes take a long time. When difficult friends get hurt, the harm is sometimes skin-deep, but oftentimes it is deep down. The healing process is often delayed by insensitive individuals who cannot tolerate the foibles of difficult people.

Tell them something like this: "I didn't like the way you made a fool of me in front of those girls, just to appear cute. I hope you won't do that again."

The statement above is frank and yet open to give them a second chance. It gives leeway for improvement. This is the proper way of dealing with difficult friends because it also helps them to realize their faults and to change their attitudes.

**Difficult Classmates**

Classmates are not necessarily friends. Most are acquaintances in your classroom. You share the same room, subjects, and professors. Difficult students often want to prove something. In doing so, they need a tool to drive home a point. They seldom choose fellow difficult people for this.

Difficult classmates often choose the silent types who look harmless and unpopular. Popular people have support, and difficult people do not want a mob to be against them. They can't stand majority rejection. In the first place, they often try to prove something because they want admiration. If you look like a harmless loner, you're likely to be chosen. So beware!

The smart way of dealing with difficult classmates is to always stay away from them. There can't be only two students in a classroom - and there can't be only two chairs. Let others fill in the need to be "tools" for them. The safest seat in class is near the teacher's table. Stay there. It is a refuge in a stormy classroom.

You are even safer outside the classroom. If your difficult classmates eat in the canteen, eat somewhere else. If their team is up against your team in your sports class, stay out of their path. Play those games where there is no physical contact involved from your opponents, like volleyball.

If for some turn of events, you are teamed up with difficult classmates for a project or some undertaking, plead your teacher for reconsideration. If the teacher proves to be another difficult person and refuses, then the best option is to yield. Accept your difficult classmates. Try to enjoy their company; anyway, it won't take forever. School projects last only for a time. Laugh at yourself for the temporary misfortune.

Face it. There's no use worrying over difficult classmates who have nothing better to do than project themselves as the main characters. And you should know better; actually, they need help. Their egos might be terribly hurt. They are picking on you most probably because they see that you are a nice person. They regard you as a whole individual with a healthy character who can take on their impossible attitude. So being picked on and still being nice about it brings out your potential as a mature, rational individual.

### **Difficult Neighbors**

Unless you plan to move out of the neighborhood, difficult neighbors can affect not only you but your family and even your pet as well.

The best attitude to have is to do what you want as long as it is confined within your territory. If they complain, politely point out that whatever it is you are doing that drives them crazy is being done in your property.

They may not let you alone even with the above polite explanation, but at least you let them see that you know your rights and will stand up for them. Now be sure that whatever you are doing within your property directly affects only you and your family. Don't watch TV, listen to the radio, or play your musical instruments with full blast volume. Make sure the volume fills only the room where it should be heard. Avoid having noisy parties into the wee hours of the night. Make sure your howling dogs are confined to where your difficult neighbor won't hear them.

What if it's the other way around? What if your neighbors annoy you until you can no longer tolerate it anymore? You can give your neighbors a friendly visit and tell them your woes. If they don't heed your appeal, take your case to the local authority. If this move doesn't work, then yield. Just ignore the nuisance. Most difficult neighbors need attention. Orient yourself and your family not to pay attention to your neighbors' untoward behavior, but continue to be friendly with them. In due time, they will grow weary of their actions and they will return the good favors you've been showing them.

### **Difficult Bosses**

If bosses start being difficult, almost all your life can take a sudden negative twist. Again, the best antidote is obedience. Resigning is a temporary escape. If you transfer to another company, you may end up with a worse scenario.

Console yourself with the thought that difficult bosses last only some hours. Relish at the thought of home. Relish at the thought of warm food, peace and quiet, and then some quality sleep.

The right thing to do is to stay positive as you remain being obedient. Life is more than dreading the company of your bosses. Learn to enjoy their company. Your bosses may have needs they are not aware of, and you are there to help them cope. It's a noble calling, really.

Finally, thoroughly enjoy your weekends by unwinding and doing things you like. You need the therapy that happy weekends bring to “cleanse” you of the filth your difficult bosses put on you 5 days a week. By doing this, you may then come out fresh and recharged for the coming week.

### **Difficult Business Partners**

A business can be as valuable as life itself. You have to watch out whom you partner with in business. Most business partners are close friends, and starting a business with them is often a rewarding experience. But money matters can pressure people and change them. The business partners and close friends you thought you knew can slowly turn to difficult business associates. This will terribly affect work relationships in the office, and the business itself.

You may have common goals with your business partners, but your opinions may vary and conflict. At times having standard work procedures may help stabilize things; but at times they don't, especially if one of you starts to play with the idea of bolting out of the partnership to start another business.

When business partners start being difficult, it is good to be open-minded and flexible about things without compromising your principles and the company's agreed policies. Often, differences in opinion do not necessarily mean a real conflict is present. You must try to listen to the ideas of your difficult partners and put in some of your own. This usually leads to a settlement.

Sometimes, the ideas of your partners may seem more effective and lucrative, but it goes against the goal of your company. And in spite of your repeated pleas to preserve your mission-vision, they insist and threaten to part away with their investments if you don't give in. This is the time to review your partnership and be frank with each other. The company goal probably needs some adjustment or revision. Why not agree together to consider modern trends and give the company a new face? But if things get out of hand, and if they want out, let them out; but make sure all ends in a positive, friendly note.



In any business relationship, especially one with difficult people, assimilation is vital from both sides. Both must give and take something. If it is true in the investment aspect (both must share in the capital), it should also be the same case in settling ideas.

### **Difficult Co-workers**

Difficult workers are easier to handle because they are under company rules and regulations. The best weapon against difficult co-workers is to be friendly to them as you focus on your work. When you have established yourself as a friendly co-worker to all, you give lesser chance for difficult co-workers to recruit people to be on their side.

You are in a tighter situation if the difficult co-workers are close friends of your bosses. But if you produce excellent and dedicated work for the company, nobody can give you trouble. Your character and work attitude are your best defenses in tight situations against difficult co-workers who have allies in high position.

In a worst scenario, if you are fired due to the machinations of difficult co-workers, you may plead the attention of higher authorities. Seek justice without compromising your character. Don't hate anyone, not even the difficult co-workers and their accomplices. Show good attitude, even if the director himself fires you. Persecuted good people will always end up with a favor that is better than what they originally had. You must have faith that this is the natural order of things.

### **Difficult Strangers**

Strangers are the easiest to get rid of. But be careful on how you do it. Make sure you act firmly but politely. Use polite words such as "sorry" and "excuse me." Never humiliate difficult strangers. If they start abusing you in very scandalous ways, walk away from them and ignore the tirade of words they will send behind you. Smile as you walk away. Never look embarrassed or affected.

## Chapter 6

### Getting Out of Tight Situations

Some situations with difficult people tend to tighten too much. At times you have to get out of them for a while to breathe in fresh strength again, and later go back to the same situation to conquer it. This kind of getting out is temporary, and is not meant to avoid difficult people altogether.

#### **Uniting with Others**

You can join forces with your siblings to appease your difficult parents, or you may unite with other workers in pacifying a difficult boss. There's safety and strength in numbers. You can encourage each other whenever the pressure gets too strong. You can help each other out in getting jobs done right. Children can agree to lessen added hassles by avoiding friction between themselves (They can appear to be more acceptable to their difficult parents). If a solo performance of good attitude can do wonders to change difficult people, then just imagine what a positive group of people can do? A proverb says that two heads are better than one. It's not an alien from another planet that's being portrayed here, but a unity in working out a positive course of action. Joint acts of goodness are sure to overwhelm a single difficult person.

#### **Using Reverse Psychology**

Most difficult people, being egoistic, are childish. Most tricks for spoiled kids are applicable to them. It pays to study how to pacify tots in tantrums and apply that to difficult adults.

Reverse psychology is basically suggesting the positive opposite. It requires a touch of art to skillfully apply this.

Let's say a difficult person interferes while you're giving an inspiring talk to a small group. He hints out that he knows better than you do. So you stop and let the guy have his say. Limit his time, then say something like: "That was interesting. After I finish, I'm sure some of you here also want to say something." Stress the words "After I finish." This will give a hint to all, especially to Mr. Difficult Guy, that you don't want any interruption until you are done talking.

A famous proverb says it pays to always do more than is being asked by difficult people. If they ask you to carry a bag in one mile, carry it two miles. If they ask for your cloak, give them your other garments as well. If they slap you on the right cheek, offer the other as well. In this way, the proverb adds, you *“heap up burning coals in their heads.”* This means you make them re-think their behavior compared to yours. So the re-thinking can only happen if those difficult people see something different and positive in you. But if you confront them head-on, then you have just proven yourself to be another difficult person.

You must be like an animal trainer. Some animal trainers always have food at hand to reward performing animals with. Some use whips and other tools, like the lion or tiger trainers. But some teach animals by giving them a dose of their own medicine. They let the animals do foolish things. When the animals get hurt by doing such acts, they learn never to do them again. Of course, never treat difficult people like animals. But you can handle them by hinting at their foibles, by letting them suffer or see the consequences of such, and by *giving them a dose of their own medicine.*

### **Using Humor**

Long time ago, colonized people used comedy plays to protest the cruelty of their colonizers in a light way. They communicated the message to both countrymen and oppressors effectively by making fun of everyday scenes of injustices.

Humor can drive the point home without directly condemning the offenders. It can make both the offending and offended parties laugh and yet learn.

In one Christmas party I attended, the employees thought of presenting a comedy skit where both employees and employers were impersonated in a comical way. They all saw themselves in a new light. They realized their strengths and weaknesses, as well as what images they have been projecting to others.

If difficult people try to make everyone see how ugly you are, you may start calling them Mr. Handsome or Miss Beautiful, not with a look of insult but with sincerity. Mean it. It will either

make them feel ashamed of themselves, so they will stop; or they will feel accomplished, so they will mellow down because they think they have proven their point.

### **Relaxation**

When under attack, relax. You can't die of severe attacks from difficult people unless you choose to. If you think too highly of yourself (that's feeding the ego), chances are, you will easily be offended by difficult people. But if you estimate yourself just right, and you don't pay attention to what difficult people think about you (because you know better than to take their remarks seriously), no damage will be done no matter how severe the attacks. You can just smile away at the offenders.

Relaxing is one of the greater virtues not even the most extremely wealthy people possess. For sure, difficult people can never relax because they don't know how. They actually hate the idea. Relaxation to them is mortal sin. Thus, they also deprive people around them of rest and relaxation. They need to see that everybody is pressured.

But once they see that you can relax under attack, they will begin to avoid you. They may spread the news around that you are lazy and won't amount to anything. To them, tension leads to sure success.

Not only can you save yourself from difficult people by relaxing, you can also maintain good health. Practice relaxing in any situation: While reading, eating, conversing, sitting or standing, walking, catching a bus, being scolded, in an emergency, etc. It will be difficult at first; but as you practice, it will become spontaneous. The body can be taught and conditioned by the mind. Don't surrender your fate to circumstances around you. Take control. Never control others (that's being a difficult person), but learn to control yourself.

Many say it is important to let your temper show, because repressed emotions are bad for the heart. Relaxing is not repressing anything in you. Uncontrolled tempers only make matters worse. A saying goes that a fool gives full bent to his emotions, but the wise refrains from them.

So at the first sign of a threat from difficult people, relax. Don't let their wishes dictate how you live your life.

### **Showing Them**

There will be times when difficult people become too intolerable, especially when other people are greatly affected. During these rare times, you must speak out and rebuke the offenders gently.

There was once a difficult young man who was giving an old lady a hard time in a train. A young lady stood up and asked him to be patient with the old woman then invited him to join her in giving the old woman a hand.

When I was in a conference once, a difficult person stood up to ask lots of questions that led nowhere. The speaker gently cut him short and then said, "I will answer one question, sir, but the rest of your questions will be dealt with after my speech so we will not run out of time."

Sometimes, difficult people must be shown that they have gone beyond their limits. But this must be done gently and free from any harmful intention, especially from public humiliation. We don't want to merely stop difficult people; we also want to help them.

### **Shifting Attention**

When difficult people start hammering away at you, try to divert your attention to positive things. If a difficult spouse is consistently nagging about your son's failing grades in Math or Science, shift your spouse's attention to subjects where your son got better grades. Learn to take attention away from an unwanted subject matter.

Consider this story. John, a difficult person, was jealous of Jack because Jill (John's crush) was closer to Jack. So John ridiculed Jack's face to everybody in a party, and made sure Jill took special notice. But Jill tried to save Jack's face by suddenly asking everyone if they have heard the latest news on avian flu. Jack took the cue and began discussing on the disease and the whole group was instantly converted to their side. John, wanting to be the star of the show,

put himself forward and tried to dominate the discussion. Jack and Jill settled back, contented to be part of John's audience. It's better to be John's audience than to be his victim.

Another technique of shifting attention is to pass the pressure on to others. This is very effective in a public speaking situation. You may find this handy in a small group discussion where you act as a speaker or lecturer.

If a difficult person is asking you senseless (those that have no connection whatsoever to the topic) questions, or if that individual just wants to interfere with the discussion, you may either:

1. Entertain questions later (which is a temporary diversionary technique); or
2. Deal with the question now by throwing the same question to the group.

For instance, Mr. X asks a series of questions on abortion. Your topic is human anatomy. Abortion can be connected to the human anatomy, but it is likely that majority of your audience did not come to hear you speak on abortion. But Mr. X keeps on pressing his smart questions on you, to put you in a bad light.

One of his questions is: "What if, after aborting the baby, guilt strikes you and you decide to put the fetus back? How do you do it?"

You say to the audience, "Listen up, guys. Mr. X here has an interesting question. He wants to know how a fetus could be put back into the womb. Who can answer this?"

By doing the above, you get the pressure off you and you put it back to Mr. X. Now, the whole audience is after him. For sure, people who came there to hear about the human anatomy will be irked. They will answer as meanly as Mr. X asked the question.

Here's another story. A difficult guy wanted to change route when he and his friends went on a trip to the wilds. The difficult guy desperately wanted to try a new path and doggedly pressured the leader of the tour to do this. The leader knew that the rest of the group, and especially the owner and driver of the car, preferred the usual route and showed signs of impatience on the difficult guy's insistence.

The leader spoke up: "I really have no problem with your request, as long as the driver and owner of the car has no problem with it."

By doing so, the leader just saved himself from the pressure and the majority resentment had he succumbed to the difficult guy's demands.

### **Majority Approval**

Mr. Manager is faced with a difficult employee who insists on putting up a union which he knows is abhorred by the majority of the employees. He does not want to sound anti-unionism, so what he does is call a meeting of all the employees and submit the matter to a "yes or no" vote. As expected, the "no" votes have it. He then had the department supervisors and heads sign the resolution; thus, making it appear that it was not he who turned down the request for a union but the employees themselves.

### **Putting It on Black and White**

When dealing with difficult people, especially on sensitive matters like favors, money, or appointments, it will help you to put everything in writing.

Companies make policies precisely for dealing with difficult employees. When difficult friends or relatives borrow a big sum of money from you, have them sign an agreement to pay the price on a definite date. This is ideal for those who have a track record of unpaid debts. If an appointment for a meeting is set with difficult people, keep repeating to them the details. If possible, let them text to your cell phone the time and place so you may have a record of your appointment that they themselves have set up. If difficult employees insist on something unreasonable, it is safe to make policies or regulations regarding employee rights, duties, and privileges which employees have to sign as part of their work contract. You can go back to the provisions of these policies or regulations as you deal with them in the future.

Difficult people are so finicky about whatever details they can use to annoy people and to prove to them that they have erred. Difficult people enjoy it so much when they catch a person unprepared and at a loss. Thus, you may have to deal with them according to their ways. A proverb says: "At times we must deal with fools according to their foolishness; though at times, we must also deal with them differently."

### **Going Against the Flow**

There are times you must remain meek and silent as you deal with difficult people. There are times you must go with their line of thinking for a while to ease their pressures. But there are times you have to shut them up without losing your dignity.

But then, there are times you have to simply do the opposite of what they want you to do. If they make fun of you, you simply look at them and ask, “So I look stupid. What’s so funny about that?” In doing this, make sure there are no other people around, or these difficult people may get what they want, and everybody may end up laughing at you. If this happens, laugh with them. This will neutralize the situation.

At times you have to shut your mouth if these difficult people goad you to speak. Or speak when they want you to shut your mouth. But do this without any ill feelings against the offenders. Just teach them a lesson.

It must be stressed that this strategy is not always advisable. You must be keenly sensitive to situations before you can masterfully apply this technique. Applicability of techniques is on a case-to-case basis. Hence, dealing with difficult people takes lots of practice to master. Don’t be afraid to commit mistakes. Mistakes, when taken with maturity, will make us wiser. The wiser we get, the more we master, and the more we can help.

### **Leaving the “Show”**

When things really get out of hand and every option has become useless, the best thing to do to be free from a tight situation is to excuse yourself from the scene politely. Just leave. There’s no use spending your energy in fighting a dragon like Don Quixote. But make sure you excuse yourself gracefully so as not to lose face. Smile. Chin up. Make sure your last note is a friendly one.

Of course, difficult people will think that they have won that round. But that’s the way they always think. You can never make them think otherwise. So why fuss? Let them think all they want. What matters most is that you attain peace and solitude.



## Conclusion

Difficult people are always around. You have to learn how to deal with them effectively. You must know how to identify them, know why they are so, and how they can be dealt with. Help them overcome their attitude.

The first thing to do before you can deal with difficult people is to make sure that you are not a difficult person yourself. Otherwise, all efforts will be in vain. Difficult people cannot help each other. They will rub against each other and burn in the friction. Someone mature and open-minded must enter their lives and handle them without appearing obvious.

To be able to handle difficult people, you must have a good character that is gentle, meek, patient, tolerant but firm in your resolve never to become difficult yourself as you try to deal with those who are. Then, you must know basic principles and techniques on how to deal with them, as laid out here.

It is useless to avoid dealing with difficult people. It will only prove that you are no different from them, because difficult people avoid each other. They never congregate. Each difficult person wants to be the star. You cannot have all difficult people in a group being the main attraction.

But they are everywhere; you cannot possibly avoid difficult people all your life. So the best option is to learn how to handle them properly.

When a problem remains unsolved, chances are, it will worsen or multiply. Difficult people left unattended will become your worst nightmare. We don't like them taking over the world. Thus, in a sense, dealing with them is a calling. We have to help them to be able to help other people who are victimized by them. And thus, we must also help ourselves.

And there's the likelihood of having difficult people in your family - your spouse, children, sibling, or parents may be difficult people without you being aware of it. You have to stop having this incidence widespread in your clan. You have to face it and deal with it before things get out of hand.

Training your children is crucial in preventing difficult people from emerging. It often starts in childhood. Children left to themselves are potential candidates, especially those whose every

wish is fulfilled by doting adults, those who are spared from proper discipline, and those who are abused and deprived from their parents' attention. It is in childhood that a substantial molding takes place to produce mature individuals.

Finally, difficult people are people. Don't hate or despise them. They are victims. All of us have, in one time or another, been such victims. Their number one medicine is love. Other supplements for their healing are understanding, patience, and tolerance. Your firmness in your maturity and uprightness will serve as their eye openers.

You are the hope of difficult people near you. Don't fail them. They're counting on you.