

# The Manning Newsletter

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## “Handling Difficult Behaviors”

Have you ever felt the pulse pounding, face-flushing, word-sputtering frustration of being face to face with:

- . an egotist
- . an aggressor
- . a sneak
- . a victim
- . a negator
- . a superagreeable
- . an unresponsive?

No matter how challenging, belligerent or negative the difficult person's behavior, don't take it personally. By identifying the difficult behaviors listed below, and responding to each with openness and affirmation, you can open the bridge to communication.

### **Aggressors**

Aggressors behave in a hostile, abusive and intimidating way. They always have to be right and will charge like angry bulls if you challenge or cross them.

Take a deep breath and let them blow off steam and express their anger and frustration. Address them by name to maintain control. Then state your position clearly and avoid the temptation to argue.

### **Egotists**

Egotists are experts and appear to know more than others should about a particular subject. Facts are power to egotists and since they know the facts, they feel superior.

Because you cannot “fake it” with egotists, make sure you know the facts and information. You can also capitalize on what they know by asking questions. Egotists love to show off and have others appreciate their knowledge.

### **Sneaks**

Sneaks take potshots. They undercut your authority by using sarcasm, which they often disguise as a joke.

Try to turn their attention and comments to the issues not the personalities involved. Once sneaks realize that you won't put up with their sniping, they will stop.

### **Victims**

Victims see everything negatively. They complain, whine and act defeated. Since victims often believe no one thinks they are important, start your interactions by listening to what they say. Steer them toward the facts, which are usually much less negative than what they believe.

Maintain control by bringing up the negatives yourself, then dismiss each logically. Direct their attention to the more positive aspects of the situation.

### **Negators**

Victims seem pale compared to the negators. Negators aren't just negative, they tend to distrust anyone in power. They believe that their way is the only right way and their motto is “I told you so.”

Stay positive, but realistic. Delay discussing solutions since negators will dismiss every solution as you bring it up. Refuse to argue with them and stick with the facts.

### **Superagreeables**

While superagreeable people are easy to like, they can be difficult personalities to deal with. Superagreeables overcommit themselves and their staffs because they can't say, “No.”

Carefully limit how much you ask of them to eliminate the disappointments caused by missed deadlines.

### **Unresponsives**

Unresponsive people are the most difficult personalities to deal with. They don't reveal their true motives, and you end up in a guessing game trying to find out what makes them tick.

The most effective strategy is to draw them out with open-ended questions. Even if the silence between you and an unresponsive person grows chasm-like, wait it out.

### **Characterize the difficult behaviors in your life**

List any difficult behaviors you work with and identify which type most closely fits each. Jot the techniques for each behavior on a three-by-five index card and review the cards before meeting with the people.

Visualize your next confrontation with that person and see yourself using these techniques. Rehearse until you feel comfortable with the techniques.

### **Encourage people to change**

When you ignore difficult behaviors, they don't change. But when you support positive change and refuse to indulge their behaviors, you encourage them to learn new coping skills - at least in your presence.

### **Know when to give up and seek help**

Some people may suffer from more than just difficult behavioral traits; they may have personal problems as well. Keep in mind that you can't know the whole story. Don't concern yourself past the bounds of your professional relationship. You may wish to use a facilitator to mediate or teambuild to create win-win situations.

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