



Dealing with difficult colleagues

As well as doing a good job at work, you are expected to deal with all manner of personalities in a businesslike and courteous manner. But what happens when your company lands you with a difficult, prickly colleague who makes your life hell?

Tackling difficult people

Working with difficult people is a common problem; there are so many personality types and egos kicking around in a working environment. Brian Salter and Naomi Langford-Wood, authors of *Successfully dealing with difficult people in a week*, suggest taking action to deal with tricky colleagues.

'It is better to tackle the problem and talk to the person. Stick to facts, not opinion, and encourage the problematic person to come up with a solution. From what they say, you can look for common ground and start negotiating,' says Brian. Try to understand what makes them behave the way they do and, when tackling the situation, keep things unemotional.

Behaviour that causes problems

Insecure people - who boost their own self-image by criticising others or throwing tantrums.

How to handle them - reassurance is needed to help build up their self-esteem. Try not to snap back, but be assertive in attempting to find out what the problem is from their point of view. Ignore temper tantrums by remaining silent.

Negative people are very damaging in the workplace because they affect those around them. Such people may be trying to protect themselves from future failure. Negative people can be also be aggressive bullying types who demand things done their way and always know best.

How to handle them - try to get them to explain why they feel as they do, but don't waste time arguing. If the person is a bullying type, and you can avoid dealing with them, you may find it worthwhile keeping out of their way, as such a person is unlikely to change.

Selfish people - bulldoze their way through their working life concentrating on their own needs and aims with no regard for others. They may never have grown out of the childhood 'I want this, I want that...' attitude to life.

How to handle them - talk to the person who is being selfish and quietly explain what they are doing and how it affects you. Keep your tone neutral and avoid getting into an argument. Body language should be assertive, so maintain eye contact, but be relaxed, smile and nod to encourage the other person.

Pleasant people - pleasant people with problematic behaviour, such as unreliability, can be hard to deal with because you don't want to hurt their feelings. Maybe they have trouble saying 'no' to people.

How to handle them - reassure them that you value their opinions and encourage them to come up with suggestions and solutions. In the case of someone who can't say 'no' look at narrowing down their area of responsibilities, so they are not put in the position where they promise the world, but can't deliver.

Take a look at yourself

With so many different personalities and egos at play, it is worth remembering that all communication is a two-way process. It's always hard to assume that the culprit could be yourself, but if you are finding someone difficult, it may be worth double-checking that you always deal with him or her in a courteous manner. It is possible that this person is reflecting the way they are being treated back at you