

# WORKING W DIFFICULT PEOPLE



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*Difficult people are everywhere. Dealing with them can be a challenge. Conflicts can arise because of many things: attitudes, opinions, rules, or failed expectations. Sometimes we take on the problems of others, and they become our own. These interactions can wreck your day. There are ways to work with them, though. Here are some tips to maintain your integrity and manage difficult relationships.*

## **1. TALK IT OUT, AND DON'T FORGET TO LISTEN**

There are two sides to every story. Seek to understand the other person, their interests, concerns, desires, needs, and limitations. Just like you, everyone is dealing with something. Show respect for the relationship, even if it is only business. Separate your self-esteem from your job performance. If you consider yourself valuable only because of the work you do, you will suffer greatly under a difficult boss.

## **2. SET LIMITS**

Each of us have boundaries, limits that define what we will and will not accept in our interactions with others. Sometimes, others may violate those boundaries. Regardless of their intention, their behavior needs to be corrected in order to preserve and strengthen the relationship. Boundaries bring order to our lives. As the poet Robert Frost once wrote... 'Good fences make good neighbors!' Allowing your boundaries to be violated can create negative patterns in the relationship moving forward. Don't become lost in your own emotions; you can be assertive without being aggressive. Maturity expresses the right emotion in the right way at the right time. If you are being treated unfairly and inappropriately, be sure to document it. Actively pursue justice through proper channels if the rules are being broken.

## **3. SEEK COUNSEL**

If you cannot reach an agreement or continue in the same conflict day after day, consider bringing in another view. Allow someone with an objective view to assist in the communication and exploring possible solutions. Be willing to explore your own motives, examining ways that you are perpetuating the difficulty, and change if necessary. There are numerous resources available to help, including the a supervisor, First Shirt, Chaplain, True North, Military OneSource, the Military Family Life Counselor (MFLC), Family Advocacy Program (FAP), and trusted mentors or friends.

## **4. KEEP YOUR INTEGRITY INTACT**

Control what you can control. While you may feel strong emotions provoked by others, ultimately you are responsible to choose what you do. Hold yourself accountable to behave in a way that is consistent with your values. Trials do not cause us to be what we have not been; rather, they reveal what we have been all along. "No one can make you feel bad without your permission." – Eleanor Roosevelt

## **5. MAKE PEACE, NOT WAR**

Conflicts can be handled through any of three responses: Escape, Attack, and Peacemaking. The ideal responses are those of peacemaking. Initial emotions can make that difficult, but don't launch an all-out attack. After cooling down, seek reconciliation, compromise, arbitration, mediation, or discussion. Search for creative solutions. Sometimes peacemaking involves third parties, see number 3.