



## **“Working with Difficult People”**

*Difficult people are everywhere. Dealing with them can be a challenge too. Conflicts can arise because of many things: attitudes, opinions, rules, or failed expectations. Don't let situations or people wreck your day. Sometimes we take on the problems of others, and they become our own. Here are some tips to maintain your integrity and overcome conflict in the workplace.*

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

There are two sides to every story. Seek to understand the others interests. What are their concerns, desires, needs, or limitations? 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**

When you let someone abuse you or hurt you verbally, the other person is not advanced. Protecting yourself sets a necessary limit for both of you. The limit advances the relationship. Boundaries bring order to our lives. As the poet Robert Frost once wrote... 'Good fences make good neighbors!' Don't become lost in your own emotions. Maturity expresses the right emotion in the right way at the right time. If you are being treated unfairly and inappropriately you should 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. Counsel may be needed to explore your own motives and examine ways that you are perpetuating the difficulty.

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

Control what you can control. You are responsible for your own reactions. The other person does not cause you to lose control. They didn't force your reaction. Your reactions reveal what is happening in your heart. 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**

Dealing with conflicts boils down to three responses: Escape, Attack, and Peacemaking. The ideal responses are those of peacemaking. Seek compromise, reconciliation, arbitration, mediation, or discussion. Don't launch an all out attack. Search for creative solutions. Sometimes peacemaking involves third parties, see number 3.

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