

HOW TO ELIMINATE WORKPLACE CONFLICT...

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<http://www.hodu.com/eliminate.shtml>

Wherever you go, you find people who are rude, selfish and insensitive, and sometimes, you're forced to work with them, often to the detriment of your own productivity. You don't have to become the best of friends with a difficult co-worker, but a more harmonious working relationship is clearly within your reach

The same problems that plagued people in ancient times are still with us today. People are still rude, selfish, insensitive, and difficult -- some of the time. Unfortunately, you may be forced to work with these difficult people. That's life.

In fact, a University of North Carolina survey found that 78% of the respondents think rudeness and incivility have increased in the last decade. And every one of the respondents could cite examples of co-workers who had caused workplace conflicts or treated them in a disrespectful manner.

To make matters worse, difficult people definitely hurt productivity.

As the UNC research team reported in their results to Industry Week and The Dallas Morning News, 53% of the respondents said they lost work time worrying about a past or future confrontation with a co-worker. 37% said a hostile confrontation caused them to reduce their commitment to the organization. 28% said they lost work time because they avoided the confrontational co-worker. And 22% said they put less effort into their work because of confrontations.

Even though you may not like certain people or situations they put you in, there are some things you can do to improve working conditions and and increase productivity:

1. Take an honest look at yourself

I remember one man who left job after job because he found his co-workers to be annoying. He was easily flustered, and some of his less-than-kind colleagues took a subconscious delight in flustering him.

Eventually, he learned that when he spoke he gave an aura of being easily flustered. So he started to work on his self-confidence and started to practice relaxation exercises. He became less and less flustered. As he changed, his co-workers also changed. They became more positive and less difficult.

If people around you are difficult, take a moment to take an honest look at yourself. Is it possible that you're doing something that contributes to their difficult behavior? Don't automatically assume that you're totally innocent, and they're totally to blame for your workplace conflicts.

2. Find a point of entry

There is always a way to get into the hearts of difficult people. It's like rowing around a mountainous island, looking for a place to land. You may not find the landing place immediately, but it's there. It just takes a bit of patience while you search for the point of entry.

It's the same with people. Their mountains, their blockades, their annoying behaviors typically come from some pain they're suffering.

It's so easy to react to the behavior of difficult people in a negative manner. After all, it's difficult. It does hurt. You can judge people's behaviors. But you must be very careful about judging the motives behind their behaviors.

3. Look for the lesson that can be learned from each difficult person and each workplace conflict. Instead of wasting your energy on getting annoyed, aggravated or defensive, focus on lessons that can be learned while working with difficult people.

During one of my motivational speeches, one of my audience members, a Vice President of a Fortune 500 company, said, "Whenever a difficult person crosses my path, I ask myself, 'What can I learn from this person?'" He continued, "Perhaps that person was put in my path to teach me patience or give me a chance to practice my skills in assertive communication."

When you focus on the lessons you're learning, instead of the irritation you're experiencing, you'll be in much better shape to respond to the workplace conflict in a positive manner.

4. Take your time to think before you respond to a difficult person during a workplace conflict. Before you say or do anything, figure out if it's worth it. How much time and energy do you want to spend on that person and his or her behavior? Sometimes you'll want to spend a lot, other times not.

Just don't get pulled into a hissing contest. You can go back and forth forever as to who did what, who's to blame, and who started it. Does it really matter? Always remember, worrying about what's right is always more important than worrying about who's right.

In other words, take extra caution before you offer advice. It's like the time Billie Burke, a famous actress from a bygone era, was on a transatlantic cruise. She noticed a gentleman suffering from a bad cold.

"I'll tell you just what to do for it," said Billie. "Go back to your stateroom; drink lots of orange juice, and take two aspirin. Cover yourself with all the blankets you can find. Sweat the cold out. I know what I'm talking about. I'm Billie Burke from Hollywood."

The man smiled warmly and introduced himself in return. "Thanks," he said. "I'm Dr. Mayo of the Mayo Clinic."

A final workplace conflict thought:

You don't have to become the best of friends with that difficult co-worker. You don't have to spend a lot of time together. Just look for your "point of entry," and you'll get an immediate, positive boost in your working relationships, and a substantial increase in productivity.