

Let's Talk: Dealing with difficult personalities

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Hi, my name is Katie Neider and today I'd like to talk with you about ways to deal with difficult people.

Whether it's your neighbor, coworker, your adult child, your parent, or spouse, we've all had our own experiences with difficult personality types. While we may not be able to pinpoint why this person acts the way they do, we can identify ways to manage these interactions in the moment. So, let's talk about ways to prepare for these situations so the next time you're around a difficult person, you'll feel more equipped.

Set healthy boundaries

First, set appropriate, healthy boundaries. Simply put, having healthy boundaries is about knowing your limits. You need to decide, in advance, what you will and what you will not accept from the other person. Be mindful of where you end and the other person begins.

Be realistic

Aim to reach a place of acceptance of who they are and who they aren't. Okay, so this person has been rude nearly every time you've interacted with them. Sure, let's give them a chance, but let's not expect sudden change or for the person to become a completely different person overnight. So, essentially, prepare yourself, in advance, and be realistic in your expectations of this person.

Don't take it personally

Another thing is to choose to act and not react. You cannot control the other person's behavior, but you can control how you respond to their behavior. Be proactive in your interactions. Remain calm, regardless of the other person's actions. Keep in mind that this person is dealing with their own issues. Chances are it's not about you. As difficult as it may be to do in the moment, try not to personalize it. Another thing is to talk it through with someone you trust. Process, vent, and identify how you felt in the moment. This will help you to become more prepared the next time you encounter a difficult person.

Remain calm

And, as much as you can, avoid allowing the situation to escalate. Don't match their behaviors. Instead, seek to model appropriate, healthy behaviors. Don't give the person the satisfaction of causing you to act in a way that is out-of-character for you or does not align with your own personal values. Allow the person time to say what they need to say and listen, truly listen. Reflect back to the person in order to demonstrate your desire to understand and to find common ground.

Take care of yourself

And lastly, and perhaps most importantly, make sure to take care of yourself. Self-care is essential. Sometimes we have no choice but to interact with difficult people, so that piece is out of our control. Focus on what you can control, yourself, your own personal health, and well-being. Do something to get your mind off of the situation and the difficult individual. Mindfulness, exercise, time with loved ones, whatever helps you.

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44.27.372.1-RFL (7/19)