



How to Deal with Difficult People Guidebook

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Why People Behave Badly

You must first understand the real causes of bad behavior: Here are some principles of human behavior that will help you understand why people do everything they do.

Principle 1: All human behavior is driven by either love or fear. Unfortunately fear drives most human behavior even many of the good, nice things we do are done because we are afraid we aren't good enough and we are trying to prove our value or get validation. Fear drives about 90 percent of our bad behavior (the remaining 10 are caused by a lack of knowledge (stupidity). When someone is difficult or behaving badly the first thing you want to do is step back and see if you can identify what is causing it.

Is it one of the two core fears or is it just a (lack of knowing better)?

Principle 2: If someone is behaving badly, it is usually not about you. It is usually happening because of their fears about themselves. They might be taking it out on you, but it's not really about you.

Principle 3: There are two core fears that drive most bad behavior. They are...

1. The fear of not being good enough (the fear of failure).
2. The fear that their life's not going to be good enough (the fear of loss).

Principle 4: When someone is functioning from fear, they can't see themselves or others accurately. They have a natural tendency in this place to see everyone as either better than them (coming from inferiority) or worse than them (coming from judgment). People often cast you as the bad guy (making them superior) so they can feel better about themselves and feel like the good guy. Just because they create this story, doesn't make it true. You must expect that the more fear of failure (shame) a person has the more they will project flaws and faults onto others (blame). We call this the shame and blame game and everyone plays it. It is a basic principle of human behavior. It is why whenever you point out flaws in another person their first reaction is to bring up your flaws back.

Principle 5: If most bad behavior is motivated by fear, then most bad behavior is really a request for love, reassurance or validation. That is what this person needs.

Here is a simple procedure you can use to help you find an appropriate response:

What is this person afraid of?

Which of the two core fears seem likely? You must figure out what she is afraid of and understand how that fear is driving her behavior, so you will see her accurately.

What does this person need? What could put her fear to rest, so she would not need to behave badly anymore?

Most of the time this person needs love, reassurance, attention or validation.

Just understanding what she is afraid of and what she needs, will change the way you see the situation.

What is in your control and what is your responsibility in this situation?

Take some time to get clear on this. It is not your responsibility to fix this person's self-esteem. That is out of your control. What is in your control? What is your responsibility?

Most of the time the only things in your control and your responsibility are your feelings and your actions.



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What would be the best (and most appropriate) way to feel and act in this situation?
Write down every response option you can think of.

Then, cross out the fear-motivated options (that you would be doing out of fear for yourself) and choose a love-motivated option (based in respect, caring, strength and honesty) that feels right to you.

Choosing a mature response can be difficult, but you can do it. It helps if you see this person as having the same intrinsic worth as you have, not worse or less than you. Remember that you are not perfect either. You are also a scared, struggling, student in the classroom of life, just like them. Seeing them as the same as you, will help you feel compassion and wisdom.

You must be very careful not to let the other person's fear trigger your fear. If someone is casting you as the bad guy, it's very easy to take that personally (because you also have a core fear that you aren't good enough). This could make you want to cast them as the bad guy, to make yourself feel better. Don't let this happen. Remember your value is infinite and absolute, and what this person thinks of you is irrelevant.

You are the same you with the same intrinsic value no matter what this person says or does.

The best way to deal with bad behavior is to kill them with kindness. Sincerely validate and edify them every chance you get. Be kind, caring and respectful. This will completely throw them off because they are usually hoping you will behave badly back so they will have more evidence about you are the bad one. Your ego may really want you to behave badly back and on some level it would feel so good.... Don't do it.

I promise that being kind and respectful, even to someone who doesn't deserve it, is always the right way to go. Sometimes treating people as if they are actually better (than they are currently behaving) pushes them in that direction. People will often become whatever they think you think they are.

If you see them as a kind, mature, respectful person, who treats people right and you even tell them what a good person they are, they might want to live up to your high opinion of them. You might encourage them to change themselves.

It's worth a try.



Confronting a Liar

Confronting a person that has lied, is not always the best course of action. Your ego may want to confront this person because it would make you feel safer or stronger or right — but it may not serve either of you. May I give you some other ideas?

When a situation like this occurs, you must first step back and make sure you are seeing the situation and the people involved accurately. When you have self-esteem fears (that you aren't good enough, which we all have to some degree) these fears can skew your perspective of the situation. You must check your fears, before you do anything else.

Here are three ways to check if confrontation is the right answer:

1 — Make sure your fears are out of the way and you can see yourself accurately.

Remember that your value isn't on the line here. Your value is infinite and absolute and nothing anyone else does, thinks, or says can diminish you. You are the same you no matter what. You could choose not to be offended by this behavior, since it can't really hurt you.

We all have a tendency to focus on the bad behavior of other people because it makes us feel better about ourselves. We sometimes cast this person as the bad guy so we can feel like the good guy. You must make sure you aren't focused on their faults while ignoring your own. You must make sure you see this person accurately (the same way you see yourself).

We are all flawed, struggling human beings in process. Could you forgive this person for being flawed since you have flaws too?

Could you be making this a bigger deal than is necessary?

Are you taking it personally when it really isn't about you?

Or is this offense really unacceptable behavior that must be corrected in order to have a healthy relationship with this person?

If this behavior is rare, or understandable in this person's situation, or forgivable, the most mature course of action may be to forgive it and let it go. **Listen to your gut on this.**

If it is happening too often, is unacceptable abusive behavior or intentionally hurtful, then you should bring it up and talk to them about it, but in a caring way (I'll explain how below.)

2 — Make sure you are seeing the other person accurately

This person is a scared, struggling human being doing the best they can with what they know. The problem is, they don't know very much and their perspective is clouded by fear.

Everyone has a core fear about "not being good enough." This core fear drives most of their bad behavior. Can you see this person has fears about their value?

Remember that most bad behavior is about that fear, and it is usually not about you (even though it feels about you). It is about their fears about themselves. Most of their bad behavior is about protecting, promoting and edifying themselves, or quieting their fear to rest in some way.



Confronting a Liar

Can you see why this person behaved the way they did?

What did this person really want and need?

Could their bad behavior be a request for love, attention, reassurance or praise?
(Bad behavior is usually a cry for help.)

As part of this step (where applicable), ask them questions before you say a word, so you really understand where they are (or were) coming from.

Do not assume that you know.
Most of the time we speak before we have all the facts.

3 — Make sure you see this situation for what it really is, a lesson.

Your life is a classroom, every experience is a lesson and every person is a teacher. This person is in your life to teach you something. What could it be?

Some people are there to show you things about yourself. What is this experience showing you? Is it showing you some of your fears? Why would it serve you to see them?

Some people are in your life to give you the opportunity to be wiser, more compassionate or more forgiving. Some people are in your life to give you the opportunity to be stronger, speak your truth and stand up for yourself. You are the one who will know which lesson this is being taught.

How is this situation giving you an opportunity to be a better, wiser, stronger, more loving you?

If you decide this situation is in your life to teach you about speaking up or confronting someone, part of that lesson is learning to do it in a loving way. If you approach this person with fear (focused on protecting yourself) the whole situation becomes about you. This approach is selfish and will cause the person to get defensive.

You must approach this person with caring and compassion. Your goal must be to edify them, and talk about how you can both make the relationship better.

You must bring up this issue because you want to have a good working relationship, and you understand that we all lie at times to keep ourselves safe. You are not coming from judgement, just compassion. This kind of conversation can edify and validate both of you.

No one should feel judged or looked down upon if you approach this this way. No one should get defensive. Defensiveness only happens when you approach them with fear focused on protecting yourself. If your goal is to validate them first and foremost, then talk about the offense, things will go better.

I explain how to have mutually validating conversations on page 10 of this guide. This is a communication skills everyone should have and it would work great in these conversations.



How to handle anger

First, I want to explain the psychology behind anger. It usually comes from these three factors:

1. A fear of not being good enough, which creates a tendency to cast blame at others.
2. A feeling of being wronged, taken from or insulted (victimized).
3. A need for the chemical rush that comes with anger and makes one feel powerful.

If you look behind someone's anger you will usually find some insecurity (though they may be covering it up with ego) and/or an incident where they felt taken from, treated badly or insulted at some level.

The funny thing about this (anger triggering) experience is that it doesn't have to be real, logical or even make sense for the brain to latch onto it, and the more addicted to anger someone is the easier these moments are to invent.

Anger can even be created when someone has done something wrong themselves and you are just the person who called them on their bad behavior. Because they don't want to be responsible for their behavior, they subconsciously focus on how mean or bad you were for bringing it up. (Many of you have experienced this with your spouse or significant other.)

Have you ever been pulled over by the police for running a stop sign? It can be a very interesting anger experience. Our first thought (driven by our subconscious programming) will be to think of an excuse that might get us out of being responsible for our partial, pitiful excuse for a stop. We hope the police officer will be nice (and not a jerk) about our very slight offense and let us off with a warning, but he does his job in a very logical, matter of fact way, and gives us a ticket.

We are not happy about this and we usually feel cheated. We can experience a great deal of anger towards the officer. We feel wronged and mistreated yet – We did not stop at that stop sign. We are responsible for this and the points on our record now. But it's more satisfying to be mad at him than ourselves.

The last time this happened to me, I sat in the car for a minute and really experienced the angry emotions. The amount of anger I had towards this officer, who was just doing her job, was crazy. I was furious at her. When you experience this kind of emotion it is more healthy to take a minute and process it. Don't suppress or stuff the feelings, and don't express them (to the extent that you make them bigger and bigger) just sit with them and ask yourself some questions:

1. What could this anger (or other emotion) be here for?
2. Could it serve me in any way?
3. Could it teach me anything?
4. What is behind it? What am I really afraid of?
5. Are my feelings and attitude in my control?
6. Is this emotion going to do me any good to stay in today?
7. Do I have any other options?

When I got that ticket that day I pondered these questions awhile in my car. I realized this experience could help me to understand why some people, who have more police "interactions" because of their skin color or ethnicity could start to feel a great deal of anger towards the police. I have an African-American daughter who gets followed around stores by security all the time and feels a great deal of empathy for people, who are angry at the police. I was having a hard time understanding their point of view, but if this one police experience (which was my fault) made me this angry, imagine how I would feel if it happened more frequently.

This is the bottom line – every experience is a lesson. When you step back and look for the lesson in it, you gain wisdom, clarity and strength to choose a different way.

(On the next page I'll explain what to do when others are angry).



How to handle angry people

First, understand when anger is directed at you, it may not really be about you.

Step back and ask yourself did I really do something that I need to take personal responsibility for? Do I owe this person an apology? If you do own it – and give them one immediately.

If you really don't think this is on you. It may be a projection of their fears about themselves and they may need to feel powerful and right in this moment by making you wrong. You must see their anger accurately for what it is, so you won't let it bother you if it is mostly their problem. Don't take it on and suffer over it.

Second, be nice, kind, calm and logical and treat the other person with all the respect and caring that you can, even when they doesn't deserve it. Praise them and validate them whenever possible (about any good behavior you see). This is often the last thing they expect, because they are subconsciously hoping you will behave badly back, so they can further proof to cast you as the bad one. Being kind will throw them off their game, and it may actually force them to see they are the one behaving badly. This is what you want.

Don't cast any blame or point out that they are in the wrong. You want them to realize this on their own (it's much more powerful this way.) Having said that, if a lot of time goes by and they can't see their anger issues you may need to get a professional involved who can help them to see how her behavior is a problem, and show them how to change it. It works a lot better if a third-party professional, not you, is the one to point out their need for some clarity.

Your part is to make sure you see other people as the same as you, and do not cast them as the bad guys, because this is the real answer to stopping anger. We are all imperfect, struggling, scared human beings doing the best we can with what we know and we all have the exact same value all the time.

If you would commit to see other people accurately and never see yourself as better than anyone else, it will take your ego out of the picture and bring tolerance and acceptance back in. We must stop casting our neighbors, co-workers, the police or any person who is different from us as the bad guys. We must remember that anger towards another person or group of people will hurt you in the end, because you are giving power to the idea that people (including you) can be not enough.

Buddha said, "Holding on to anger is like grasping a hot coal with the intent of throwing it at someone else; but you are the one who gets burned."

Understand that every anger experience, where you feel wronged or insulted is there to help you grow, learn to forgive and become a better person. It is your lesson on inner strength, forgiveness, tolerance, understanding and becoming more mature (your lesson as much as theirs).

Even in situations when a wrong needs to be brought up, you must do it from a place of wisdom, clarity and caring for the other person, not casting them as the bad guy. It must be handled from a place of forgiveness, seeing the other person as the same as you, for it to encourage change.

You can do this.



Dealing with a difficult leader

There are basically two types of leaders: Those who function in fear about their own value and can therefore only focus on themselves, and those who are secure about who they are and can therefore focus on the needs of others.

We call these fear-motivated leaders or love-motivated leaders.

- Anyone who needs to threaten and intimidate employees to control their behavior is not secure about who they are, and is a fear-motivated leader. Their focus is on protecting and promoting themselves and making themselves look good. They are coming from a place of ego, and they often use intimidation to control and manipulate other people.

If you want to be love-motivated leader you should:

Understand that your value is not on the line. You have nothing to prove and you are good enough right now. Knowing that your value is safe makes it easier to focus on serving other people.

- Choose to empower people instead of scolding, threatening or forcing. Choose to be a cheerleader who inspires his or her team to achieve great things. Say things like, "Don't do it for me, do it for you," and be supportive when other people win.
- Get respect because you give respect. People will care what you think and say if you care what they think and say. Validate, honor and respect every person's right to his opinion. You don't have to agree with everyone, but you must respect their right to think the way they do.
- Inspire people to feel responsible, confident, powerful and free. You do this by empowering them to solve their own problems instead of solving problems for them. You do this by letting people own more responsibility.
- Trust people to do what they are assigned to do and show them you believe in them.
- Treat others with respect and kindness.
- Be flexible and create an environment where people feel safe.
- Leaders and parents who strive to lead with love create teams with integrity. This means that team or family members do the right things, even when the leader isn't watching. They also create loyalty and cooperation, which makes everything run smoother.

If you are currently working for a fear-motivated leader, here are a couple of suggestions that may help:

- 1) Make sure you are seeing this person accurately.

Understand that most of his or her bad behavior is caused by the fear of not being good enough. The problem is not about you. Most of the bad behavior of a fear-motivated leader is really a request for validation. When he screams and yells about other people's performance, it is because he feels unsafe or threatened in some way. This situation may make him look bad or embarrass him.

Just understand why they behave the way they do. Try to see this person as the same as you, a struggling human being in the process of growing and learning. He is not better than you, so don't let him intimidate you. He is not worse than you, so don't spend time making him the bad guy. See his value (as a human being) as the same as yours. This brings compassion, strength and wisdom into the situation.



Dealing with a difficult leader

2) Don't take anything he/she says or does personally.

3) Validate him/her as often as possible. This makes them feel safe with you. Be kind and respectful and stay in control of your emotions and reactions. The more mature and wise you behave, the better they will treat you.

One of my executive coaching clients had a boss who was obviously threatened by him and his good ideas for improving things at work. After some coaching he could see that his boss had huge fear he wasn't good enough and when my client came in with ideas to improve things, these ideas were seen as criticism of how he was running things.

As soon as my client realized this, he changed his tactics. Now, when he has an idea, he takes it to the boss as a question and asks for advice, while validating how awesome he is. "I really want to improve things in my department, but I don't know how and I wondered if I could run some ideas past you, and if you could tell me what you think we should do, since you are so much more knowledgeable than I am." This technique made his boss feel safer with him. He was bothered at first with playing dumb, but soon realized it's not playing dumb, it's cutting out the ego and showing up smart but teachable.

4) Don't ever gossip about or put the boss down to your other co-workers. Take the high road and stay out of the gutter, even if others are swimming in it around you. Be the one who won't participate in gossip. Don't scold the others, just walk away and don't join in.

4) Document everything. If you are being disrespected or even abused at work, quietly keep track of unethical, immoral, abusive or manipulative behavior. Write everything down. This way if you need it in the future you have it. Be really careful where you keep this information though. I would keep it at home.

5) Say as little as possible. When you do need to speak, ask lots of questions and listen to him first, then choose your words carefully. Don't put this person on the defensive by assuming anything. Stay teachable and ask lots of questions so you really understand what he/she is thinking. Don't assume anything.

6) When he/she does behave like a love-motivated leader, be sure to notice, thank them and let them know how much you appreciate it. This will encourage good behavior in the future.

You may also want to update your resume and always keep your eye out for new opportunities.



How to deal with rude coworkers

I'm going to give you a couple different ideas here (and these suggestions will work for anyone who has a difficult person in their life.)

The first technique is to have a mutually validating conversation and directly ask for different behavior. This works great if the other person is rational, calm, logical and capable of actually caring about you. But if you are dealing with a toxic person, who may even have narcissistic or sociopathic tendencies, you can't get anywhere with conversation.

You could then try the encouragement technique (explained below) because it sometimes makes toxic people actually want to change themselves, but most of the time you are going to end up at option No. 3 to work on yourself and become really strong and un-offend-able.

One thing to keep in mind, no matter which option you choose, is that rude people who insult others, are overly competitive, show-offs, know-it-alls or brown-nosers are usually battling a lot of fear they aren't good enough. It is terrible fear of failure and insecurity that makes people need to appear better than others. It will change how you feel about this situation, if you see this person accurately as scared, not just rude.

Then, one thing you can try (along with the three options below) is validating, reassuring and building up this person as much as you can. Praise them and tell them how wonderful, amazing and good they are. Even though this is the last thing you want to give people who treat you badly, it is exactly what they need.

Sometimes when they get some validation they will feel better and safer around you and won't need to put you down anymore. So keep that in mind with each of the following suggestions.

Remember people are always more motivated to change when we show them their light – than when we point out their faults. People who feel good about themselves are also more loving, positive and giving towards others

Here are my three suggestions to solve this problem:

1) Have a mutually validating conversation with them

Follow these steps for best results:

- 1) Figure out the outcome you want. What kind of behavior change do you want to ask this person for? Pick one specific thing that they could do differently. (Stop being a jerk is not specific enough.)
- 2) Choose the right time. Make sure you choose a time and space to have a private, uninterrupted conversation. Ask them if this is a good time and if they are open to chatting with you.
- 3) Be calm. People can read your emotions and your energy. If you are angry, scared or upset when you talk, they will feel threatened and get defensive before the conversation even starts. Set your angry, nervous feelings aside, trust that your value is absolute and can't be diminished. Trust this experience is here to teach you both something and come from a space of trust and confidence so you approach them without nerves.
- 4) Make sure you are seeing this other person as the same as you – in intrinsic value. Do not start a conversation where you are seeing yourself as better than this person because you will subconsciously talk down to them. Do not start a conversation feeling intimidated by the other person either. They will feel that you are afraid of them and they will use this against you and may even attack you. Make sure you remember they have the same intrinsic value and the same core fears as you. See them as an equal peer, no matter where you each fall on the organizational chart.



How to deal with rude coworkers

5) Set your agenda aside upfront and focus on showing up for the other person first. Ask questions about how they feel about your working relationship and life at the office. Actively listen to how they feel and whatever they have to say. Do not get defensive or upset about anything they say, just validate their right to see the situation the way they do. (Nothing they say can hurt you.) Even ask if they have any suggestions on how you can improve. Being open to getting feedback creates a safe space where you can ask permission to give some feedback later on. Make sure they feel heard and understood before going forward.

6) Then, ask if you can ask them a favor or share some of your thoughts and feelings with them. When they say yes (and they usually will because you have earned it after listening to them) try to phrase your needs using “I” statements as much as possible and avoid “you” statements. Say things like “I have felt ... I have noticed ... It feels to me that ... and I was wondering if you would be willing to do this for me moving forward ... it would really mean a lot to me.” Ask for the behavior you want to see moving forward and stay focused on their future behavior. Don’t talk about the past, it just makes them defensive and they can’t change it.

If they are logical and rational, a conversation like this might work. If not try the next technique.

2) The encouragement technique

This is a great way to go if this person can’t handle a direct conversation. First, figure out the behavior you would like to see in this person. Then, think about how you would treat him and what you would say to him if he behaved this way. Then start doing and saying these things now.

Example: "John, I just want you to know how great it is to work with you. You are so careful and respectful to all of us and so kind. I just want you to know I appreciate you man."

This might make John want to be that kind of person, because people always want to live up to your highest opinion of them. Also, when you see the highest best in people you literally push them in that direction.

Then, every time he does anything good, jump right on it and tell him how awesome, honest or humble he is. (Focus on the qualities or kind of person you want him to think he is, not the specific behavior.) This isn’t lying, it’s showing him who he has the potential to be.

3) Ignore the bad behavior and work on you

When you are dealing with someone whose fears, insecurities or even a mental condition makes them really impossible and toxic to deal with, there is really nothing you can do to change them or get them to care what you need.

In these situations all you can do is work on you.

Practice being strong, bulletproof and in trust so no person can diminish your value with anything they do or say. You can see this experience as an amazing personal development opportunity to make you better and stronger.

You can choose to see every situation in your life as a perfect lesson the universe has brought you. Ask yourself what dealing with this person could teach you? How could it make you stronger, smarter or wiser?

See every day as a chance to practice being the most balanced, un-offend-able, confident, wise person you can be. If you do this consistently others will sense the truth about who you are, and goodness, confidence, wisdom and hard work do get noticed. The truth about who you are will come through.