

5 Steps to Diffusing Difficult People at Work

By [Laleh Alemzadeh-Hancock](#)



It is a fact of life that some people you meet or interact with may not be easy to deal with in business. There are some people that use their position or personality to create greater difficulty at work, but that is not always the whole story.

There are individuals identified as being difficult, but they may actually be people who in their efforts to improve the business may not know how to effectively [communicate](#) the vision or outcomes they would like to see. Instead, they make a decision that something is not working and immediately start attacking the results.

Here are five steps to increase your skill of diffusing difficult people or situations and get you back on track to creating greater results:

Take a breath

Our first response or comments to difficult people may not always be very productive or healthy. When we encounter an uncomfortable situation, it usually affects us physically and emotionally. This sometimes sends people down a roller coaster of emotions while creating tightness in the body, elevating the blood pressure, increasing stress hormones productions,

and increasing the risk of numerous health problems.

Tool: Take a deep breath and exhale very slowly and repeat two more times. This will bring fresh oxygen to your brain and body and will also provide a temporary relaxation to your body.

Neutralize the perceived point of view

When dealing with difficult people, most people take their focus off the tasks at hand and focus on proving the other person wrong. The challenge is that with both parties now on the defensive, they are no longer being very productive or aware of the possibilities that could create a resolution. What if you had the mindset that everything people said about you or the project was just their opinion at this moment in time? The key is to neutralize you and the views you have about the words they have used. This includes all the perceived points of views they think they have about the project, whether it happened or not.

Tool: "In your head, say interesting point of view you have this point of view, interesting point of view I have this point of view. Repeat it 8-10 times. There is a sense of neutrality that can get created. When we are neutral and not trying to defend ourselves then we can get information and ideas on ways to make the situation better.

Ask Questions

There is a great deal of miscommunication that can take place on projects and at work. Very often it is that someone heard information about something not working or they had expectations or projections of certain outcomes and they do not see them on the projects. Note: it can also be the activities that occurred during the day that yielded the frustration, which may have nothing to do with you or your project. Ask questions to be aware of the gap to ensure you and this person are on the same page.

Tool: Tell me more about what you read or heard that concerned you?

If the project is not the real problem, ask: "You don't seem like yourself today, is everything okay?"

Turn judgments to your advantage

With every comment or judgment people make about you, you have the choice to agree or resist. These are both sides of polarity and take you out of the neutrality that is needed. Or, you can choose something different. Allow people to form their own opinion and let their words just pass through you, but don't let it stop you or affect you. When people judge, the first response is to resist by creating an energetic wall to stop the words or actions. The challenge with resisting is that it also stops you from receiving information, awareness, ideas, or anything else that you can create greater.

Tool: Just visualize yourself lowering all the barriers or walls. You can also take a deep breath in and as you release the breath you can say barriers down, and repeat it 2 more times.

Turn everything to its opposite

It is very easy to take on people's perspectives and immediately start thinking of all the ways we did something wrong or make it be worse than it really is. For every comment or situation, imagine flipping it 180 degrees. Looking at it from its opposite side allows us a different perspective while providing information, awareness, and ideas on ways we can change it.

Tool: Ask, "If this was the opposite of what it appears to be, what else would be possible?" "What information is available here that I have not even considered?"

The key to diffusing difficult people starts with you. When

you do not defensively react to the intensity thrown at you then you can create a change in the energy and turn the situation to your advantage.

About the Author: [Laleh Alemzadeh-Hancock](#) is a management and professional services consultant, [Joy of Business](#) facilitator and the founder and CEO of global professional services company, [Belapemo](#). With nearly 30 years' experience in operational excellence, change management and business consulting, Laleh has inspired and empowered thousands of individuals including Fortune 500 executives, government agencies, non-profit organizations, athletes and veterans. A lifelong entrepreneur and passionate change-agent, Laleh strives to seek out possibility in every problem and aims to facilitate strategic change and optimal growth for all her clients. She is an advocate for people of ages with special needs or disabilities and their caregivers, and served on the Governor of Maryland's Caregivers Support Coordinating Council for four years. Through her organization, Global Wellness for All, Laleh inspires individuals, particularly those with perceived disability, to demand more from life and seek greater success.

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