

3 Emotionally Intelligent Strategies for Dealing with Difficult People

Working with a difficult person (and, often, more than one) is as expected in the workplace as attending pointless meetings.

If you're like most people, none of your approaches to get the other person to change make a noticeable, permanent, positive difference in your day-to-day relationship. There are likely multiple factors that may be contributing to your ongoing frustration. However, choosing your mindset about your difficult person is completely within your power.

Here are three perspectives about working with difficult people that just might help you get unstuck:

1. You are likely your Difficult Person's Difficult Person.

We are so used to thinking about the *other person* as the problem that we rarely think about our contribution to the dynamic. But think about it: if you are experiencing the other person as challenging, they are likely experiencing you as challenging, too.

2. Your Difficult Person may not be able to behave the way you want them to.

While it might seem crystal clear to you that if your difficult person would just talk less/work faster/collaborate more, they would be the kind of person you'd be happy to work with. And while taking less/working faster/collaborating more might be behaviors that *you* can exhibit, and that *you* value, that may not be the case for your Difficult Person.

You may want to alter how you expect your colleague to behave, and acknowledge, appreciate and reward them for the value they bring to creating a necessary diversity of work styles.

3. You may not be able to fix things with your Difficult Person.

You may want the relationship to feel more positive and productive, but sometimes, that just isn't in the cards. If the relationship truly isn't going to improve, you may need to "practice the fine art of emotional detachment".

Accept that you can change your own mindsets and behaviors, but you cannot change another person--and you cannot fix a relationship all by yourself.