

Employee Enhancement Newsletter

Helpful Resources from your Employee Assistance Program

March 2014

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How to Deal With Difficult People

Everyone has experienced a time when they had to deal with a difficult person. This is a form of adversity. Difficult people take different shapes whether they are argumentative, abusive, stubborn, angry, combative or a host of other negative emotions.

The question is, how can we deal with them?

Here are six (6) tips on what to do when in the presence of such a person:

1. Remain calm in the eye of the storm. Be still and say nothing. Let it run its course. Oftentimes the angry person is trying to provoke you into a shouting match. It doesn't pay to argue because it raises barriers.
2. Let the person do a great deal of the talking. He/she will soon tire of it. Sometimes that's all they want. To be heard. To feel important. Everyone wants to feel important. Some people just express it in ways that are counterproductive.
3. Genuinely see from the other person's point of view. Imagine yourself in their shoes. Never say "you're wrong." In fact, try hard to look for areas of agreement and expand on them.
4. You have power in these words: "Yes, yes, I see exactly what you're saying. You mean....." This shows the other person you heard them. That's all they usually want - to be validated! By agreeing on some things, you are gradually breaking down the other person's anger or resistance.
5. If the situation turns verbally abusive, put a stop to it (with your palms extended upward as if you were a traffic policeman), and firmly but calmly state: "You are very angry right now and you're saying things you don't mean (give the benefit of the doubt) so I will excuse myself and we will talk again after you calm down." Then leave the room or ask the person to leave.
6. If you are wrong, quickly admit it and take responsibility. You could say, "You're absolutely right, it is my fault and here is what I will do about it....." Or even if you are convinced you're not wrong, at least give the benefit of the doubt, "I may be wrong. Let's look at the facts together."

These words also have power - tremendous power. Not only does it validate the other person's viewpoint but it also diffuses the tension hanging in the air. It dissipates almost immediately and you can almost hear a sigh of relief from the other person. They have been heard is what their brain is telling them. You might be surprised to see what happens after that.

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Chat Reminder

Dealing with Difficult People

Connect with Deer Oaks and a counselor for a live confidential chat.

When:

March 19, 2014

Where:

www.deeroaks.com

Session Time (CST):

12:15 PM to 12:45 PM





Protect Your Personal Information



Identity theft is a serious crime. It happens when someone steals your personal information such as your social security number or credit card numbers and uses it without your permission. You may see mistakes or mystery charges on your bank, credit card, or other account statements. You may receive bills for products or services you never received.

Protect your personal information, urges the Federal Trade Commission. Get detailed information online at www.ftc.gov/idtheft.

- Keep your important papers secure. Limit what you carry in your wallet or purse. Pick up new checks at the bank instead of having them mailed to your home. Take outgoing mail to a collection box or the post office. Don't leave it in your mailbox. Shred sensitive documents, receipts, credit card offers, insurance forms, checks, bank statements, and similar documents.
- Secure your social security number. Only give it out when necessary (and ask if you can use a different kind of identification).
- Protect your computer and mobile devices. Use anti-virus software. Don't open files or click on links sent by strangers. Remove the memory cards from mobile devices before recycling them.
- Protect your data online. Keep your passwords private. Don't over share on social networking sites. If you post too much information about yourself, an identity thief can use that information to answer challenge questions on your accounts (birthdays, mother's name, pet names, high school).

IDENTITY THEFT PREVENTION AND RECOVERY SERVICES PROVIDED THROUGH YOUR EAP

Deer Oaks offers you free online identity monitoring through its *Control Your ID* service. The service is provided at no cost to you and is accessible via the Work/Life website in the Legal/Financial Center. Additionally, if you are a victim of identity theft, you may call the EAP for a free 30-minute consultation with an Identity Recovery Professional who will assess your situation and assist you in creating an action plan. Our Identity Recovery Service helps you to recover from, and minimize the impact of, a breach of your identity

Walk Off Stress, Naturally



At work, at home, even in the car, stress is a constant struggle for many people. But it's more than just exhausting and annoying. Unmanaged stress can lead to serious health conditions such as high blood pressure, heart disease, obesity, and diabetes.

"The American lifestyle is fast-paced and productive, but can be extremely stressful. If that stress is not addressed, our bodies and minds can suffer," said Dr. Aaron Michelfelder, professor of family medicine at Loyola University Chicago Stritch School of Medicine.

Our bodies need sleep to rejuvenate, and if we are uptight and stressed, we aren't able to get the rest we need. This can lead to serious physical and mental health issues, which is why it's extremely important to wind down, both body and mind, after a stressful day.

According to Dr. Michelfelder, one of the best ways to wind down and reconnect after a stressful day is by taking a walk. Though any walking is good, walking in the woods or in nature has been proven to be even better at reducing stress and improving your health.

"When we get to nature, our health improves," he said. "Our stress hormones rise all day long in our bloodstream and taking even a few moments while walking to reconnect with our inner thoughts and to check in with our body will lower those damaging stress hormones. Walking with our family or friends is also a great way to lower our blood pressure and make us happier."

Research out of Japan shows that walking in the woods also may play a role in fighting cancer. Plants emit a chemical called phytoncides that protects them from rotting and insects. When people breathe it in, there is an increase in the level of "natural killer" cells, which are part of a person's immune response to cancer.

"When we walk in a forest or park, our levels of white blood cells increase and it also lowers our pulse rate, blood pressure and level of the stress hormone cortisol," Dr. Michelfelder said.

He also suggests reading, writing, meditating or reflecting to help calm the mind after a long day. To help calm the body, yoga and breathing exercises also are good.

"If you want to wind down, stay away from electronic screens as they activate the mind. Electronic devices stimulate brain activity and someone's post on Facebook or a story on the evening news might cause more stress," he said.

Health-e headlines™

Don't Assume You Know How to Exercise

Many people who exercise think they know what to do when they walk into a gym, but the reality is poor form, training at an inappropriate intensity, or choosing the wrong exercises for your needs. A well-planned program using proper exercise technique will prove much more successful. Sit down with a well-qualified and certified personal trainer to talk about your exercise program to start on the right track.

Health-e headlines™

First Aid for Burns

For minor burns:

- Immerse in fresh, cool water or apply cool compresses for 10 to 15 minutes.
- Dry the area with a clean cloth. Cover with sterile gauze or a non-adhesive bandage.
- Don't apply ointments or butter; these may cause infection.
- Don't break blisters.
- Over-the-counter pain medications may help reduce inflammation and pain.

Health-e headlines™

An EAP Reminder

Life Can Be Hectic. The EAP Can Help You Find Your Balance.

Deer Oaks, your EAP, is always available to you and your household members.

If you are struggling with children, finances, or just want some practical advice on health or the mind-body connection, contact Deer Oaks by calling the Helpline.

Counselors are available 24/7 to provide you with immediate care.





Clinician's Corner..

Monthly Advice from the Deer Oaks Clinical Team

Dealing with Difficult People

Difficult people are everywhere and if we're being honest with ourselves, we can probably admit to being the difficult person at one point. Sometimes people have difficult personalities; sometimes it's the current situation that can make someone come across as difficult. As hard as we try, the only thing we can do is focus on our own actions. Although the suggestions below don't come naturally to most, with a little practice, you can control your own reaction to a difficult situation and help move through it as quickly as possible.

- **Take a time out:** Although it may sound like an intervention for a child, it is an incredibly effective tool for adults, too. Oftentimes our initial reaction when confronted with a difficult person is to become defensive and possibly even angry ourselves. When it's an available option for you, take an opportunity to walk away from the situation. Be sure to tell the person that you need some time to yourself, and advise them of when you will re-address the issue. By allowing yourself a few moments to switch from emotion-based thinking to logic-based thinking, you're more likely to be able to resolve the issue more effectively and diplomatically; there's no need to let yourself become so upset.
- **Model appropriate behavior:** Humans naturally mirror and are affected by the emotions of people near us. Even though your inclination may be to raise your voice, point fingers, and match the level of difficulty of your counterpart, this will increase the chance that he or she will remain emotionally charged up, too. Even though it takes quite a bit of effort, if you are able to keep your voice calm, the content of your speech rational, and your body posture relaxed you can increase the chances of the other person following suit. It's hard to yell when your anger isn't being returned.
- **Practice active listening:** When someone is upset with something we have said or done, as they are going through the laundry list of complaints, we may find ourselves stewing up our defenses in our mind ("I never said that," "you're wrong," "how dare you,"). However, underneath difficult people can sometimes simply be a problem or a need that they are wanting to be met or solved. Instead of cooking up what you'll say in your defense try to hear what this person is saying: What do they need? What would you feel like if you were in his or her shoes? Instead of responding with your own defenses, summarize what you just heard the other person say; let them know that they are being heard and validated.
- **Adopt a problem-solving approach:** Instead of focusing on this person's personality ("he's so mean," "she's such a complainer," "he's so difficult,"), put on your detective's hat and figure out what this issue boils down to. Getting wrapped up in how frustrated you are will prolong the issue. Use your active listening to help the person feel heard, validated, and to confirm that you understand the exact nature of the complaint. Collaborate to offer multiple solutions, and agree upon the one that suits both of you. Make it about the problem, not the person.



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Build Personal Financial Security



If you want to achieve financial security, consider an emergency fund your safety net. Generally, an emergency savings account is the first savings goal a family should have. While establishing an emergency fund can feel stressful or overwhelming, once you have an adequate amount tucked away in savings you will have peace of mind knowing your safety net is in place.

Why do you need an emergency fund?

An emergency fund is a savings cushion available to you in the case of a financial emergency. There are many situations where you may need to rely on your emergency fund, including job loss or other reduction of income, health emergencies, automobile repair, and home repairs. If any of these financial emergencies happen to you, an emergency fund can keep you from falling into debt.

Save three to six months' worth of living expenses

To save for an emergency fund, you should know how much money you'll need. Most financial experts recommend that you save about three to six months' worth of living expenses. If you have a job that is less stable, are self-employed, or feel that you may need to use your emergency fund sooner rather than later, consider saving a larger amount. As your income grows, add to the account so that you always have six months of living expenses set aside.

Choose the right savings account

Emergency funds should be saved in a low-risk, short-term account. While it may be tempting to put these funds in a high-yield financial vehicle, keeping your funds in a low-risk account will ensure that your money is easy to access in a financial emergency. However, don't keep the funds in your standard savings account or checking account. Not only will that make them too accessible, you'll also earn a low interest rate. Money market funds are great for emergency funds because they are low risk and earn a higher yield than a regular savings account.

Make your emergency fund your top priority

Once you have a goal, it's time to start saving. For many, saving for an emergency fund should be a top financial goal, even above retirement and college savings. Determine how much money you have to set aside each month, and if your money market account allows it, set up an automatic periodic investment monthly so that you won't forget to transfer the money to your emergency fund.

Once you have your emergency fund established, don't touch it except for true financial emergencies. Remember that this money isn't for vacations, large purchases, or other "wants". If you do need to use the emergency fund, start a new savings plan to replenish it as soon as you get back on your feet.

About Money Management International

Money Management International (MMI) is a nonprofit, full-service credit-counseling agency, providing confidential financial guidance, financial education, counseling and debt management assistance to consumers since 1958. MMI helps consumers trim their expenses, develop a spending plan and repay debts. Counseling is available by appointment in branch offices and 24/7 by telephone and Internet. Services are available in English or Spanish. To learn more, call 800.432.7310 or visit www.MoneyManagement.org.