



Tips for overcoming negative aspects in yourself:

1. Learn to recognize when your defensive mechanisms come up. Realize that you are probably not really being attacked.
2. When you catch yourself feeling defensive, don't react so quickly.
3. Learn how to listen when someone asks a question or makes a suggestion.
4. Ask people to re-state their question/comment/suggestion.
5. Try to understand what others are saying by repeating back what you think you heard.
6. You may want to ask for more time to respond, then get back to them. This will give you time to work with the question/comment/suggestion without the pressure of being on the spot.
7. DO consider that other people have good ideas that are just as valid as yours.
8. Take courses or workshops in listening skills and team-building.
9. Find someone who can help you work on this negative aspect of yourself – a good friend, coworker, teacher or counselor.
10. If it is someone that you interact with regularly, ask them to let you know when you are being a jerk and call your attention to what you are doing. That will help you learn to see what situations and events trigger your insecurity.
11. Recognize that changing learned patterns of insecurity and defensiveness may take years of work.
12. Don't give up on yourself.
13. Learn to understand your own personality and your unique strengths and weaknesses.



*Bloomsburg University of PA
Residence Life Office*



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Development Series

Dealing with Difficult People



*“Anger
is one letter short
of Danger!”*

The Exploder

The Exploder's behavior is equivalent of a temper tantrum. The outbursts are filled with rage that barely seems under control. They feel threatened by the situation and are unable to cope effectively. Hence, they use intimidating behavior to gain more control.

How to Work with them:

1. Give them time to run down and gain self-control on their own
2. Look directly at them and wait. Get their attention and stand up for yourself
3. Show that you take them and their concerns seriously by using your active listening skills
4. Don't argue or try to cut them down
5. Make sure they are seated and not standing over you. If necessary, suggest moving to a private setting for further discussion.



The Complainer

The Complainer finds fault with everything. The message behind their behavior is that someone should be doing something about their problems. They are unable to engage in productive problem-solving dialogue. They feel powerless to change situations and at the same time feel it's someone else's responsibility to do so.

How to Work with them:

1. Listen attentively to them even if you feel guilty or impatient
2. Acknowledge what they say by paraphrasing. Check to see if your perceptions are accurate
3. Don't agree with or apologize for their complaints.
4. Move to a problem-solving mode by asking specific questions, how they suggest the problem be addressed.
5. End the cycle of persistent blaming



"He who throws mud, loses ground."

"Sit on the fence long enough and the parade will pass you by."

The Clam

The clam is the person who reacts to your questions or attempts to engage them in conversation with silence, a grunt or some noncommittal yes or no. They avoid painful interpersonal situations, express hostility and avoid taking a position on some issue. They offer very little clarification about how they feel which often leads to a refusal to cooperate.

How to Work with them:

1. Your major task is to get them to open up. Ask open-ended questions and wait for a response.
2. If no responses are forthcoming, ask another open-ended question and wait. Do not fill in the silence with idle chatter. This will indicate your own discomfort with the situation.
3. Develop your skills in using the Friendly-Silent-Stare technique
4. Comment on what is happening in the interaction between the two of you.
5. If they don't open up or time has become an issue, end the meeting and set up another time to talk.



The Wet Blanket

The Wet Blanket responds to any question or idea with a quick and negative response. They'll usually say, "It won't work" or "It's no use." They avoid taking an active role in problem-solving and will continue to be negative & critical. They feel as if everything is out of their control. As a result, they have developed a basic bitterness about themselves, others and life that they are unable to see the glass half full.

How to Work with them:

1. Be alert to your own tendencies toward pessimism. Do not allow them to bring you down and into their negativity pool.
2. Make optimistic, but realistic statements about past successes in solving similar issues at hand
3. Don't try to argue with them. See their perspective and view their negativism as problems that can be solved & overcome
4. Don't offer solutions until the problem has been thoroughly discussed.
5. Be prepared to take action on your own and make a decision



The Know-It-All

The Know-It-All is the bulldozing expert on all matters. They project a sense of absolute certainty about everything and usually leave others feeling one-down, stupid or worthless. They have a high need for control and feel the only sure thing is to do it all oneself.

How to Work with them:

1. Be prepared, do your homework and have all information you need available before you talk with them.
2. Listen carefully and paraphrase the main points.
3. Question firmly about unclear facts or any inconsistencies, but do not confront them in a group situation. Be tentative about disagreeing so harshly right from the start
4. Conduct a self-check on your own Know-It-All comments
5. Be prepared to accept their alternatives in hopes to build a working relationship for future encounters.



The Staller

Stallers are habitually indecisive. They will accept a task, but will not follow through with it, leaving others to do the work. They have a hard time making decisions because most decisions will not be agreeable to everyone all the time. They avoid the 'disappointment factor' and as a result often lack the ability to lead others.

How to Work with them:

1. Be open to listening to the conflicts and difficulties they face in making choices and decisions. Understand that their avoidance mode of problem solving may not be able to be altered.
2. Give support for any decision making they can offer
3. Listen for indirect clues for the underlying issues. Surface the issues and then proceed with engaging them in problem solving techniques.
4. Concentrate on the facts of the situation and do not take on their problems/issues yourself.

"You can't direct the wind, but you can adjust your sails."

