

# Difficult People “Cheat Sheet”

Yes... there really are difficult people!

While there are advanced strategies that can actually change their behaviors, here are some quick short-term strategies to stop them from being difficult with you right now. Here are seven common types of difficult people and short-term strategies for getting along with them.

## The Big Bully



**Motivation: Action**

- Stay assertive.
- Repeatedly say the Bully’s name to break their pattern until they stop attacking you.
- Quickly let them know that you understand their problem and answer with a clear, brief explanation.

## The Think They Know It All



**Motiation: Attention**

- They know that they don’t really know what they are talking about so don’t confront them directly.
- Use questions to present your ideas with respect.
- Soften your statements with words like “maybe” or “what do you think” to make it easier for them to go along with your ideas.

## The Maybe Person



**Motivation: Safety**

- Patiently discuss their conflicts about making a decision and try to understand any objections they have.
- Provide a comfort zone where they can feel safe and free from criticism or judgment if they make the wrong decision.

## The “Yes” Person



**Motivation: Safety**

- Even when you feel frustrated, be careful and kind with this difficult person.
- Don’t ignore it if they don’t deliver as promised.
- Confront them gently when they let you down.
- Get them to put commitments in writing if necessary.

## The Silent Type



### Motivation: Safety / Order

- The best short term strategy for getting the silent type to respond is to ask open ended questions that start with “who”, “what”, “when”, “where”, or “how”.
- When you ask the questions, make sure that your nonverbal language shows that you expect an answer.

## The Ambush Artist



### Motivation: Attention

- Your short term strategy with the Ambush Artist is to be direct and assertive.
- If you hear a remark, stop what you are doing and confront them with something like “how is that relevant to what we are doing here?”
- Don't let them off the hook if they claim they didn't mean anything by their comment.

## The Exploder



### Motivation: Attention / Action

- Your best approach here is to get some emotional distance and take control of the situation.
- Be friendly and calm as you say his or her name to get their attention.
- As you repeat their name, ask questions to find out their real concerns and address the concerns quickly and directly.
- If necessary, take a time out to let them calm down.

## The Three Step Solution

While the strategies given on this handout are effective for interacting with a difficult person in the short term, they may not provide a permanent solution. To completely stop the behavior, use this three-step framework that works with any difficult person, not just these seven.

### Diagnose

What do they gain from this behavior?



### Break

Stop it from “working” so they don't get what they want from the behavior.



### Replace

Give them a better way of getting what they want.