

Dealing With Challenging Parents



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Prevention Strategies



Although confrontation is sometimes unavoidable, following basic rules of human relations may help to avert confrontations before they begin:

- Be honest and fair
- Treat parents with patience and respect
- Keep a sense of humour
- Be quick to praise the efforts of parents
- Look for areas of agreement
- Be slow to anger



General Coping Strategies

- Don't take the behaviour of difficult people personally. Their troublesome behaviour is habitual and affects most people with whom they come in contact.
- Don't fight back or try to beat them at their own games. They have usually been practicing their skills for a lifetime and you're an amateur.
- Don't try to appease them. Difficult people have an insatiable appetite for more.
- Don't try to change them. You can only change your responses to their behaviour.

Strategies for Four Common Types of Difficult People

- OPENLY AGGRESSIVE PEOPLE:
 - Stand up to them, but don't fight.
 - They will expect you to either run away from them or react with rage. Your goal is simply to assertively express your own views, not try to win a battle of right or wrong.
 - First, wait for the person to run out of steam.
 - Then call the person by name and assert your own opinions with confidence.





Four Common Types



■ SNIPERS:

- Snipers are experts at taking potshots in subtle ways, such as humorous putdowns, sarcasm, disapproving looks and innuendoes.
- You may feel uncomfortable replying to them because you don't like confrontation.
- Respond to a sniper with a question. "That sounds like you're making fun of me. Are you?" A sniper usually replies with denial. "I'm only joking."
- This will reduce the chance for similar attacks in the future.

Four Common Types



- COMPLAINERS:
 - These are fearful people who have little faith in themselves and others because they believe in a hostile world.
 - Their constant discouragement and complaining can bring everyone to despair.
 - Don't try to argue these difficult people out of their negativity.
 - Instead, respond with your own optimistic expectations.



Four Common Types



- SILENT PEOPLE:

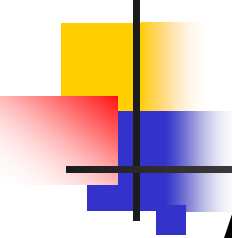
- People who ignore you, give you sullen looks and respond to every question with silence are difficult because they're timid.
- Ask them questions that cannot be answered with just a yes/no, such as "Tell me your concerns."
- Then wait at least one full minute before you say anything. The long silence may make them uncomfortable enough to say something. If they do start talking, listen carefully.



Presenting Difficult News...

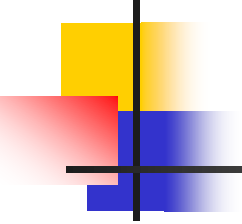
Do it with compassion

- Let them have their say. They need the opportunity to react, to articulate their ambivalent feelings and work out their own sense of it. Your job is to listen intently and respectfully, even if their comments are illogical or unfair.



Acknowledge that their feelings are valid, even if you don't share them. It's always a mistake to dismiss the fears of others. In doing so, you create implacable foes. Acknowledge that the concerns are real, that you understand them, and that you'll search for a way to ease them.



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- Allow people the opportunity to work out their own accommodations.
 - Preserve as much of the familiar as possible.
 - Finally, explain your decisions. When you ask people to make a sacrifice, it helps if they see something good coming from it.
 - Be sympathetic but forward looking. Look for compromises that will ease the transition. Be specific about the benefits.

Listen First, Persuade Later

If there's a common thread that runs through dispute resolution, it is this:

- Listen carefully before you try to convince others. You can't change someone's mind until you know how it works.
- Until you go a step further and acknowledge their concerns, people will tune you out, no matter how good your arguments or how well you state them.





The Rule!

On every issue that stirs strong feelings, the majority of people invariably bring with them a pet theory or preoccupation...If you address this preoccupation, they will listen to what you have to say. If you do not address it, they will not listen. It's almost as if people have grown so obsessed with their own theories bursting within them that they cannot pay attention until these have been addressed.

The Rule

Listen and acknowledge before you persuade.