

Characteristics of Difficult People and Responses to Them

1. The Sherman Tank	
Common Characteristics	Responses to Them
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abrupt, abusive, often arrogant. • Possess and use interpersonal power which generates confusion, flight, or helpless frustration in others. • Cool thinkers and quite merciless. • Expect compliance and efficiency. • Give negative feedback freely but are unable to receive any. • In attack mode a lot of the time. • Often despise non-STs as weak and unimportant. • Often out to prove themselves to themselves. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stand up to them without fighting. They'll usually eventually listen to somebody who knows what they want. • Give them time to run down. • Don't worry too much about being polite when you stand up to them. • Be firm even if feeling the fear. • Call them by name / get their attention. • Try to get them to sit down. • Maintain eye contact. • State your opinions assertively. • Be ready to be friendly once confrontation dealt with.
2. Snipers	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less direct but still use ways to put people down. • Often observe social conventions but their effect is just as negative as Shermans. • Will use tactics such as purportedly helpful comments rather than overtly bullying. • This means fewer choices for those on the receiving end. • Bystanders can get irritated and expect you to react. • May have the same inner resentments as Shermans, but don't have the same compensating power to move others into action. • They like to win and expect others to respond. • Victim must decide to stop being a victim and change the nature of the interaction. • Need power without personal danger and are often better at sniping than outright battle. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surface the attack by questioning / testing your reading of their behaviour and statements – do this with a smile. • Seek group confirmation / denial. This means that they are flushed out into the open and there is opportunity to evaluate their responses. Snipers usually deny attacks.

3. Exploders	
Common Characteristics	Responses to Them
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Throw tantrums apparently from nowhere. • A friendly discussion with them suddenly turns, as a result of a barely perceived threat or blockage. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give them time to simmer down. • If no pause, interrupt to make them pause. • If that isn't working, take time out. • Be very clear about your intentions. Make it clear you're able to discuss it but not in the midst of a hissy fit. • Don't panic. • Make sure others don't panic.
4. Complainers	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exert control by incessant comment and making others feel guilty. • Often self righteous. • Find fault, not solutions. • May be a "triangular" complainer. • "Perfect" and blameless. • They get attention but seldom get action. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen attentively. • Acknowledge by repeating the gist. • Interrupt if unending – seek summary. • Do not reinforce by agreeing. • Do not apologise, to avoid accusation – defence – reaccusation. • State fact without comments. • Switch to problem solving by asking questions and getting their action. • In a triangular situation, offer to contact the other person there and then. • If nothing works, set the limits and stop the conversation. • Ask how the person would like the conversation to end.
5. The Clam	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unresponsive even when asked. • Use silence to make people uncomfortable. • Therefore use it to gain some control. <p>NB: Isolate real claims from panel members / participants who are keeping quiet for other reasons (e.g. inexperience, awe).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use open-ended questions. • Use friendly silent stare (rather than talking for them). • Comment on what's happening, including non-verbal language. • Elaborate if that doesn't work. • Be attentive if the clam opens. • If they don't say you'll be back to it later. • Set limits. • If none of this works, state that you consider the silence an assent.

6. Superagreeables	
Common Characteristics	Response to Them
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They're fun and they promise what people want. • They want to be liked and make others feel approved of. • Can make unrealistic commitments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make honesty non-threatening and they might use it. • Don't accept unrealistic commitments. • If you don't confront the problem, they'll keep letting you / others down. • Keep the confrontation 'friendly'.
7. Wet Blankets	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "It won't work", "we tried that before", "there's nothing that can be done" – knocking plans, not finding solutions. • No one can be entrusted with a task and no one cares. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't get drawn in and don't let others. • Be optimistic. • Change tack but don't try to argue – you won't convince a negativist. • Rushing in with solutions will delight them with more opportunities for attack. • Use catastrophizing – "what's the worst that can happen?" • Use their "black hat" constructively at times.
8. Bulldozer Know Alls	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Productive, competent, radiate power and self-sufficiency. • Make others feel inferior. • Right with monotonous regularity. • Make it difficult for others to be creative, or even efficient. • They do not listen. • Authoritarian and impose their own ideas on people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study the subject matter. • Listen and acknowledge their ability. • Ask questions, rather than challenging (they will usually know what they're talking about). • Avoid dogmatic counter argument. • Give them a few things they can just remain superior on.
9. Balloon Know Alls	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unlike bulldozers, these are the phony know alls. • They kid themselves and others into belief of competence. • They often get into positions of power and you may be at a loss as to how they got there! 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do challenge, but present facts rather than just arguing. • Other panel members may take this person on as a "pet" task.