Coping With Difficult People: The Proven-Effective Battle Plan That Has Helped Millions Deal with the Troublemakers in Their Lives at Home and at Work

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We've encountered them: the bullies, the wet blankets, the yea-sayers that never come through. More often than not, we're left fumbling for words, stumbling toward the door...frustrated, enraged or just plain depressed.

Dr. Robert M. Bramson, a psychologist and management consultant, will show you that it is possible to remain sane, dignified and optimistic when dealing with even the most Difficult People. With these lively, insightful dramatizations, you'll learn how to:

Identify difficult types, from the too-good-to-be-true to the too-hot-to-handle, from the perennial gossip to the eternal clam.

Master the step-by-step procedures that will neutralize any negative or hostile encounter.

Understand your own style of thinking and how it affects your ability to deal effectively with each type.

Maybe you can't turn "Gloomy Gus" into "Pollyanna."..but with the help of Dr. Bramson, you'll prevent the difficult from becoming impossible---and end "relation frustrations" for good!

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From Reader Review Coping With Difficult People: The Proven-Effective Battle Plan That Has Helped Millions Deal with the Troublemakers in Their Lives at Home and at Work for online ebook

Andrea says

I read this book more than 10 years ago and am now re-reading it. It is a very quick read and is so helpful not only in work relationships but also personal ones. The primary take away is for one to focus more on their own reactions and coping strategies vs. trying to expect or effect change in a person who is difficult to deal with. I have recommended this to countless colleagues and friends. It is a small paperback, easily acquired on Amazon but buy it before it goes out of print!

Jamie F says

Good book with specific steps to deal with 7 different types of difficult peoople. A lot of the recommendations fit well with what I've learned in the leadership program at work, but instead of a generic approach for everyone, it gave specific steps for specific situations. It was worth reading if you have difficult coworkers or if you need to be prepared to deal with anyone! ;-)

Andrew says

Maybe I'm looking for something with a bit more bite, that offers more practical solutions than, essentially, "grin and bear it". I wanted a work that dug under the personalities and got to the driving pathology. For that, I will have to look elsewhere. And if I may be forgiven for nitpicking, this work really suffers from a case of the cutes, with workplace personalities labeled things like "the clam" or "the sherman tank".

Kresimir Mudrovcic says

Book was literally OK, nothing more. Writer spoiled it with too many disconnected parts, I was missing some flow in the book. Also, there were too many personality divisions that created too many different things specific to some personality type to remember. Also there was not a single scientific or research backup for the recommendations. Overall, it is a good topic, but style of writing was a failure.

Dawn says

This book was really informative. I wish I had discovered it about ten years ago. I think it would have really helped me cope with some situations that should not have become so complicated and stressful. This book describes different types of people that prove difficult to handle and ways to cope. I think the most important

thing I realized from this book is that the majority of people are not consciously difficult and half the trouble is how your reaction can escalate the situation if you employ defensive mechanisms. I will now constantly monitor myself for any triggering of defense mechanisms and try to cope in more appropriate ways. At least now I feel that I will have options next time I encounter someone that conflicts with my preferred thinking type and proves difficult for me to deal with.

Walleye23 says

Interesting observations and so helpful hints. Definitely directed to a workplace environment rather than one's personal life (that was what I was looking for).

Jerry says

I'm looking for a book on this subject that is interesting to read and doesn't bore me with anecdotes about people I don't care about. This book is a quick read, but what I got out of it could have been conveyed in 50 pages. If the subject has to be fluffed up to make a book, the writing needs to be much more entertaining. If you have a particular person in mind when you pick up this book, I'd jump right to the chapter devoted to them.

booklady says

Helpful book to pick up when you encounter a person who is a particular challenge and you have to deal with them on a regular basis. Teaches techniques to de-emphasize emotional aspects and view the situation from a safe distance. Invaluable with certain people.

Adam Nelson says

I read this for work, for my department's professional development. Interesting and at times difficult read. It stirred up bad memories of a former, very abusive work environment, for one, but it also had the unintended effect of causing me to reflect on my own behaviors on the job. I can pinpoint many times in my working life when I was the difficult person. In that sense, the book can be an invaluable tool, especially now that I'm the director of my department.

Matt says

The edition I read was very old, published in the early '80s. I hope later editions have updated research.

RE: this edition, I found his choice of personality types to be accurate but I disagreed with some of his analysis of why these personalities emerge.

I think sociology and business psychology has come a long way since this edition was written. Anyone who has spent any time in college has likely spent time in a management class and thus examined the topics he addresses in this book, and probably in greater detail.

His writing style is very boring and dry. I hope that has improved too.

Aaron says

I've been doing psychiatric counseling for a few years and I'm always looking for good resources, both for myself and as recommendations for the general public. This book sets the standard for the topic. I have two main issues for review: first for the general and then for the professional.

Bramson makes the point toward the end that this is not a "self-help" book in the sense of improving self image or self esteem. It is, as it claims, a guidebook for how to cope with difficult people in your life. To be clear, it's not a book to improve your self image, to get motivated, to have a sense or purpose, etc. that so many of the self-help books of that era promise. More to the point, it is not a book on how to change people around you. As he frequently points out, this book is about finding ways to *deal* with people and situations when we can't escape and can't change them.

The book addresses 7 types of difficult people (or more accurately, 7 categories of difficult behavior or personalities):
- Hostile-Aggressive (that threaten, intimidate, or attack you)
- Complainers (that raise dissent without working toward solutions)
- Clams (that are silent and unresponsive to you)
- Super-agreeable (that can't say 'No' when they should)
- Negativist (that erode motivation, like a wet blanket)
- Know-it-all Expert (that won't or can't hear other opinions)
- Indecisive Staller (that can't make a decision, urgent or not)

I wouldn't be surprised if you find the writing a little dry or the examples a bit too simple. A few times I found myself thinking, "Are you serious...?" But that's really beside the point. The lessons are clear, the examples are simple to follow, and the theory is sound. Is it a solution to every interpersonal problem? Of course not. Bramson's point is that you won't be worse off than you are now for trying.

Regarding professional counseling issues, this book should be standard reading. I'm sure not everyone will go for it, but it's an easy, short and accessible resource. I didn't feel any strong allegiance to any school or orientation in the field. Perhaps it belongs in Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (doesn't everything now?) just based on it's practical approach and its focus on adjusting attitudes through action. But again, I think Bramson is right to say this is not a proper "self-help" book, and more a critique of social interactions. A recurring theme is how most of these problems we have with people grow out of proportion due to learned customs and proper etiquette - even when it doesn't fit or make sense. Perhaps I'm contradicting myself, but it seems to be an open-ended format that would lend itself well to an of the schools.

Nicole says

This book is exactly what the title suggests, how to cope with difficult people. The setting of the book is in the workplace or office, but the authors ideas can be applied to just about anywhere where there are people that you do not care for. Read about the various types of "difficult people" and learn how to deal with them and their habits/manorisms, etc. professionally and most effectively.

Jason H says

This book is definitely all about what the title says: coping. Bramson gives some good overviews of archetypes you'll see in offices around the world, and even though the book is dated now (teletype?), the people we all work with are generally still the same.

The thing that bothered me the entire time was that he decided to write a book about coping with difficult people instead of a book about how to change those difficult people for the better, through training, self-awareness, etc. Maybe he's secretly trying to fix the reader (and I know I saw some of myself in his descriptions, and so should you, if you are being honest), but I felt myself wanting more every time he described a good way around difficult behavior instead of dealing with the underlying issue.

Diana Banner says

If you're looking for a book to help you understand different types of difficult people, how they act, and why they act that way this is the book for you. What I loved most about it was the focus on understanding the behavior and the information on how to cope with people in your life who act this way. This book does not focus on how to change other people's behavior because that's not possible. The only thing we can change is our own actions and how we feel about a certain situation. In this book, Bramson proposes we can accomplish this by learning coping behaviors. The main focus is on dealing with people in a work setting, but the methods are easily adaptable to personal life as well.

The book addresses 8 "types" of difficult people: Hostile-Aggressives, Complainers, Silent and Unresponsive people, Super-Agreeables, Negativists, Know-it-Alls, and Indecisive Stallers. For each category of difficult person, Bramson discusses what the behavior looks like, why people do it (I love how he includes scientific information like reinforcement and not just emotional reasons) and then explains step-by-step methods for coping using real life examples from his consulting career. The idea behind the coping methods is that they "interfere with the "successful" functioning of the difficult behavior."

After going through the different "types" individually the author includes chapters that give a basic formula for developing an action plan that you can use when preparing to deal with a difficult person, information on different thinking styles and how they affect the behaviors of difficult people and the person trying to cope, and ways to manage the defensive behavior that will ultimately arise both in the difficult person and the person applying these coping methods.

What I found most valuable was the focus on coping. The author stresses that a lot of times you are not going to end up with an ideal situation, but you will end up with one that alleviates a lot of the stress and mental anguish that goes along with not dealing with difficult people. He demonstrates through examples and explanations that since you can't change a difficult person, you have the options of suffering or coping, and coping is just better for everyone involved. I knew Bramson was hitting home and giving me applicable

information when I started to see how my own actions in past situations actually fed into the difficult behavior and made it worse. I was then able to think about what the outcome would have been if I had instead applied the coping methods detailed in this book. I can say that I have confidence that with some practice my future interactions with difficult people will be much more successful and less stressful.

originally posted on my blog http://www.f1helpme.wordpress.com

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Steven Peterson says

There are some other books out there on the same subject. Some, like "Toxic Coworkers," may do the job even better. But this is still a useful volume. As the Introduction notes (page 1): "This is a book about impossible people and how to cope with them." Coping is the center of this work--how to deal with workers who are difficult to work with. The idea? (Page 7): "Coping enables you and the Difficult Person to get on with the business at hand." "Win-win" is the goal. Is the advice useful? Each reader will have to decide for him/herself?

The book describes a variety of difficult types: hostile-aggressive, the complainer, unresponsive ones, wonderfully nice people who don't perform, the negativist, know-it-alls, and indecisive stallers. For each, the author describes the malady and then suggests how one might work with them to get the best out of them. The book closes, also, with ideas as to how one can manage one's own "defensive behavior" around such problem workers. The author concludes (page 214): ". . .many people just like you have found that coping effectively with difficult people is possible."

Final question: How well does the book succeed? Not bad, but the solutions will not convince all readers.