



Happy Staff = Happy School

# 7 Types of Difficult People

## Working in schools can be stressful!

These articles are intended to help the great people who work in schools to reduce their stress and increase their sense of satisfaction.

Read this article to find out how to work with people who have these difficult character traits?

**Know-it-alls**

**Moaners**

**Procrastinators**

**Bullies**

**Quiet ones**

**Killjoys**

**Eager to please**

Nobody can go back and start a new beginning, but anyone can start today and make a new ending.

Maria Robinson

One of the challenges of working in schools is that we work with so many different types of people. Each of us has people that we find particularly difficult to deal with, whether they are fellow staff members or parents. Often they frustrate or annoy us! By trying to identify what makes them challenging, we can implement strategies. Seven broad types of difficult people have been outlined below, with suggestions for each one on how to manage or deal with their typical traits.

You may find you recognise elements of your “**difficult person’s**” behaviour in one or more types. After reflecting on this information try to identify specific strategies to deal with the difficult people in your life or school.

***It is important to remember you can not change anybody else’s behaviour, only your own.***

**1. Know-it-alls** - *Apparently confident, often condescending; claimed knowledge may be real or fake; often poor listeners.*

Coping with the know-it-alls:      prepare yourself with the facts;  
state your position and invite discussion; and  
aim to work together

**2. Moaners**

*Complain frequently; feel powerless and vulnerable to change; rarely offer solutions.*

Coping with moaners:                take them seriously: listen carefully and summarise  
what’s been said; and then ask for solutions, to  
encourage positive engagement.

**3. Procrastinators** - *Characterised by delays and indecision; may indicate stalling tactics or uncertainty; often sensitive to external opinion.*

Working with procrastinators:      make communication easy;  
instil confidence; allow time; and  
work with them towards a solution.

**4. Bullies** - *Hostility, anger and selfishness, blatant or concealed; attempt to assert dominance; and may be physically threatening. Take formal action against persistent bullying: seek guidance from your school, your union rep or employee advisor for support.*

Working with bullies:                be cogent and confident but not aggressive;  
allow time for aggression to dissipate; and  
maintain eye contact.

**5. Quiet ones** - *Withdraw communication in difficult situations.*

Coping with quiet ones:              ask open questions and allow time for answers;  
engage actively and sympathetically;  
and keep communicating yourself.

**6. Killjoys** - *Disagree with everything; often feel powerless or disappointed.*

Coping with killjoys:                accept pessimism while projecting optimism;  
discuss potential problems to pre-empt negative  
comment; and be prepared to take action on your own.

**7. Eager to please** - *Keeping everyone happy is their priority; may over commit and fail to deliver.*

Coping with eager pleasers:        show that you like them;  
engage on a personal level;  
listen carefully; and  
help them to be realistic about the task in hand.

As well as thinking about the behaviours of others, it can be worthwhile to use this list to reflect on how we may be perceived by others.

Teacher Support Network

TSA is a group of independent charities and a social enterprise that provide practical and emotional support to staff in the education sector and their families.



teacher support network

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