

BULLIES, NARCISSISTS AND SNIPERS

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Last month's article, "Dealing with Difficult People", identified some of the reasons why people behave in difficult ways, and offered suggestions for coping with difficult behavior in general. This month we'll take a closer look at three types of difficult people who can be extremely hard to deal with.

BULLIES

Like the Lion in "The Wizard of Oz", most bullies are really cowards, who have learned to intimidate people as a way of getting what they want. The best way to stop bullying behavior is to stand up to it: calmly and firmly tell the bully to *stop* that behavior, let him or her know that this is *not* the way to get what s/he wants from you, and then say what you *would* be willing to do, *if* you were asked nicely. Easier said than done, I know! If the bully is very intimidating, you may need to rehearse in advance how you will do it. Don't try to stand up to a bully alone if you're afraid of getting hurt - find some friends who are willing to join you. You should also report any bullying behavior at work to your boss (unless your boss *is* the bully, in which case you may need to seek advice from HR or someone in the organization to whom your boss will listen). A good website for more information is: <http://workplacebullying.org>

NARCISSISTS

In Roman mythology, Narcissus was a God who fell in love with his own reflection. Narcissists are self-absorbed people who crave attention, demand loyalty and devotion, and believe that their needs are not just more important than yours, but are truly the only needs that matter. The secret to getting along with a narcissist: make him look good. As long as your behavior, words and presence reflect favorably on the narcissist, all will be well, in fact you may find her to be a charming and entertaining person. But **never disagree with a narcissist**, unless you are prepared suffer his wrath, or are ready to give up on the relationship. The only thing a narcissist hates more than being disagreed with is being ignored, so there's a chance you can stay in her good graces if you're willing to apologize profusely, agree with everything she says, and act like you're awed to be in her presence. A new book that offers hope is "Disarming the Narcissist" by Wendy T. Behary (her website is <http://www.disarmingthenarcissist.com>).

SNIPERS

Otherwise known as Back Stabbers, these folks can be difficult to deal with because they are friendly and agreeable to your face, and will always deny any hostile intent, yet they find ways to attack you invisibly, or when you're not looking. The best way to deal with this passive-aggressive behavior is to *surface the attack*: that is, let the sniper know that you realize what's going on, and if you can, point out the sniping behavior as it's happening. This will likely make the sniper mad, but usually the attacks will diminish over time if you confront them calmly and consistently. Unless of course, the sniper is also a narcissist. . . .

My recommendations for dealing with all types of difficult people: try to stay calm, take care of yourself by setting limits, don't take their behavior personally, and don't expect them to change!

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