# Ten Tips for Dealing with Difficult People

1.  When dealing with difficult people, it's more effective to be assertive rather than angry.  Anger can be contagious, so try to avoid "catching" the other person's hostility.

2.  Learn to recognize low levels of anger in others.  This can allow you to intervene earlier and create resolutions more easily.  Listen to language and watch non-verbal cues as well. Is someone's tone changing or their volume increasing?

3.  Use a technique called "fogging".  Say something general or broad such as "That's interesting", when inwardly you disagree.

4.  Work at accepting difficult people while still not liking their difficult behavior. This allows you to get some distance from the behavior itself, and gain a more expansive perspective.

5.  Consciously being *nice* to difficult people can sometimes be a great way of dealing with them. But do guard against passive-aggressiveness on your own part.  In other words, don't be loving and/or collaborative if it feels dishonest to do so.

6.  Try to get a better sense of what sets the other person off.  Notice what his or her buttons are, and avoid hitting them, if possible.

7.  Compromise! Give in or some things and learn to see compromise as a strength rather than a concession.

8.  Listen actively.  Ask for clarification of what the other person has said instead of arguing with them.  Focus on their needs and your own, not just the "issue".

9.  Ask yourself what you may be doing to contribute to the problem; if you're stuck, talk it over with a counselor or trusted friend.

10. Keep your distance from those who seem unsafe.  See your fear as a cue, warning sign, or "gift".  Set limits with inappropriate behavior; make it clear you will not tolerate this and will seek help if the situation doesn't change.  If you feel you're in danger, notify appropriate personnel/authorities and take whatever reasonable steps necessary to protect yourself.

# Five Tips for Getting a Grip

When you're angry, you're aware of it—correct? Not necessarily. Experts say that the first step in anger management with their clients is often to help them get a better sense of their own personal anger signs and triggers. It turns out that if you're able to detect the early physical and emotional calling cards of anger in yourself and others, you stand a much better chance of being able to manage a balanced response. Practice, experts say, is *essential* in learning how to handle this emotion well. So here are some tips for recognizing and managing anger.

1. **Read between the lines.** Self-observation is a critical step in learning to manage any emotion effectively. The goal is to see our behavior as others see it, stripped of all our intentions, excuses and justifications. This can help to create a new perspective.

2. **Pay attention to your body.** Research done at the University of Texas a few years ago shows that the early signs of anger are changes in physical sensation. Muscle tension, headache, stomach ache, feeling flushed, sweaty, hot, clammy fingers or hands, a change in breathing…all these can be the physiologic signs of change in the situation (i.e. leaving).

3. **Use your feelings as a barometer.** Feeling powerless, useless, unloved, unimportant, betrayed, set up or sabotaged, helpless, envious, disrespected, embarrassed, ashamed, unworthy, these feelings, like their physical counterparts of sweaty palms and racing hearts can be an indication that it's time to introduce some perspective or make a change in the situation.

4. **What sets you off?** A powerful technique is to pose this question to yourself. Then, for a period of two weeks, observe and write down the things that "set you off".

5. **Exercise.** Research tells us that physical exercise, both aerobic (i.e. running, swimming) and anaerobic (i.e. weight lifting) goes a long way to tame our tensions.