



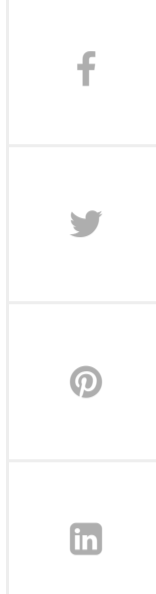
Home > How to keep your cool when someone is being a d!%k

COMMUNICATION SKILLS

# How to keep your cool when someone is being a d!%k

TAMMY TANSLEY - MARCH 30, 2017

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Does it seem to you that the world has gone mad? That you are increasingly dealing with difficult people? That the pendulum of **decent humans to d!%ks** is swinging the wrong way?

If you do a cursory glance of social media, you there seems to be example after example of people telling stories of other people being d!%ks. You can feel the collective rolling of eyes on reading these stories.

But it's one thing reading them on social media, and quite another being on the other end of that sort of behaviour.

## First – has the percentage of d!%ks actually increased?

The first thing to say is that mankind has been behaving badly since time began. It's now just more obvious because we're exposed to other people's stories through social and other sources of media. You know when you buy a yellow car, how suddenly all you're seeing are yellow cars? We see what we focus on, so if you start looking for idiots, that's what you'll find.

There are also a fair percentage of people who are acting badly because of the stress that they're under. Whether that is family stress, job stress or the stress of the world today, people are doing it tough – and sometimes that manifests in behaviour that is 'less than optimal!'

## Three quick tips for dealing with difficult people

My first tip might seem strange, but stick with me: **practise empathy**. There are times that decent people act like d!%ks. Being empathetic to what another human is experiencing can allow you to **frame their behaviour** in a way that seems much more palatable. That's not to say that you need to be a doormat, or put up with poor behaviour; but if you can see the root cause of someone's behaviour, and give it the benefit of the doubt, it can put you in a better position to more appropriately respond to the situation.

Tip #2 is to **respond rather than react**. Take some time to consider your response before firing back. If you know you're a hot head, wait a few hours before sending texts or emails. Or get someone you trust to read them first. If you're on the phone or face to face, buy yourself some time – go to the bathroom and do some breathing. Ask yourself how you best want to respond to this situation so that it moves it forward. There are times when reacting in the heat of the moment feels momentarily satisfying, but ask yourself whether that satisfaction will last beyond the immediate moment, or whether it will harm the relationship/situation further.

Tip #3 is **'not my circus, not my monkeys'**. There are times when someone genuinely is being a d!%k, but it doesn't have any (or minimal) impact on you. Shrug it off. We don't have to be morally outraged at every piece of poor behaviour we witness and hear about.

## What about ongoing and systematic d!%k behaviour?

So, we've established that we don't need to be a passive victim to someone else's behaviour. We can choose how we want to respond: good, bad or indifferent.

There are times, however, particularly in the soloist's life, when dealing with difficult people needs a different approach to the three quick tips above.

The key here is that you've observed a pattern of behaviour over a period of time.

For example:

- The complaining client who is never satisfied and wants more and more but is not prepared to pay for it.
- The drama queen employee who takes up all your time and energy.
- The supplier who continually provides shoddy workmanship but won't take responsibility for it and blames you for a poor brief.
- The procrastinating client who doesn't do what they are meant to in the agreed timeframes, and then complains when the job isn't completed on time.

You shouldn't ignore things like the above if they are ongoing **and** impacting on you. The good news is that there are specific tactics you can use for any one of these types of behaviours. Once you've identified the "type" you're dealing with, you can formulate a specific response.

These are three wonderful books that address the different behaviours and offer specific solutions and language to use when dealing with difficult people.

- [How to easily handle difficult people](#)
- [Coping with difficult people](#)
- [People can't drive you crazy if you don't give them the keys](#)

This is also a great example of when a coach can be of benefit. Talking to someone outside of the situation can help bring objectivity to the situation. It can help identify the degree to which you are contributing to the situation. It can help identify what the root of the d!%k behaviour is (ie what they really want). Finally, coaches can help identify specific actions you can take to help keep you sane.

## In closing ...

It's important to remember though that we can only change our own behaviour.

We can (and should) choose how we:

- Respond to another person,
- Interact with them,
- Deal with the drama and poor behaviour.

We can (and should) be clear about what the impact of their behaviour is on us. But, the reality is, at the end of the day, it is their choice to change (or not). We have zero control over changing any other person. Sadly. So there may be times when the best response is to **choose to not to have anything further to do** with that person. Let them be a d!%k with someone else.

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