

How Many EGR People Do You Have in Your Life?

Recently, a friend introduced me to a new term: EGR.

I'm not sure who coined the term EGR, but it's used to describe difficult people. It stands for *Extra Grace Required* because the EGR person tries your patience, tests your social skills, and drains your energy. Everybody has EGRs in their life. And, at times, everybody is an EGR to someone else.

You might be tempted to ask, *How can I avoid them?* You can't. Or *How can I fix them?* You won't. The best question to ask is *How can I deal with difficult people well?* Why? Because your response is the only thing you can control.

So here are some of the difficult types of people we all meet in our daily lives and how to handle them:

The Hammer

There's a saying about hammers: "If all you have is a hammer, everything looks like a nail." This person is hard on everything and everyone. Nothing seems to be enough. Their way of dealing with life is very established. Hitting hard has been the answer for them for a very long time.

How to deal with the Hammer

Don't take it personally. They probably treat almost everyone like they are treating you.

It's tempting to try to ignore this person because of the way they pound on people. Separate the way they communicate from the points they make; otherwise, you might miss some good feedback or information.

The Megaphone

This person makes conversation difficult. They like to talk and often try to talk you into submission, making it hard to get a word in edgewise. This person often sees information as a sign of power or intelligence and is often trying to show their own value or authority through their one-sided conversations.

How to deal with The Megaphone

Start by listening, but don't let them go on forever. Once you have the point, politely interrupt them. Confirm you heard them correctly by summarizing their points back to them.

Keep your comments simple and focused so you don't encourage more rambling. And if the conversation goes too long, don't be afraid to politely end the conversation.

The Bubble Buster

This person simply can't or won't see anything positive in the world around them. Have a great idea? Their response, "Nope. Won't work." Or you give them what you believe is an awesome presentation and all they do is punch holes in it.

How to deal with the Bubble Buster

Understand there is probably some baggage in this person's life that is coloring their world gray.

Be a patient listener. Thank them for their input and critique.

Try to turn the conversation into a positive one by asking them to share with you what they do like about the idea, product or presentation.

The Volcano

This person is the unpredictable, volatile ticking time bomb.

You've probably come across this person. Recently, I was stopped in heavy traffic and I was accidentally blocking a car from getting onto the road I was on. Well, the guy in the car was a classic Volcano as he demonstrated with his horn, his voice, and his ... "salute." You're never quite sure when or how the Volcano will erupt.

How to deal with The Volcano

Be humble without being a doormat. A gracious response can be disarming to the Volcano, indicating you're willing to own your own actions.

Assert your feelings without responding aggressively, which will only make things worse.

The Clam

This person handles stress, conflict or social interaction by going into silent mode. It can be hard to figure out what's really going on in their mind and heart, much less to interact with them.

How to deal with The Clam

Be careful not to dominate the conversation, even unintentionally. Let them know you want to hear what they're thinking and feeling when they are ready.

Ask open-ended questions that require more than a yes or no answer.

Be patient with them; impatience will only encourage more silence. Give them time, especially if a conflict has triggered their silence. Create a safe environment for them to share with you.

The Nitpicker

The Nitpicker is cousin to the Bubble Buster. Like the Bubble

Buster, this person is highly critical and seems obsessed with finding mistakes. Nothing is good enough. This person also seeks out and works hard to find every little thing that is wrong with you or what you do. Nothing will stop them from telling you what is wrong with everything.

How to deal with The Nitpicker

Insecurity is often at the root of their criticisms. At times, this person is looking for things to criticize externally to distract them from the negativity they feel about themselves internally.

Try to sincerely build them up by pointing out the good you see in them.

Avoid being defensive. Defensiveness is oddly affirming to the constant critic.

Challenge them by saying, "I think you make some fair points, but I'd also like to know what you see as good and right about this too."

The Victim

This person is the constant whiner, letting everyone know how their troubles and trials are the result of the actions of others. It's hard for them to take responsibility because they don't do introspection.

How to deal with The Victim

Set boundaries. It's not wrong to hear them out, but enabling their constant complaining by listening without boundaries hurts both of you.

Keep reaffirming your concern and care for them, but don't try to appease the complaining. Like a child who whines to get what they want, if you give this person what they want all the time, you only encourage them to do it more.

Ask them, “What can you do to make the situation better?” This may change their focus from blaming everything on others to thinking about the role they’ve played in the situation and what they can do about it.

Have you dealt with any of these types of difficult people?
How do you cope with them?

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