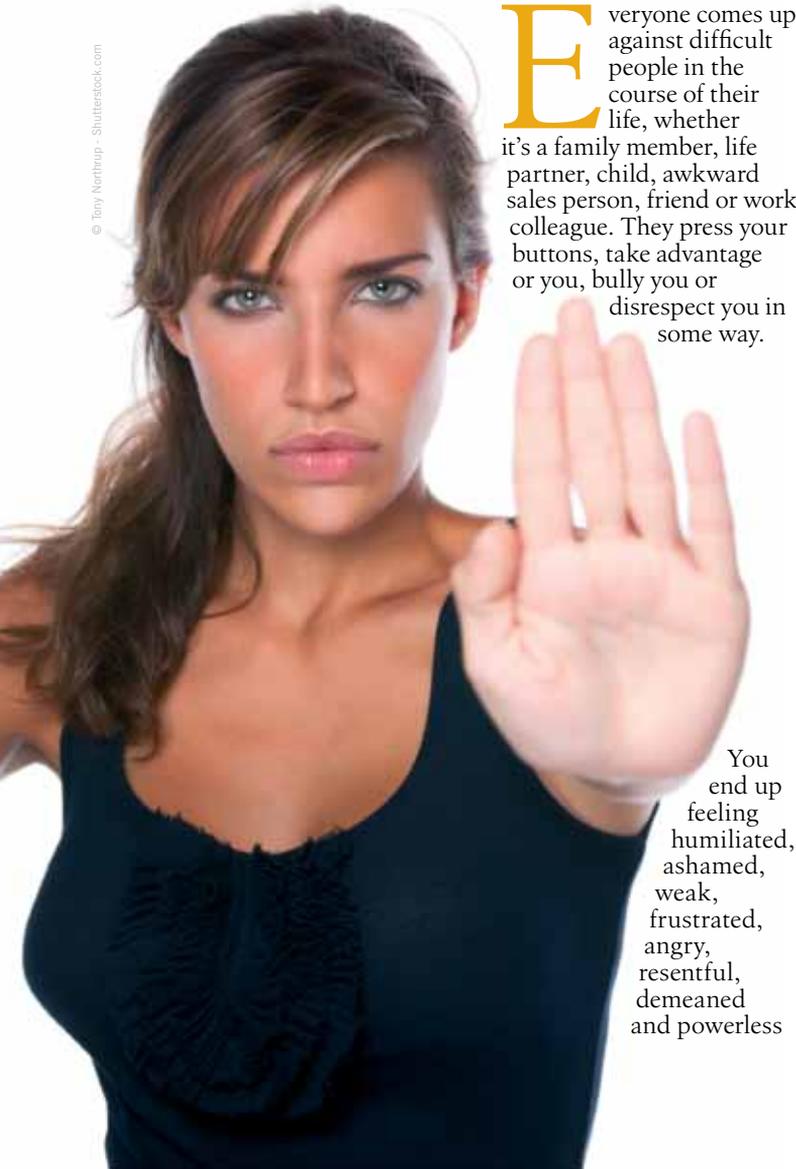


HOW TO SAY 'NO' *and mean it*

Carolyn Moody offers some insights
and tips on dealing with difficult colleagues
and acquaintances.

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Everyone comes up against difficult people in the course of their life, whether it's a family member, life partner, child, awkward sales person, friend or work colleague. They press your buttons, take advantage of you, bully you or disrespect you in some way.

to change their behaviour or your reaction to it.

How do you respond to your difficult person? Do you take their attack personally? Do you fight back? Lose your temper? Try and defend yourself with explanations or placations? Nag and criticise them? Go quiet? Give in? Go away and sulk? Complain to anyone who will listen? Do something indirect to get back at them? Or do you confront them quietly

When you allow others to influence your emotions you probably feel a sense of powerlessness

You end up feeling humiliated, ashamed, weak, frustrated, angry, resentful, demeaned and powerless

and firmly, stating what you want and making sure you leave with an agreement you can both live with, or consequences if the agreement is not honoured? Perhaps you ignore the behaviour because it just isn't important enough to get steamed up about? You might even use humour to diffuse a situation.

Most of us are brought up to believe that others have the power to make us feel

anything: *"He makes me so angry"; "When my boss criticises me, he makes me feel really hopeless". "She drives me mad..."* When you allow others to influence you

The moment you start explaining or defending yourself, you have given your power away

emotions you probably feel a sense of powerlessness. This is because you are literally 'giving away your power' to other people to influence how you feel.

Assertiveness is a way of dealing with difficult people that stops you feeling powerless around those who try to manipulate you. Being assertive means knowing how to set your boundaries and say 'no' from a place of confidence rather than fear.

TAKE TIME OUT BEFORE REACTING

As soon as you feel yourself going into reactive mode, take a deep breath and give your rational brain a chance to click in. Come back to discuss the

Being assertive means knowing how to set your boundaries and say 'no'

issue later, when you have had time to calm down. It is OK to be honest and say: "I really can't deal with this right now. I am feeling too (agitated,

upset, attacked, unable to think clearly)...I would rather we discuss this later." Make a point of going back and discussing the conflict at a time when it suits both of you.

DON'T TAKE IT PERSONALLY

We are taught to take pretty much everything personally which puts us at a disadvantage and gives the upper hand to our antagonist. Keep in mind that the other person's bad behaviour says more about them and their insecurities than it does about you. Their problem is bad behaviour. Your problem is your emotional reaction to it. Treat them with calm firmness, making it clear what you are and are not prepared to accept from them.

DON'T WASTE ENERGY DEFENDING YOURSELF

Most people think they must defend themselves against manipulative criticism. The moment you start explaining or defending yourself, you have given your power away. If you know you are in the right, you do not have to prove anything to anyone else. Instead allow them their opinion, no matter how ludicrous. Try the fogging technique in the tip box.

THE ENERGY OF YOUR COMMUNICATION

Only 7% of communication is verbal, tone of voice counts for 38% and body language

is 55%. As you change the way you feel inside and as you learn to express yourself assertively, your body language, tone of voice and words will become aligned and sending the same quietly assertive message.

FOGGING

Fogging allows you to receive criticism comfortably without becoming anxious or defensive, while giving no reward to those using manipulative criticism. You are able to calmly acknowledge in your critic the probability that there may be some truth in what he/she says.

Examples

(C = Criticism, R = Response):

- C: 'What? You're on ANOTHER diet?'
- R: 'Yes I am.'
- C: 'You can't give up eating sugar altogether. Everyone needs some sugar for energy you know!'
- R: 'You could be right.'
- C: 'What's the matter with you?! You drive me crazy when you spend so much time at your computer.'
- R: 'I am sorry you feel that way.' (Said sincerely and without sarcasm)
- C: 'What took you so long, you said you would finish that report two hours ago!'
- R: 'Yes, it took a little longer than expected.'



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