

Things to Remember When Dealing with Challenging People

1. Be Prepared

- Always have an agenda for each meeting with topics and time limits. This will help to keep the meeting focused and on track.
- Have ground rules posted and refer to them both at the beginning of each meeting and as needed throughout meetings.
- Anticipate possible challenging situations. Plan ahead for how you will handle them. Practice how you would react to particular situations. Arrange for support from fellow board members to control the meeting.

2. It's Not Your Fault- Don't Take it Personally

- People display challenging behavior because of who they are personally, not because of you.
- It's not personal; so don't react as if it's a personal attack. Remember your role to run the meeting and protect everyone at the table

3. Control Your Reaction to Conflict

- Really listen to the person speaking. Agree when possible and ask questions to help you to understand their perspective.
- Think about what you are going to say first, before speaking.
- Speak slowly and evenly, without raising your voice.
- Address the person by name, if possible and look them in the eye.
- Express your perspective firmly, but not confrontationally.
- Confront the issue at hand, not the person.
- Stay on topic and remember not to lose your temper.

What Causes People to Be Difficult?

- Negative feelings from previous interactions or situations
- Inaccurate or incomplete information
- Seemingly incompatible goals
- Different styles of communication