

# Working with Difficult People

Here is a little secret you may already know...in your role as a student leader there are going to be times when you need to deal with difficult people. And, you know what? You may be the difficult one at times too!

The reality is that you will become a stronger leader if you are challenged to handle strong, difficult personalities now and then. So, be forgiving, plan for how to respond, and always work towards a positive outcome. If you do that, "difficult" can gradually turn "easy."

## What Can Difficult Behavior Look Like?

- Arguing a point over and over
- Choosing self-interest over what is best for the group
- Inability to compromise
- Talking more and listening less
- Not following through on commitments
- Showing disrespect
- Taking over or being dominant

## Keep Your Cool

When working with difficult people, try these tips for keeping your cool and managing your anger:

- **Walk Away** — If you feel anger building inside you, excuse yourself for a minute to regain your composure.



Take some time  
to keep in Mind ...

...to not interrupt. Interruptions can be very difficult and frustrating for people. And, it appears that interrupting to get your point across is becoming very common today. Don't be part of the trend! Always let others finish speaking before you respond. Doing anything else is rude and can impact the progress of a group or relationship.

"All the adversity I've had in my life, all my troubles and obstacles have strengthened me. You may not realize it when it happens, but a kick in the teeth may be the best thing in the world for you."

~ Walt Disney

- **Think it Through** — Before taking any actions, think through the potential consequences of those actions.
- **Count to Ten** — It's old advice but it still works. Counting to ten gives you time to cool off and think more clearly.
- **Take a Breath** — A few deep breaths can clear your mind and keep anger at bay. Do some intentional breathing to alleviate the pressure.
- **Change Gears** — If a situation or a person is annoying and it's within your power to make a change, then by all means, make a change.
- **Reflect** — If you are frustrated or angry, take some time to consider WHY? What is it that is making you perceive someone's behavior as difficult? Once you get to the root of the anger, you might be able to address it more effectively.

## The Difference Between a Display of CONFIDENCE vs. ATTITUDE

At times it can be difficult to read the emotions behind a behavior. This is particularly true when it comes to a show of confidence versus giving a little attitude—the lines can be blurry.

**Confidence**—serves as armor. When you show confidence you are displaying the ability to communicate and respond to information with poise, calm, and self-reliance.

**Attitude**—serves as a weapon. When you give some "attitude" it can come off as an attack mechanism against the doubt or lack of confidence you may actually be feeling. And, when you use this "weapon" it can sometimes be perceived as being difficult.