

Interacting with People Who Annoy You

What to Know

If you're like most people, there is someone in your life that constantly annoys you. While you can't control their behavior, you can manage your response to their behaviors. Here are some ways to remain calm and cool when someone irritates you.

1. Calm and center yourself. Annoying people might bring out the worst in you. When you feel yourself getting frustrated and overwhelmed by someone's actions, take a minute to clear your mind.

Take a long, deep breath in, followed by a slow exhale. Take deep breaths until you feel in control of your words and actions.

As you breathe, you may find it helpful to repeat a simple phrase to yourself, such as "I'm calm," or "Chill!" Focus on your phrase instead of the person annoying you.

2. Remain silent. If a person is actively bothering you by teasing you or trying to provoke you, it is helpful to remember that the only thing you can control is how you respond. The simplest thing you can do is to just remain silent. Silence doesn't mean you're weak – it's a sign of strength.

3. Check yourself. You may be tempted to show your annoyance through eye rolls or your facial expressions. However, you should try to limit or minimize your response to annoying behavior. Don't groan, sigh, or roll your eyes when someone gets on your nerves.

4. Put it in perspective. Ask yourself, "Does the annoying behavior negatively affect my life beyond this moment?" Most of the time the answer will be "no."

5. Limit interactions with competitive people. Some people like to find ways to put you down so they will feel better about themselves. If you have people like this in your life, you can learn to "shut down" conversations designed to make you feel bad about yourself. You can simply say something like, "I really don't like to talk about this kind of thing."

6. Learn to deal with people who talk too much. Do you have someone in your life that loves to talk and talk regardless of whether you show interest in what they are saying? It's polite to listen to them for a few minutes, but if you find their constant talking is annoying, say something like, "Do you mind if we change the conversation?" Then, talk about something that is of interest to you both, or just excuse yourself by saying you have something to do.

What to Do

Since you can't change the behavior of someone you find annoying, you need to focus on what you can do to deal with annoying behavior.

Describe a situation in the past where you successfully handled an annoying person.

People often seem more annoying to you when you're stressed out. What can you do on a regular basis to reduce your stress?

Do you think you do something that annoys other people? If the answer is "yes," what will you do about this situation?

Do you feel you are assertive about what you want and need? Assertive people have fewer problems dealing with annoyances of all kinds because they have clear boundaries with others, and they are confident about what they will and will not tolerate. Describe the last time you were assertive with a friend, relative, or colleague.
