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## Difficult People Quiz

**You're working at a customer service desk, facing a long line of shuffling, impatient customers. One of them steams forward from the back and says, "I refuse to be treated like this. Do you know who I am?" You:**

- a) Say, "Oh, I'm so sorry! Of course, I'll take care of you right away."
- b) Loudly address the other people in line, asking: "Does anyone know who this woman is?"
- c) Say: "I know that you are a customer who needs help, and I'll be happy to help you when it's your turn."

**No matter how hard you work, your boss makes passive-aggressive comments that suggest you're loafing. You:**

- a) Sulk at meetings and just keep plugging away.
- b) Call his voice-mail after-hours and angrily detail a 5-point argument for how hard you're working.
- c) Set up a meeting to discuss things with him and explain that you're meeting goals and need his support.

**You rush home from work and excitedly tell your husband that you've been promoted. He says, "Gosh, at your company, they'll promote anybody." You:**

- a) Laugh it off while feeling hurt, thinking he's probably right. The company is a little short-staffed.
- b) Grow furious, stomp your foot, and say: "You're always saying stuff like that to me! What's wrong with you?"
- c) Say, "Ed, I really feel demeaned when you talk to me like that. Do you have a problem with my promotion?"

**Your father, who consistently says you're a spendthrift, is shocked by the price of your new apartment. "You're stupid to pay that much," he suggests. "Can't you find something cheaper?" You respond:**

- a) "I guess I could."
- b) "Stop treating me like a kid. This is my money, and I'll do what I want with it."
- c) "I know it seems high to you, but homes were cheaper the last time you bought one. Real estate prices have changed."

**The saleswoman was charming when you bought six outfits from her, but hostile when you returned half of them the next day. You:**

- a) Feel cowed. Maybe you are making a big fashion mistake. You can't afford them all, but you could scrimp next month.
- b) Tell her that her attitude is poor and then report her attitude to the management.
- c) Persist with the return, and vow to shop elsewhere from now on.

**You introduce a new idea at a meeting only to hear a consistently negative co-worker mumble, "Yeah, like that's going to work." You say:**

- a) Say nothing, but lose your enthusiasm and finish your thoughts in a thin, teary voice.
- b) "Lara, we're all sick of your rudeness. You never let anybody finish before you shoot us down."
- c) "Lara, what part of this do you think isn't going to work?"

**You're driving but your friend in the passenger seat is freaking out, she yells "Look out!" as she clings to the door handle and slams her foot onto an imaginary brake. You:**

- a) Empathize with her anxiety, and drive at a snail's pace to calm her down.
- b) Pull over to the side of the road, and say: "You're driving me nuts! Stop it!"
- c) Say: "It's hard for me to concentrate on driving when you're doing that. Please try to calm down, and next time, you can drive if you like."

**You are having marriage problems. Whenever you try to talk with your mother, she just says, "You made your bed, now lie in it." You:**

- a) Stop talking to her. Why bother?
- b) Finally get up the courage to confront her, telling her she's always been a terrible listener and you wish she'd change.
- c) Keep conversations with her light, and find more sympathetic people to confide in.

**No matter what you try to discuss with your teenager these days -- from friends to the weather -- they bristle or whine or stomps about. You:**

- a) Whine back: "Oh, precious pumpkin, what have I done to upset you? It must be me."
- b) Shout back: "Gosh, you are so darned impossible!"
- c) Continue to schedule quality time, and remind them you're on their side, no matter what.

**You're taking a course for fun, but the teacher routinely insults the students. One day, when you ask a question, she shouts: "Aren't you doing the course reading?" You:**

- a) Apologize, and tell her you'll stop asking questions from now on.
- b) Shout right back: "I am, but neither you nor the book explains things clearly."
- c) Let it go, but pull her aside after class to explain that asking questions is the best way for you to learn.

## **OUTCOMES**

### **Mostly A's**

You're a pushover.

When faced with a difficult person, you tend to either buckle under or bolt. Aggressive, hostile people terrify you, so you do their bidding or just run for cover. Naturally, your chin trembles as you meekly turn away. As a result, your life is determined by other people's thoughts, decisions, and behaviour. You would benefit from learning your own strengths as a communicator and how to be assertive.

Don't imagine you can change people. You can only change how you react to them.

## **Mostly B's**

You fight fire with fire!

You occasionally use humour or diplomacy to deflect a difficult situation, but often when you're steaming, you let it show. You're rarely afraid to speak your mind, but sometimes you're a little edgy about it. Snapping back, accusing, blaming, and using phrases like "you always" and "you never" may relieve you for a moment, but blowing your stack just puts the difficult person on the defensive, and won't change the situation.

Don't react too soon. Take a breath..., and wait a moment or two before you respond. You may benefit from learning how to tone down your responses so that you don't fan the flames. For some people, you can be the difficult person because you are not afraid to say what you think. You might benefit from learning how to confront people without causing a bigger problem, using diplomacy and tact.

## **Mostly C's**

Good for you! Apply for an ambassadorship.

You know the three stages of dealing with difficult people: avoiding, shrugging off, and dealing directly. You know whom to drop or avoid and how to manage them: snarling salespeople, naysaying acquaintances, incessant preachers, know-it-alls. You know that when you do encounter a whiner, barker, or pouter, he or she probably has a self-esteem problem and you don't take it personally. You know when to shrug it off as of no relevance to you. With difficult people you can't avoid, such as your mother, you learn to accept her limitations and find what you need -- advice? soothing words? -- elsewhere. You also know when to speak up to give difficult people the boundaries they so clearly lack. You talk directly to the people you're mad at, not behind their backs or over their heads. You also know how to talk to people politely and effectively without being a wuss. Best of all, you know that using an emotional umbrella (ignoring, empathy, straight talk) doesn't stop the rain, but keeps you from getting soaked. WELL DONE!!