

# Strategies for Dealing with Difficult People



Condominium living is community living and there are elements which one must adhere to that sometimes could be a nuisance and make one behave in a way which is out of character. As a property manager, I have always had the outlook that there is a reason behind the person's ACTION and the property manager's REACTION that will drive the outcome. The best trick to managing a difficult person has always been about dealing with the difficulty the person is going through.



Take a simple approach such as: Listening to the person to understand their concern and acknowledging it without interruption is crucial.

Staying calm and understanding the anger behind the person's behaviour is primarily due to the difficulty and challenge they are having towards an unresolved matter. The emotional reaction is not directly targeted at the manager personally, but is the result of their frustra-

tion. Staying calm and continuing to listen to understand the core of the problem is extremely important.

Showing respect is important and any sign of contempt will not help resolve the situation. The manager's focus should always be around resolving the problem and distancing the negative behaviour from the equation.

Solution: Once the concern is established, discussing and recommending a viable solution generally makes one walk away happier.

**Dipta Baidya, RCM**  
**Vice President of Finance**  
**Dove Square Property**  
**Management Inc.**

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During my nine years as a property manager I have encountered the nicest homeowner to the most ornery homeowner who does not want to hear what I have to say but wants his problem taken care of "yesterday."

Two tactics I use are – First, I take a deep breath and release it slowly

before answering the phone. I find this action relaxes my body so I'm not tensed up. Second, I surround myself with uplifting quotes and pictures at my desk. I have a saying that I keep directly in front of my computer that reads "Do not listen with the intent to reply, but with the intent to understand." For me this is such a true statement. Remember, we are blessed with two ears and one mouth. It is our job to listen more and speak less. This is my daily target to hit. I'm not perfect but I keep trying for the bullseye!

**Jackie Stavert, RCM**  
**Newton-Trelawney**

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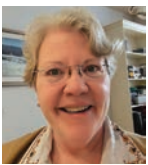
In this career, first and foremost we need to recognize it is a serious customer service job. When issues come up, a resident will take it very personally, because it is personal! It's their home.

It's important to remember our job is

Of the many talents a manager must have in their broad skill set, surely people skills (including a calm demeanor needed to address all the questions that can arise at the management office) will rate in the top five. Because not everyone who arrives at the office with a question is cheerful. We asked condominium managers and executives to share their best front-line tactics for dealing with the myriad personalities that make up a condominium community.



not only to fix issues but to teach residents about their asset. People cannot



learn when they are upset. That being said, it is not our job to accept abuse, but learn how to defuse a high-

tension situation, so that we can deal with the problem and teach. That starts with listening. Write down what you hear. Even if the person on the other side of your desk is yelling and cursing, IT'S NOT PERSONAL! Recognize it's very personal to them because they are in a situation they don't know how to control. Humans generally like to be in control, and it messes up their sense of balance when they're not in control. If a person is yelling you can, in a very calm voice say, "I am very sorry you are experiencing this situation and I want to hear what you are saying so I can help you, but I don't hear well when people yell at me. If you could please lower your voice it will help both of us fix this problem." What you have done is tell the person

they deserve respect and you genuinely want to help them, they are not alone, you are both in this together.

Now there are people who will not respond to a polite request for a modicum of respect. When a person is behaving in this manner and just wants to blame and bully, then you can use what I refer to as the three Cs – Calm, Control, Command. People that behave in that manner want leadership and they don't always know it. The three Cs are easy to remember: the one who stays Calm is the one in Control and the one in Control gets to make the Commands. In this case the statement would be, in a very calm, controlled manner, "I am very sorry you are experiencing this situation. I hear what you are saying, and I will help you. I need you to speak lower so I can hear you and fix the problem." It is still a respectful statement but more authoritative in tone.

These techniques take practice to get right and it's not in everyone's personality to stay calm in a high stress

situation when they feel like they are being attacked. At the end of the day try not to take mean things people may say to you personally. Just ask yourself, "Is this situation something I'll be remembering when I'm 90 years old sitting in my rocking chair?" Chances are, probably not.

**Darryl Norrie, RCM**  
**DEL Property Management Inc.**

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In our property management company, we have a number of tactics



for dealing with difficult people. First, we take a step back and try to put ourselves in their shoes, remembering this is

either their home or an important investment for them. We listen to what they have to say and emphasize as best we can. When at all possible we try to come up with a creative solution to help them. However, in the case where this isn't possible, we draw directly from legislation or from the condominium documents. In



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the rare case where we are unable to help them, or they will not listen regarding the law then we have two options. Our first option is to send a legal letter explaining their obligations or the lack thereof of the corporation. As a last resort if the difficult person is harassing, abusive or violent we trespass them from all properties and our offices except the one they currently reside in, and limit their interaction with our company to emergencies only, and written letters to the board to be opened at a board meeting.

**Sean Wilde, UE, RCM**  
**CEO, Senior Property Manager**  
**Lee Management Solutions Inc.**

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### Conflict Prevention

People have two primal needs: The need to feel safe and secure, and the need to feel in control.



When these needs are not met people will behave in whatever manner they believe will restore those needs. The skills to prevent conflict and build relationships with those who appear to have difficult personalities are some of the most valuable assets a manager can develop.

If you want to take control of an emotionally charged conversation and prevent conflict try these steps:

1. Imagine yourself in the counter-part's position.
2. Observe and listen without reacting or judging.
3. Demonstrate empathy and show a sincere desire to understand what the other side is experiencing.
4. Recognize their perspective and demonstrate that recognition.
5. Validate the other side's emotions.
6. Propose a positive, compassionate and solution-based thought.

A disagreement can be re-framed into a negotiation with empathy, active listening and patience.

**Nicholas Chirametli, RCM**  
**Vice President,**  
**City Sites Management**

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One of the biggest challenges our industry faces is the inevitability of dealing with difficult people on a near daily basis. In the many areas of the

tertiary sector, most difficult people come and go, but there is a sense of permanency when managing an individual's residential space. As repeated interactions between manager and owners are expected, unwavering professionalism must be uniformly applied. Understanding that difficult people are only classified as such because conflict arose from a difficult situation



is of utmost importance. The ability to display sincerity in your communication with them, especially while delivering "bad news," minimizes the conflict. Above all else, a change in attitude which welcomes confrontation and new challenges is crucial. After all, each interaction provides us with new insight.

**Melody Roche, RCM**  
**General Licence**  
**Crossbridge Condominium**  
**Services Ltd.**

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