

## You Want Me to Work with Who?

This book is a couple of years old, but I recently heard the author speak at a SHRM regional conference, and the messages were timeless. "I really like my job, except for the people," author Julie Jansen recalled someone telling her, and she said the book demonstrates how to deal with colleagues in a way that is constructive, rather than through deceitful or passive-aggressive behavior.

"People have problems — home, stress — and they don't say, 'Today is the day I am going to sustain my work relationships,'" said Jansen. "Everyone has their own agenda, personality, communication style, work habits. Even if you screen for fit, problems can arise."

Jansen's "Eleven keys to a stress-free, satisfying and successful work life...no matter who you work with" will help you cope with situations where co-workers — or anyone — push your buttons, and gain better control of yourself and the relationship.

- 1. Confidence:** Most people lack some level of confidence so bad behavior arises as a result of overcompensation. Your confidence can serve as a model.
- 2. Curiosity:** If you can learn what motivates colleagues, you'll be better equipped to guide them past bad behavior.
- 3. Decisiveness:** Avoid analysis paralysis. "In a moment of decision, the best thing you can do is the right thing. The worst thing is nothing," said Jansen.
- 4. Empathy:** "It's not always easy when you don't have chemistry with someone."
- 5. Flexibility:** "This is one of those keys that people are either born with or without. Change makes most people anxious."
- 6. Humor:** "Laughter is a great connector," but Jansen warns it should be self-effacing and not directed at others.
- 7. Intelligence:** "This is not IQ; it's the ability to solve problems, execute, and see the big picture."
- 8. Optimism:** "The lens through which all opportunity is seen and the source that creates possibilities that leads to favorable change."
- 9. Perseverance:** "The ongoing pursuit of goals and dreams and can finish what was started."
- 10. Respect:** "Having good manners, expressing thanks, being kind, appreciating, behaving professionally and with integrity."
- 11. Self-awareness:** A very sophisticated key to develop, said Jansen, requiring feedback, TV, the Internet and other media. "You need depictions of how people behave in stressful situations. It will help you develop the self-talk that regulates yourself."

One would think that the burden of the internal development should lie upon the difficult person, not the one who is struggling to keep peace. "Most of the time with difficult people, you will feel like you are making the effort and that is true," said Jansen. "Unless someone has real motivation to change, they probably won't do it." But, the payoff is worth it as Jansen noted that creating a strategy for your work relationships is as important as doing a good job. "Having a plan of action is always a good step," she suggested.

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