

How to Get Along with Anyone: 63 Strategies for Success

Susan Mendoza Beller, JD, LLM

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A mediation expert teaches readers how to deal with difficult personalities in a well-constructed, engaging book.

The title of Susan Mendoza Beller's *How to Get Along with Anyone* makes a big promise—and Beller, an international mediation expert, fulfills that promise admirably with sixty-three specific strategies to deal with even the most difficult of personalities. For each strategy, there's a relevant quote, an introduction, a sketch of a fictional person to illustrate negative behaviors, suggestions for how these behaviors can be modified, an activity that can be performed as a group, and discussion ideas.

Each short chapter is, in effect, a self-contained miniguide that offers a well-constructed problem-solution approach to understanding another's point of view and resolving conflict. In chapter 21, "Fundamental Attribution Error," Beller explains psychologist Lee Ross's discovery that "we tend to attribute our own less-than-stellar behavior to outside causes, but we attribute the same behavior in others to their personality flaws." Beller offers the example of an individual who misreads some neighbors' friendly attempts to welcome him to their neighborhood because of his own suspicious nature. He ends up treating them in an uncivil manner. Beller then suggests a group activity: "Collaboratively create a Mission Statement to prevent misunderstandings involving the group purpose and goals."

Beller examines a wide range of personalities and human behaviors, using an equally wide range of sources, including those that draw insight from psychology, philosophy, and mythology. Chapter titles include everything from "Achilles Heel" and "Ego Theory" to "Narcissism," "Peer Pressure," and "Pre-Conceived Notions." To some readers, the sixty-three strategies may, in fact, be so broad that there seems to be little substance that cements them together other than the author's decision to organize them alphabetically. In addition, Beller does rely somewhat heavily on mythical figures and their personalities to demonstrate contemporary behaviors.

Still, the book has several strengths, not the least of which is the concept. It is an impressive feat for Beller to have identified so many different personality traits and then boiled them down into distinct chapters. The consistent organization of each chapter is coupled with well-written, succinct examples (many of which are relevant to the workplace) and engaging exercises. This makes it easy for any reader to pick and choose the topics most relevant to his or her needs. Because of its structure, the text also encourages groups of people to work together to understand the behaviors of each other. As a result, this volume could have value in any group setting, whether it be family, friends, or a business environment.

The book's design is also a strength. An inviting cover photograph shows a diverse group of people coming together. The content is nicely organized, each chapter is clearly identified, and the author includes additional resources at the end. Interior pages are divided into logical sections with well-chosen subheads and easy-to-read text.

Beller writes in her conclusion that the book "is a journey into the minds of many diverse personalities, and an activity adventure in team building." As such, *How to Get Along with Anyone* is sure to make for enlightening reading.

BARRY SILVERSTEIN (January 23, 2014)

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