

Dealing With Stubborn People

Description

We will cover the science behind why people could be acting stubbornly, a better way to look at stubborn behavior, and how to persuade and argue with stubborn people.

What Causes People To Be Stubborn?

At some level, stubbornness is a genetic personality based trait. The big 5 personality includes one trait called disagreeableness. Trait disagreeableness ([low agreeableness](#)) is correlated with selfish, non cooperative, and generally stubborn behavior.

Another trait called openness can also relate to whether a person appears stubborn or not. Low levels of trait [openness](#) means a person is less curious, less likely to enjoy intellectual conversations, and less likely to be open to new ways of doing things. Low openness people prefer tradition and have a lower assortment of interests.

An aspect of the human brain can lead to stubbornness. [Confirmation bias](#) is the brain's preference for ideas that support what it already thinks. This bias leads people to reject things that could cause cognitive dissonance or challenge closely held beliefs. In other words the brain minimizes evidence that doesn't support its beliefs and maximizes evidence that does. If the person you are speaking with is acting stubbornly, ask yourself if the topic could be challenging an idea they have an emotional connection to.

Finally, a person's stubbornness could also come from [Overconfidence bias](#). This is when the person's experience of confidence is greater than how accurate those ideas end up being. You see this when people overestimate what they can accomplish or think their beliefs are more certain than they actually are. See also [Dunning Kruger](#).

A Shift In Mindset

There is a way to have more effective interactions with stubborn people, with out giving in to their demands. Instead of looking at yourself as the victim of a stubborn person's actions or lack of action, take the power back. View yourself as in control of your situation. But how? You can't control a stubborn person, right?

Instead of saying someone is stubborn, tell yourself you aren't good enough at persuasion to deal with that person. By reframing the problem, you take back control. Now you can do something to change the situation. Make it your goal to become so good at persuasion that even the most stubborn person will listen. If you are interested in how to master persuasion, take the first step by reading about the [key to persuasion](#).

Persuading Or Arguing With A Stubborn Person

There are effective tricks that seem to work well for [persuading](#) a stubborn person. These same tricks work well in arguments too.

First, **understand their personality**. Ask questions and read articles about what people [value](#). Listen and watch carefully. By understanding them you will learn the psychological triggers that cause them to act.

Next, learn how to **reframe your persuasion**. Instead of trying to convince someone to act with the reasons you think are motivating, tell them to act because of the reasons they find convincing. For example, if you are dealing with a stubborn person, they likely value social recognition, their image, and success. Tell them how your plan will get them one of those things.

You can move on to the more **advanced** techniques next. [Altercasting](#) is a technique where you use a person's identity to get them to act. For example, you might tell a person "I just thought you were a smart person. It seems like all the smart people are starting to do X." See [this post](#) for more details.

Try using **reverse psychology** to win the argument. Often people who are stubborn will disagree just to maintain control of a situation or conversation. If this is the case, try making a bad version of the argument opposite to what you actually want. They will hear you and disagree. Pretend you want to argue that orange juice is the best juice that exists. Instead, make a terrible argument against orange juice. "Orange juice is the best juice because it has the best color." They will likely pounce at the chance to disagree and win such an obvious victory.

Finally, **make them think your idea was actually their own**. This is taken from a [famously effective book](#) on handling people. The easiest way to do this is to tie your argument to what they have said in the past. "I was thinking about the best way to solve the project and I remembered what you said last week about efficiency." Give them all the credit and watch them agree. This technique is practically magic if you do it well enough.

Don't Do This One Thing With Stubborn People

When dealing with stubborn people, there is often the push to just cave into their demands because the fight isn't worth it. This might be true in the short run, but it can cause you serious issues in the long run. If you cave to one of their demands, they might begin to think they can just run you over any time they want. Instead, don't compromise unless you are getting everything you want. Sometimes you need to send people like this a message. Simply disagree and push back right when you first meet them or first start interacting with them. This sends the signal that you aren't someone who can be bullied or simply out stubborned.

Category

1. Persuasion

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