

How to Avoid Power Struggles



“Trying to win a power struggle is like trying to win a nuclear war. You may achieve your goal, but not without catastrophic casualties on both sides.”

– Jamie Raser

Avoiding power struggles is essential for promoting psychological health and safety in both personal and professional environments.

Engaging in power struggles can lead to heightened stress, anxiety, and interpersonal conflicts, negatively impacting mental well-being. When individuals navigate workplace dynamics without succumbing to power struggles, they create an environment conducive to collaboration, open communication, and mutual respect. This approach fosters a sense of psychological safety, where individuals feel secure expressing their opinions without fear of reprisal.

By prioritizing cooperation over power dynamics, a healthier workplace culture emerges, reducing stressors and contributing to a positive atmosphere that supports the overall psychological well-being of individuals within the professional setting.

Power struggles with high conflict people can be draining and destructive, but there are steps and techniques that can help you avoid them. Here are some practical tips for avoiding power struggles with high conflict people:

1. Be mindful of your own emotions

Power struggles with high conflict people often escalate due to emotional reactions. It's important to be mindful of your own emotions and avoid getting drawn into their drama. For example, if a high conflict person is shouting at you, take a deep breath and focus on remaining calm and composed.

2. Use active listening

Active listening is a technique that involves paying close attention to what the other person is saying, acknowledging their perspective, and avoiding judgment. For example, if a high conflict person is complaining about a situation, try to understand their perspective by repeating back what they have said and asking clarifying questions. This can help to de-escalate the situation and prevent it from turning into a power struggle.

3. Avoid getting defensive

High conflict people are often looking for a reaction and getting defensive only fuels their behavior. Instead, try to remain calm and composed, and avoid responding in a way that escalates the situation. For example, instead of saying "That's not true!" try saying "I understand that you feel that way, though I have a different perspective."

4. Set clear limits and boundaries

Setting clear limits and boundaries is an important step in avoiding power struggles with high conflict people. By setting boundaries, you can effectively communicate your expectations and prevent the high conflict person from crossing the line. For example, if a high conflict person is constantly calling you at all hours, you can set a boundary by saying that you will only take calls during certain hours of the day.

5. Walk away

If a power struggle with a high conflict person becomes too intense, it may be necessary to walk away from the situation. This can help to de-escalate the situation and prevent it from turning into a full-blown argument. For example, if a high conflict person is becoming increasingly aggressive, it may be necessary to leave the room or end the conversation.

By following these steps and techniques, you can effectively manage the situation and avoid power struggles that can be detrimental to your mental health.