

THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE I HAVE FACED in dealing with a person with forceful opinions/ strong-minded personality.

by Feroza Sader

I would like to start with a quote: "A strong woman is one who can build a firm foundation with the bricks others have thrown at her". Anon. Think about this: Most successful people have these common traits - they are strong minded, mentally tough and resolute about their ideas.

But do you think these attributes can also go wrong?

I have found that being "strong minded" can range from being unfortunate to even harmful for relationships. I have experienced a 'head-on collision' (not with my car!) but an actual encounter with a person whose strong-willed mind resulted in expressing words and manifesting behaviour which led me to make a decision of isolating myself from the person to protect myself from the bullying and verbal abuse.

I am not a big fan of prejudices and thinking fallacies which result in some people voicing opinions and don't usually have anything tangible to substantiate them with. Martin Luther King said: "Let no man pull you low enough to hate him". So avoiding contact with forceful and opinionated people is a mechanism I use to prevent unfortunate dialogue but it does not mean cutting ties or burning bridges.

Have you ever remained totally calm when dealing with a forceful person?

I did, and during that moment of calmness I had time to rationalise and think coherently instead of becoming defensive and appearing weak.

If someone gets angry with you and you don't react or respond then that anger falls back on that person. In your life journey, as you remain the consistently kind, caring,

magical person that you are, there will be that one person who, no matter what you do, that one person will remain negatively different. Just "let them be". Have confidence in your amazing self.

Don't let them change who you are for if they are regularly raising their voice and being confrontational and you are constantly kind and caring, then that speaks volumes!



Is it their ego or disguised low-self esteem?

Some people try to draw attention to themselves by picking on others and go from person to person trying to validate themselves. Avoid letting their behaviour get to you! Don't get involved in their 'twisting' talk. Rumours are carried by haters, spread by fools, accepted by idiots and dies when it hits a wise persons ears.

Consider this: "Don't tell me what was said about me, tell me why they were so comfortable to say it to you." I figured out the hard way that some people are what I call surface level thinkers. They mostly react on the spot. They don't thoughtfully assess and consider the implication of things and are somewhat handicapped when it comes to long-term thinking

Easier said than done?

Some tips to assist you in dealing with opinionated, strong minded people. Not all may work for you – I hope you find value in at least some of them:

1. Keep cool, calm and composed... breathe.
2. Keep your distance and keep your options open. You can't fly like an eagle if you hang out with turkeys.
3. Depersonalise, and shift from reactive to proactive. What others say and do is a projection of who they are, not who you are. Ignore their opinions and actions and you won't become the victim of needless suffering.
4. Know your fundamental human rights: The right to be treated with respect; the right to say "no" without feeling guilty; the right to take care of and protect yourself from being threatened physically, emotionally or mentally; the right to create your own happy and healthy life etc.
5. Instead of focussing on what's wrong, focus on how to solve the problem.

Be thankful for all the difficult people in your life and learn from them for they have shown you exactly who you do not want to be. Master the art of communication and you will experience less grief, greater confidence, better relationships, peace of mind and ultimate success. I wish you the very best on this journey.



Feroza Sader is Executive PA to the MD of AAAS a Division of Imperial Group Limited.

She is a member of PAFSA's Academy of Excellence having reached the status of Finalist in the Office Professional of South Africa 2010.

She was awarded the Crystal Award by PAFSA in 2016.

Currently, she is Chair of the InTouch Newsletter committee.

**Feroza lives by this saying:
'There are only two days in the year that nothing can be done. Yesterday and tomorrow'. So today is the right day to love, do and live.**