



## People, Not Problems

Your friends, family, co-workers and clients will never outperform the character labels that you put on them.

Our brains love labels and compartmentalization. Once you've labeled someone and determined who someone is in your brain, that is exactly what you will see, regardless of whether the person is truly displaying that behavior.

When you label someone as "difficult," everything that the person says and does will be "difficult" in your eyes. Your label becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

So, what can you do to change this pattern?

Here are the 5 tools that I've used to build relationships instead of resentments with people who push my buttons:

- 1. See the person before the label**

Before you automatically characterize someone, pause. Just as you are a complex person and would want someone to get to know *you* before putting a label on you and boxing you into characteristics that you may or may not possess, get to know this person. What are his/her goals? Passions? Hobbies? What is this person's background and experience? How did this person get to where he/she currently is at work or in life?

- 2. Somebody Loves Them**

If what you've seen from this person's behavior so far repels you, remember that somebody loves them. This person is someone's wife, husband, brother, sister, best friend, or neighbor. The sun rises and sets with this person. Somebody somewhere loves them, not you, I get that, but somebody does, which means that it's possible for you to find just one likable thing about him or her.

- 3. Listen with Loving Eyes**

When you're talking with this person, listen with loving eyes. It's very easy to have daggers in your eyes when you don't like someone and don't want to be in the same room, let alone engaged in conversation together. In those instances, silently repeat to yourself, "listen with loving eyes" to soften your gaze, remove the threat and bring the tension down.

- 4. Focus on the good**

Search for as many positive qualities as possible in the person. When you find at least one good thing, focus all of your energy and attention on it because you get more of what you focus on.

5. **Practice**

When you don't want to be nice, practice doing what kind, helpful people do. You don't have to feel like doing it. Instead, just practice. Get into action and the feeling will come later.

When you're around someone who rubs you the wrong way, see the person, not the problem that you think he or she is creating or presenting, remind yourself that somebody loves them, listen with loving eyes, focus on the good and practice doing what kind, caring, compassionate, patient and open-minded people do.

People are people, not problems. Treat them accordingly.

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**For more tips like these, send an email to [andrea@andreaashcraft.com](mailto:andrea@andreaashcraft.com) with your name and "Add Me" in the subject line.**