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# CIVIL ENGINEERING ACADEMY PODCAST

Hosted By Isaac Oakeson

## CEA 69 - HOW TO DEAL WITH A CHALLENGING PERSONALITY

Regardless of the field we're in, there will always be heated situations that tend to make us lose our temper and completely get out of the "professional mode". It can be our boss or supervisor that is a little bit difficult to deal with, or maybe we're in charge of a team and one of our subordinates has this unique personality trait that can make things uncomfortable. Since we cannot escape these situations, we'd better learn to handle them.

Today, Mark Oakeson jumps back on the show to discuss some tips and tools we can use to navigate through situations that have already gotten emotionally charged. As two practicing engineers with significant field experience, they have personally seen from a distance as well as participated in such heated conflicts. In today's episode, they share their experiences, mistakes, and lessons that will definitely help you out whenever faced with such situations.

As Stephen Covey mentions, "seek first to understand, then to be understood". That's the first tip we can, and definitely should, use whenever we find ourselves in such heated conflicts with another person, whether it's our boss, coworker, or subordinate. As he points out in his book, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, empathetic listening is listening to the other person with the actual intent to understand their motives, their situations, and what's going on in their lives, both personally and professionally. Therefore, before we release that inner anger, we should actually take a step back and put ourselves in their shoes. We never know how much pressure they might be experiencing at this particular moment in their lives for them to explode in the form of a heated argument.

Another tip is to own up your own mistakes and failures. This creates not only an incredibly good image of you among your coworkers as a guy who is not afraid of admitting his mistakes

and the things he did wrong, but also helps speed up the process of getting the mistake fixed. If you admit what you've done wrong and be proactive in terms of helping those that were directly affected by it to find a solution, then you help fix your own mistakes faster.

However, there are times in which different personalities simply do not mix up. We can try as much as we'd like, but we'll never understand what that manager is saying, what they really want, how they're wired, and what motivates them within the organization. Sometimes it's not our fault. We just need to trust our guts and be aware that keeping butting heads may not be the best approach.

This episode is a great one to listen to, not only because every engineer will face such heated arguments at some point in his/her career but also because it lays out to you the different tips and techniques you can use to stay calm during emotionally charged confrontations and smoothly work out the situation for the better.

## Resources

Purple Mattress - [Website](#)

PPI - [Website](#)

Civil PE Review Course - [Website](#)

Civil FE Review Course - [Website](#)

The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People, by Stephen R. Covey - [Amazon](#)

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