

5 Ways to Deal with Back-Stabbers

Back-stabbers also known as back-bitters or back attackers, might seem easy going, even complacent, with a “don’t worry” attitude but don’t let them deceive you. Their strategy is to be nice to your face and act like your best friend, lulling you into a false sense of security that tricks you into revealing information you really don’t want them to have. They fish for some morsels of ammunition to fire back when you’re unsuspecting; then they attack you behind your back, bad mouthing or implicating you. They may lie and deny their involvement, even by pointing fingers at others as the source of their malicious mischief.

By calling them on their game, you take away their satisfaction with their own cleverness and prevent them from exulting in their sense of power (false though it may be). When dealing with them, be vigilant and watch your back!

To deal with back-stabbing behavior here are a few tips from my book, “Get Along with Anyone, Anytime, Anywhere ... 8 keys to creating enduring connections with customers, co-workers ... even kids” by Arnold Sanow and Sandra Strauss

- Gather your evidence with concrete examples, if possible of exactly what was said, to whom, and other specifics related to the incident. You’ll stand on much firmer ground with facts rather than hearsay.
- Whether you can document the situation or must rely on rumors or other reports, discuss the remarks openly with them. Use a calm, gentle tone and ask them to specify whatever accusations they’ve made: “Britney, I’d appreciate you clearing up some confusion. It’s come to my attention that you said (describe the content). Please tell me what you mean.”
- Give them a graceful exit. If they deny their actions (and they probably will) let it go by saying, “Oh, I’m glad to hear that the information given to me was an exaggeration and you didn’t mean it as criticism.” This also serves as a subtle warning that you’re on to their games. Don’t argue if they deny their intent to harm.
- Tell them the behavior you expect in the future. “Next time, let me know exactly how you feel before discussing this with anyone else”
- If you actually did make a mistake in accusing them of the particular behavior or incident, apologize. Providing an apology is a sign of strength, not weakness.

Arnold Sanow, MBA, CSP (certified speaking professional) is a speaker, workshop leader and coach who works with organizations to increase positive and productive interactions with customers and co-workers. He is the author of 6 books to include, “Get Along with Anyone, Anytime, Anywhere.” He can be reached at www.arnoldsanow.com – speaker@arnoldsanow.com - 703-255-3133