



» A Summary of Key Ideas From: The **No Asshole** Rule, by Robert I Sutton, PhD

Every organization needs the "No Asshole" rule because mean-spirited people do massive damage to victims, bystanders who suffer the ripple effects, organizational performance, and themselves. The effects of assholes are so devastating because they sap people of their energy and esteem mostly through the accumulated effects of small, demeaning acts, not so much through one or two dramatic episodes. (They) have devastating cumulative effect partly because nasty interactions have a far bigger impact on our moods than positive interactions. Assholes don't just damage the immediate targets of their abuse. Coworkers, family members, or friends who watch – or just hear about – these ugly incidents suffer ripple effects. The damage that assholes do to their organizations is seen in the costs of increased turnover, absenteeism, decreased commitment to work, and the distraction and impacted individual performance documented in studies of psychological abuse, bullying, and mobbing.

WHEN ASSHOLES REIGN: TIPS FOR SURVIVING NASTY PEOPLE AND WORKPLACES

Reframing: Change How You See Things

Psychologists have found that if you can't escape a source of stress, changing your mindset about what is happening to you, or reframing, can help reduce the damage done to you. Some useful reframing tricks include avoiding self-blame, hoping for the best but expecting the worst, and ...developing indifference and emotional detachment.

Develop Indifference and Emotional Detachment

When organizational life takes (this) an ugly turn, linking your self-worth to how people treat you and putting all your effort and emotional energy into your workplace is a path to exploitation and self-destruction. Self-preservation sometimes requires the opposite response: learn to feel and practice indifference and emotional detachment. When your job feels like a prolonged personal insult, focus on just going through the motions, on caring as little as possible about the jerks around you, and think about something more pleasant as often as you can – just get through each day until something changes at your job or something better comes along.

Look for Small Wins

The ability to gain control over little, seemingly trivial things is a hallmark of people who survive. Rigorous research confirms that the feeling of control – perceiving that you have the power to shape even small aspects of your fate can have a huge impact on human well-being.

Limit Your Exposure

This tactic dampens the damage that assholes do in two ways. First, by limiting how often and intensely you face their dirty looks and demeaning words, you suffer less direct damage. Second, as we've seen, anything that gains you even tiny bits of control can protect your sense of self, spirit, and physical health.

Build Pockets of Safety Support, and Sanity

Find and build some pockets where you can hide from assholes and hang out with decent people. These pockets can be found in even tiny moments, such as during brief interactions with supportive customers or clients.

Fight and Win the Right Small Battles

This approach requires constantly looking out for small but sweet victories. De-escalation and re-education are relatively low-risk strategies.

The Upshot: You Might Be Able to take it, but Are You Really Trapped?...

(But) there is a dark side to these ideas. They might provide just enough protection to stop people from bailing out of relentless, demeaning situations - even when they have exit options.

Think about...is it worth it to stay in a demeaning environment? Using the above strategies can provide some relief in the near term. The question is...have you weighed the cost to yourself of staying vs. the cost of leaving and finding a new job and company?