

"This book is life changing. A must-read for dealing with the uncooperative and stubborn people in your life." — MARSHALL GOLDSMITH, author of the *New York Times* and global bestseller *What Got You Here Won't Get You There*

"If I had known that 'talking to crazy' could be so simple, I wouldn't have driven myself crazy all these years trying to do it." — KEITH FERRAZZI, author, *Never Eat Alone* and *Who's Got Your Back*

How to Deal with the Irrational and Impossible People in Your Life



talking
to
CRAZY

MARK GOULSTON

*Author of *Get Out of Your Own Way* and *Just Listen**

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FIGURE 3–1: The Nine Most Common M.O.s of Irrational People

M.O.s of Irrational People

Irrational Person's M.O.	Your Reaction	
Emotional	<p>Emotional people believe they need to vent or they'll explode. Therefore they cry, scream, and slam doors. They tend to overpower you because they're willing to escalate a situation to a point that's unbearable for a sane person.</p>	<p>You may try to mollify these people by giving in to them so you can stop the unending emotional upheaval, or you may become so tired of it all that you just try to escape from them.</p>
Logical/Practical	<p>These people think they're in control only when they stick to the facts. As a result, they become terse, cold, and condescending. They tune out anything that seems illogical and nearly always view displays of emotion as "acting crazy."</p>	<p>You may start feeling and acting more emotional and angry in response to these people's dry and logical statements and the way they cut you off with icy logic. They also have a way of causing you to feel ashamed of even having feelings.</p>
Manipulative/Needy	<p>These people believe that to be in control, they need something from you that they can't supply themselves. So they whine, wheedle, and make excuses. If you suggest ways they can help themselves, they say, "Yes, but . . ." If you don't give them what they want, often they try to control you by making you feel guilty.</p>	<p>When these people are unrelenting, you may transition from feeling guilty and frustrated to feeling annoyed, put-upon, and ashamed of your deep desire to say something mean to them. You may give in to them just to get rid of them—even though you know they'll just come back for more.</p>

Irrational Person's M.O.		Your Reaction
Fearful	<p>Fearful people feel like they're constantly surrounded by threats. When something triggers their fear, they lash out wildly like a frightened dog. They also are much more comfortable than you being perched between fear and panic (because they are there so often).</p>	<p>These people evoke in you a nearly constant need to reassure them, which eventually gets exhausting and makes you resent them. If you go the extra mile to walk them through fearful situations, you're likely to find yourself becoming a regular crutch because they can't or won't move a step without you.</p>
Hopeless/ Withdrawn	<p>Hopeless/withdrawn people feel that the world will only hurt them, so their M.O. is to hide from it. No matter how hard you try to convince these people that they can be happy in the future, they spend enormous amounts of energy trying to convince you that you're wrong and that nothing will work.</p>	<p>These people's negativity may leave you feeling frustrated, sad, and a bit hopeless yourself. Trying to help them increases your chances of becoming part of their downer cycle as they suck the energy out of you.</p>
Martyred	<p>People who play the role of martyrs make a point of refusing to ask for help, even when they desperately need it.</p>	<p>These people initially make you feel guilty for not helping, even though they won't give you a chance. Over time, however, their martyr act can make you feel annoyed and exasperated.</p>

(continued)

Mark Goulston, MD, is a top psychiatrist, consultant, coach, and business adviser. Author of the bestselling *Just Listen* and *Get Out of Your Own Way*, he blogs for *Harvard Business Review*, *Fast Company*, *Business Insider*, *Huffington Post*, and *Psychology Today*; cohosts a weekly radio show; and is featured frequently in major media, including *The Wall Street Journal*, *Fortune*, *Newsweek*, *Time*, CNN, Fox News, and the TODAY show. For information on the Goulston Group, go to: <http://goulstongroup.com> or contact them at: info@goulstongroup.com

Irrational Person's M.O.	Your Reaction	
<p>Bullying</p>	<p>Bullies believe they're in control only if they're making you fearful and submissive. That's why they actively attack, threaten, or belittle you. The more afraid they make you feel, the more powerful they feel.</p>	<p>These people make you feel scared, intimidated, weak, and powerless—as well as angry. You may strike back, steam inside, or simply retreat and ruminate about what you could have done instead.</p>
<p>Know-It-All</p>	<p>Know-it-alls like being the only expert on any topic, even if they've never “been there” or “done that.” They will find cracks in any idea you offer, even if it's correct. They know that if they can make you feel stupid, you'll lose confidence and often back off and become submissive. Their M.O. is to belittle, mock, or condescend to you.</p>	<p>These people may make you feel small, insignificant, not good enough, and sometimes ashamed—as well as resentful.</p>
<p>Sociopathic</p>	<p>These people (who technically are sane, but often are irrational in a unique way you'll read about later) are hiding secrets. Their M.O. is to terrify you so you won't find out what those secrets are (or worse yet, expose them to the rest of the world).</p>	<p>These people will make you feel afraid and even “creeped out.”</p>

When you understand irrational people's M.O.s, it'll be easier for you to realize that their weeping, coldness, whining, withdrawal, or attack-dog behavior isn't really about you. Instead, it's about them and their need to feel in control. Moreover, as you'll see, knowing a person's M.O. will show you the best way to counter it.

Excerpted from Chapter 3 of *Talking to Crazy* ©2016 Mark Goulston