

# The “3 Rs”

Content Subject: Handling Conflict • Reading time: 4 minutes

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It is difficult to stay calm when a co-worker is peering over your shoulder trying to make sure you complete your assignment accurately, or when a well-meaning family member is watching over your plate to make sure you don't stray from your diet.

“Here, let me show you an easier way,” or “Should you be eating that?” are phrases that many people hear as, “Boy, you're really pretty stupid, aren't you?” Our blood boils, fists clench, and before we can count to ten, we say things like, “Do I look stupid?” or “Who asked you anyway?” The result of that interaction goes nowhere pleasant.

Having someone tell you how to do something “correctly” is one of the top reasons for interpersonal conflict. There is nothing you can do to “unhear” the words; therefore the solution is to change how you react to them. So, how does one avoid being pulled into an unwanted argument and — at the same time — respectfully explain to the other person that you would like them to stop doing that?

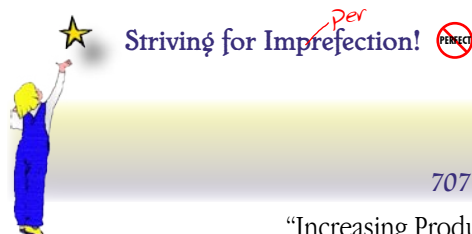
One method the next time you find yourself the recipient of unwanted advice is to utilize the “Three Rs”.

## Step 1: Recognize the *intent* of the person, *not the action*

There is an old Irish proverb, “The road to hell is paved with good intentions.” Assuming the person offering the advice is someone with whom you usually get along, try to understand that in reality, he or she just wants to make sure you're successful at what you're doing. That is why he is directing your actions.

For example, “Should you be eating that?” could be the way that he is trying to make sure you get to lose the weight you said you wanted to drop. He wants you to be successful, but doesn't know what he can do.

## Step 2: Reflect how you feel about the statement



Remember that no one makes you feel anything. YOU choose (or have learned) to react in a certain fashion. Others might not know what their comments trigger in you, so you have to tell them. Without that knowledge, they do not have the option of changing. If you don't explain why his action bothers you, he doesn't understand. It's sometimes risky to express your feelings, but the reality is, others can tell anyway.

## Step 3: Redirect the behavior

If you just shout, “Leave me alone!” he will — for possibly a longer time than you wish. In addition, it's never pleasant to share working or living spaces with someone with whom you are angry. Therefore, give him something else to do to help you out.

## Putting the “3 Rs” into action: An example

Assuming the problem was someone trying to tell you how to do a project at work, here's how the “3 Rs” could be used. Suppose you were trying to load the copier and were having trouble getting the tray to slide out.

Your co-worker, Jeff, approaches and says, “You're doing that wrong, let me show you how to do it right.”

You reply, “Thank you Jeff. I really appreciate your willingness to help (recognizes the intent). However, it's important to me to learn how to do this correctly; if you do it, I won't get to feel like I accomplished anything (reflecting how you feel). Therefore, I'd like it better if you were available for me if I had any questions later. *That* would be great! (redirecting the behavior)

By going through that process, Jeff is appreciated for his attempt, he understands you a little better, and you and he get to avoid a big blow out.

**Remember: Recognize. Reflect. Redirect. It might not always work. But when it does, it's worth the minor effort it takes.**

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