



Difficult People

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Goals for Today

What is a
Difficult
Person?

Types of
Difficult People

Peaceful Ways
of Handling
Difficult People

**We need tools to help
us stand in the gap.**



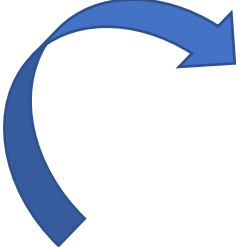
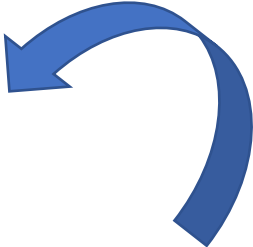
Denial

Attack



Stimulus

Response



Freedom to Choose

Reactive

Proactive



What is a
difficult
person?





Are there difficult people?

- No matter how hard we try, some people appear indifferent, uncaring or opposed to us. We usually label them “difficult.”
- When others don’t like us, something is wrong with them! When we don’t like someone, we expect everyone to understand and accept our reasons.
- Before labeling someone as difficult, let’s remind ourselves that no law says that everyone must like or respect us. It’s nice if they do—but not required.

People Aren't Difficult Just Because...

Disagree with us
about something

Express an opinion
that we dislike

Question our
ability to do
something

Don't enjoy
working with us or
prefer working
with another

Don't enjoy the
work we both
must do

Don't like your
company or the
group you belong

People are not Difficult Because

Questions our
thinking and
conclusions,

Nonverbally,
doesn't respond as
we expect,

Not affirming or
warm in their
demeanor,

Don't appreciate
the difficulty of
things we are
trying to do,

Don't trust us,

Don't believe
something we've
said, or

Don't like our style
of approaching
work, problems, or
people.

Whose Problem, Theirs or Ours?

- As we encounter mistrust and disagreement from others, **it is tempting to take all the things they say personally. The problem is not that they are difficult, but these situations and personality traits are difficult for us to manage.**
- Notice, we said, “difficult for us.” Often, we have no idea of how to handle situations where someone doesn’t like or disagrees with us.
- This can be especially hard for people-pleasers and those who want to be liked by everyone.
- The only way out of this situation is to focus on the problem instead of the emotions (theirs and ours).

Whenever we decide that someone or something is unworkable, it implicitly gives us permission to stop working or trying. But imagine how different the world would be if we treated all problems in this way. We all enjoy living in a world where things that were once impossible are commonly accepted!

What is a Difficult Person?

One who uses dysfunctional means for escalating tensions and conflict in others.

Someone who intentionally or unintentionally works against relational and peaceful approaches to resolving problems

This may include attack strategies—such as yelling or throwing a tantrum, avoidance strategies—such as refusing to deal, participate, or cooperate; or combinations of both.

It often works because when people are frightened by hostile actions, they often retreat or do their best to avoid them.

The Eighty Percent Rule

- Because people are so different, it isn't always easy to determine when someone's behavior is due to natural differences between people.
- If you wonder if someone's actions are due to personality differences or potential psychological abnormalities, apply the eighty percent rule.
- Ask yourself, "Would eighty percent of the population, or people I know, do this?"





Types of Difficult People

Difficult People



Types of Difficult People

- Bullies
- Verbal Abusers
- Passive—Aggressive
- General attacking behaviors



The Bully

Bullying is a form of aggressive behavior that may range from mild forms of persecution to full-on antisocial, narcissistic, and psychopathic behaviors.



Bullies often Resort to...

- **Physical abuse** – including the destruction of property and valued items,
- **Social abuse** – such as isolating victims from seeing family and friends, preventing the victim from leaving home, and verbally degrading the victim in front of others,
- **Emotional manipulation** – making people feel guilty about their actions, opinions, or beliefs.
- **Sexual abuse** – all forms of unwanted sexual activity,
- **Manipulation of friends and family** pitting family members against one another, starting arguments, gossip, and innuendo,

Three Characteristics

While empathic people respect individual feelings and needs, bullies do not.

They have low abilities to empathize and are often disrespectful.

When others show deferral or submission, they ignore the fact and continue inflicting pain.

Other Characteristics

Hold	negative views towards victims,
View	victims as deserving of bullying,
Think	victims are attention-seekers who cause bullying,
Justify	Justify that bullying behavior is necessary to get things done,

Verbal Abusers

- Any kind of verbal communication that attacks, belittles, or demeans instead of addressing problems and fundamental issues.



Verbal Abuse

- **Withholding** – the failure to share meaningful thoughts and feelings.
- **Countering** – the tendency to be argumentative over most everything. No matter what is said, one offers a differing point of view.
- **Discounting** – telling a person that they are oversensitive or shouldn't feel the way that they do about something that has been said.
- **Blocking and Diverting** – controlling the conversation so that the other person does not get to say what's important to them. Telling a person that they are complaining too much.
- **Trivializing** – undermining the importance of what a person thinks, says, or does.
- **Ordering** – being demanding and telling people what to do.
- **Denial** – the tendency to rationalizing one's bad behavior when confronted by it,

Peaceful Pause

- If we are honest, all of us must admit that we have been verbally abusive to someone at one time or another. Now that you know what verbal abuse is, which forms are you most guilty of using?



Passive-Aggressive People



TODAY, THE TERM PROFESSIONALS MOST OFTEN USE IS NEGATIVISTIC.



PASSIVE-AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR IS SEEMINGLY INNOCUOUS, ACCIDENTAL, OR NEUTRAL BUT HAS AN UNCONSCIOUS AGGRESSIVE MOTIVE.



FOR EXAMPLE, A PERSON WHO CONSTANTLY KEEPS PEOPLE WAITING AND THEN ASKS, "WHAT'S YOUR PROBLEM?"

Five Elements of Passive—Aggression

Rigidity

Resentment

Resistance

Reactance

Reversed
Reinforcement

Other Types of Difficult People

Perfectionists

Pessimists

Know it Alls

One-Upping and Belittling


Insults and Explosive Remarks

Reactive People

Peaceful Pause

- Which type of difficult people are hardest for you?





Peaceful Approaches

Difficult People

Safety First

- Rationally assess the environment for perceptions of danger.
- It is one thing to deal with agitated and unreasonable people and another to face the possibility of physical, verbal, or emotional abuse.
- Never willingly place yourself in an environment if you believe someone might physically harm you.
- If unsure of your physical safety, never meet alone.



Expect Abusive Situations

- All of us can be unkind and abusive—even though it may be mild abuse. It is part of the human condition. Even so, this does not mean that it is ever okay to be abusive.
- Though we may be disappointed, we should not be overly surprised.
- Angry people and those who feel powerless often say offensive things
- Even though it may be shocking, peacemakers should not be surprised as they uncover abusive environments.



Stand in the Middle Ground



NEVER ATTACK AND NEVER
RETREAT



USE RELATIONAL APPROACHES THAT
ENCOURAGE COOPERATION AND
PROBLEM-FOCUS.

Eliminate the Payoff

- Break the cycle by withholding any form of psychological payoff.
- Your next statement should seem as though you did not even hear a dysfunctional comment.

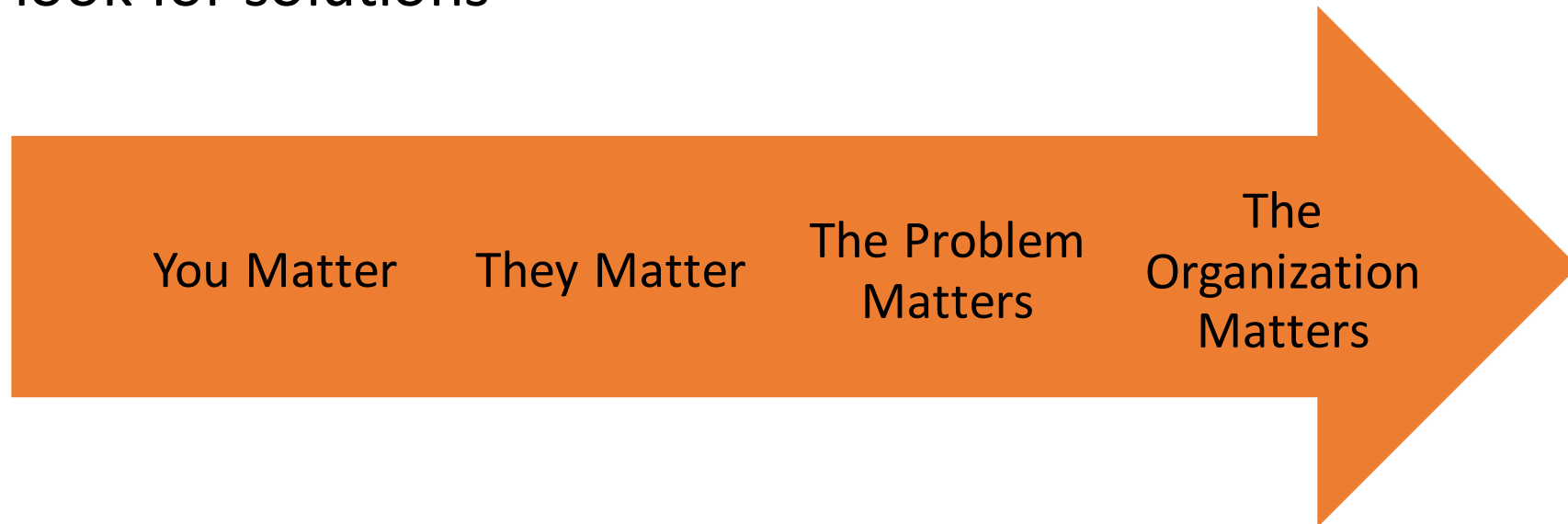




Show No
Reactivity

Use Relational Approaches

- Cooperation instead of competition
- Strategies that encourage and build positive regard.
- Embedded in the relational approach is a desire to balance the needs as we look for solutions



Create Safe Environments

- Safe, quiet, relatively private
- Set Ground Rules – I'm going to hear what you have to say and then I'll see what we can do.
- Set boundaries on interruptions, overtalking, and abusive language.



Stay Problem Focused



- “The past is the past, and none of us can change that.”
- “We can only focus on the issues before us.”
- “What are your best ideas about how we might solve (mention the specific issue)?”

WIDEN THE PAUSE

Avoid: Stimulus → Response

Instead: Stimulus → Thoughtful Pause → Response

- SAY, "TELL ME MORE."
- ASK, "WHY DO YOU SAY THAT?"
- ASK, "DO YOU REALLY THINK THAT IS TRUE?"
- RESPOND, "HMMM..."
- RESPOND, "RESPECTFULLY, I DON'T SEE IT THAT WAY."

Give Voice to all sides in a conflict



Giving voice means that the peacemaker helps each person tell their story, effectively state their concerns, and uncover any hidden needs that may need addressing.



We encourage each person to tell their story and allow others the right to do the same. Though it may sound overly simple, people often need help in advocating their positions in an emotionally intelligent way.



Giving a voice does not mean that the peacemaker is taking sides. It only means that we help all people say what they believe needs to be said and encourage them to listen and understand what others are saying as well.



Mr. Microphone

Give Voice to the Passive Aggressive

- In our discussion of the passive-aggressive, we noted that, for whatever reason, these people most often will not state their objections or concerns to others.
- Alluding to the slippery slope, we discussed earlier; denial is their preferred method of handling conflict in public while attacking others behind the scenes.
- Instead of trying to work things out with others, they resort to behind the scenes sabotage.