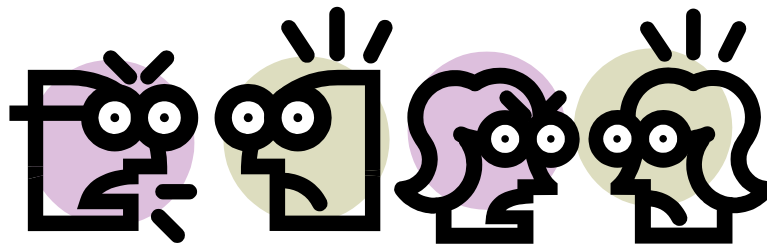


Skills for Working With Difficult People in Challenging Situations



**Conducted for First 5 Santa Cruz County
Service Integration Brown Bag Lunch**



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Road Map

Desired Outcomes

- Identify difficult behaviors that are hardest to deal with at work.
- Learn 3 key steps to handling difficult behaviors without “adding fuel to the fire.”
- Understand how attitudes about someone’s difficult behavior could either help or hurt efforts to deal with the situation.
- Practice communication skills for responding instead of reacting.

Agenda

- I. Welcome/Overview/Introductions
- II. Dealing With “Difficult People”
- III. Reframing the Issue
- IV. Essential Skills
- V. Small-Group Discussion
- VI. Closing/Evaluation

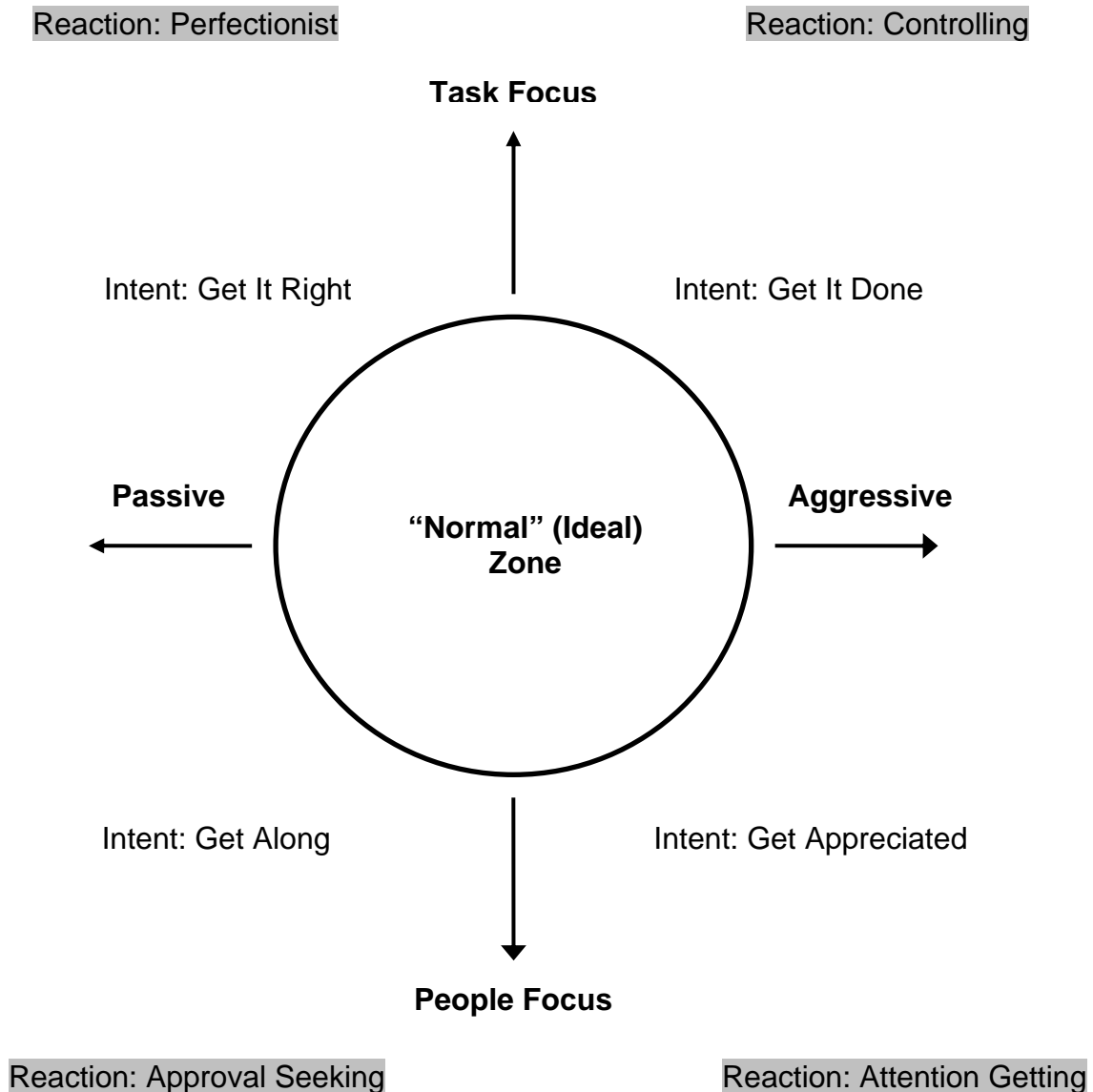
Group Agreements

1. Listen before responding.
2. Take turns speaking.
3. Stretch your comfort zone.
4. Start and end on time.
5. Keep an open mind.
6. Value different opinions and ideas.
7. Maintain confidentiality.
8. Turn phones/pagers to silent or vibrate.

10 Common Types of “Difficult People”

Someone Who...	Tends to...
1. Is hostile or aggressive Intent:	Talk loud, yell or use physically-aggressive body language. Might also use profanity or say insulting or demeaning things.
2. “Steamrolls” over others Intent:	Keep talking without letting others contribute or respond.
3. Constantly complains Intent:	Find fault in everything and avoid taking responsibility.
4. Is silent/unresponsive Intent:	Not respond verbally or non-verbally to questions or discussions.
5. Knows it all (or Thinks s/he knows it all) Intent:	Perceive new ideas as a challenge to his/her knowledge and authority. May exaggerate to make it seem like s/he knows it all.
6. Is ultra-agreeable Intent:	Agree with everything others say or agree to take on everything asked of him/her.
7. Says no to everything Intent:	Point out the negatives and limitations in everyone and everything, resist change.
8. Puts the brakes on Intent:	Find reasons to slow down or stop discussions or activities.
9. “Attacks” people by surprise Intent:	Appear “nice” on the outside but then say negative or highly-critical things.
10. Gossips Intent:	Talk about other people behind their backs.

Behind the Behaviors



Source: Dealing With People You Can't Stand. Dr. Rick Brinkman & Dr. Rick Kirschner, 2002.

Essential Skills

$$E \underline{\hspace{2cm}} + R \underline{\hspace{2cm}} = O \underline{\hspace{2cm}}$$

- You can't "make" another person change his/her behavior.
- The only thing you have the power to change is your Response to the behavior.

Individual Exercise:

- What is your typical Response to the Event?

- What is the usual Outcome?

- What is the Outcome you want?

Essential Skills

Know your last straw (before it gets pulled).

- Identify the line between what you can work with and what you will not tolerate (limits, boundaries).
- The line may change depending on the situation or over time.

Individual Exercise:

- What is your “Last Straw”?
- How easy or difficult is it for you to maintain that limit or boundary?
- How easy or difficult is it for you to recognize when your Last Straw is about to be pulled?

Essential Skills

Deflect: Let the person's negative statements and energy "bounce" off of you.

- Remember that "What gets rewarded gets repeated."
- Think, "I'm rubber, you're glue..."
- The goal is to stay clear-headed so you can assess the situation and determine the appropriate response.

Individual Exercise:

Write down 1-2 affirmations you could say to yourself to help you Deflect.

1.

2.

Essential Skills

Defuse: Use your non-verbal and verbal communication skills to neutralize the person's behavior and increase your chances of being heard and understood.

- Observe the person's behaviors and choice of words
- Listen, Reflect and Probe: "What I'm hearing you say is...Does that sound accurate? Is there anything else?"
- Blend: Verbal and non-verbal communication that is similar to the other person's
- Contrast: Verbal and non-verbal communication that is different from the other person's
- The goal is to stay calm, show understanding and empathy (when appropriate) and find out how you can help so you can move the conversation from problems to solutions.

Individual Exercise:

- What is your typical reaction to the person's difficult behavior (fight or flight)?
- What can you do or say to Blend and/or Contrast with the person in order to Defuse?

Essential Skills

Demonstrate: Model the verbal and non-verbal communication skills you want the other person to use with you. You may not see immediate effects, but at least you will not be “adding gasoline to the fire.”

- Continuum of Passive – Assertive – Aggressive communication styles
- Neutral language: Choose words that describe observable behaviors and effects vs your interpretations of a person’s intentions and effects.
- “Yes, and...” instead of “Yes, but...”
- Not-Your-Typical-I-Statements: I’ve noticed, I’m concerned, I need your help, I want to make sure I understand, I want to be able to help you, etc.
- Validate and move on: “I understand you *feel (think)* that way. Others have *felt (thought)* that way, too. What I’ve *found* is...”

Individual Exercise:

- Which of these verbal or non-verbal communication skills is hardest (or feels least natural) for you to do?
- Why do you think that is?
- What will you try to do or say differently the next time you are faced with this type of difficult behavior?