

Dealing with Difficult People

Presented by
CIGNA Employee Assistance Program



Seminar Goals

- Learn how to differentiate between “difficult people” and “difficult situations”
- Understand the reasons why people might be difficult
- Take control of the one person you *can* control—*yourself*
- Learn techniques for dealing with truly difficult people
- Know the benefits of your Employee Assistance Program (EAP)



What is a Difficult Person?

Someone who repeatedly makes it hard for you to do your work, or is unpleasant when you interact.

For example, someone whose behavior is often:

- Hostile or aggressive
- Negative or pessimistic
- Withdrawn or passive
- Overly agreeable but doesn't deliver
- Opinionated and defensive



What is a Difficult Situation?

A difficult *situation*, as opposed to a difficult person, is one where all or most of the following are present:

- There is a conflict of interests or difference of opinion with another person
- There is an obstacle blocking the person from their goal and it can appear to be a no-win situation
- They are frustrated and under a lot of stress
- The difficult behavior is not a regular pattern for that person
- The behavior changes when the conflict or obstacle is removed

Difficult Behaviors that Cross the Line

- Threatening statements or demeanor
- Harassment or verbal abuse
- Profanity directed at a person
- Inappropriate topics of conversation, pictures, or objects
- Unwanted physical contact
- Sabotaging or preventing others from doing their job

How Do You Know If Someone Is “Difficult”?

- Do they *often* make it hard for you to do your job?
- Are they *often* unpleasant for you to interact with?
- Do the above behaviors occur even in the absence of a difficult situation?
- Do these behaviors occur even when the person is not feeling a lot of stress or frustration?

Why They Are the Way They Are

- They learned it
- There may be underlying emotional or biological causes
- They don't know any other way
- It's a reflection of how they feel about themselves



They Really Push My Buttons...

In a difficult relationship, you always have control over one thing—yourself



Change Your Thinking

- Think about what their behavior costs you
- Don't take their behavior personally
- Forget about what they “should” do
- Avoid “mind-reading”
- Take an honest look at your own behavior

Change How You Act

- Stop trying to change the difficult person
- Model the behavior you would like to see
- Minimize unnecessary interaction with them
- Be respectful and polite
- Know when to bring in a higher authority

Communication Techniques for Difficult Situations

- Give up the need to be right
- Understand the other person's point of view
- Listen for some truth in what they say
- Paraphrase their point of view and ask for clarification

Continued

Communication Techniques for Difficult Situations (cont'd)

- Ask open-ended questions
- Use “I-statements” to express your views
- Look for workable, realistic compromises
- Table the subject if necessary

How Will You Deal With Difficult People?

- How can I change my reactions to difficult people?
- What can I do differently in a difficult situation?
- How can I avoid getting “hooked”?
- In what ways do I demonstrate difficult behaviors?

Benefits of the EAP

- Face to Face Sessions
- Confidential
- Prepaid
- Unlimited Telephonic consultation
- Available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
- Household benefit
- Work/Life Support such as eldercare, childcare and pet care.
- Financial Services
- Legal Services

