

For Permanent & Positive Change

The Exchange

FEATURED TOPIC: DEALING WITH DIFFICULT PEOPLE

What Makes a Person Difficult?

Everyone has someone who is difficult to deal with. Interestingly, who is difficult for you may not be difficult for someone else. What makes a person difficult?

Differences in behavioral styles can be an issue. Most people are comfortable talking to people who are similar to them. Extroverts like talking to people who will speak up. Introverts prefer to talk to people who carefully edit what they say before they say it. Warm people enjoy communication partners who are willing to invest in relationships. Task people appreciate those who get right down to business.

Since we cannot always choose with whom we communicate, it is important to recognize the style differences and adapt. While it is more work, the effort usually pays off.

Extroverted people, focused on tasks, like the bottom line. Get to the point quickly when talking to them. Be organized. Be prepared to make decisions. If you cannot, ask for a specific amount of time to consider the information. Save your charm and stories for someone else.

Extroverted people, focused on people, like to talk. Ask them open questions to allow them to exercise this favorite past time. Base your next question on something that they already said in order to smoothly link the conversation. Show your personality.

Introverted people, focused on people, like to listen. Build trust in the beginning. Ask them a focused open question and make sure you listen completely. If you disagree, ask more questions to gain understanding before you voice your opinion. Give them time to decide.

Introverted people, focused on task, like to be right. Save your opinions – just give them the facts. Be prepared so that you can answer their detailed questions. Do not just hit the high points; rather explain your process. Expect tough questions. Don't wing it – if you don't know tell them when you will get back to them.

Adapting to the other person's behavioral style can turn difficulties into opportunities. ❖

Beyond the Difference in Style

Aside from differences in behavioral style, some people seem difficult because they have different opinions. Most people base their opinions on what they have experienced. Simply sharing your opinion will seldom cause them to change their mind. Instead of sharing your opinion, share the information that led you to your opinion. When you share information, your statements will be filled with numbers, names, and descriptions. Opinions, on the other hand, will contain vague words and adjectives preceded by some form of the verb 'is'. (They are lazy. She is good at her job.)

Other people may seem difficult because they have different values than you. For instance, perhaps you value honesty at all cost and the other person values winning at all cost. Another person values the camaraderie of teamwork while others value the satisfaction of doing a job well alone. When there are strong differences in values, understanding their reasons will bring some relief of the difficulty. It will at least allow you to realize the other person's actions are not to attack you personally. In these cases, it can be helpful to agree to disagree.

And then there are a few people who seem to have difficulty with most everyone. One approach that can be beneficial is to find them doing something right and compliment them on it. Make sure the compliment is based upon a factual recount of their actions. Don't hang around for a 'thank you', because it likely will not come. This person will not want to get personal. The purpose of the compliment is to acknowledge a job well done rather than focus on the person doing it. Don't over-do the compliments. Gradually, you will find this person a little less difficult to work with. ❖

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Looking Forward

Our next issue will focus on Feedback: Compliments and Corrections.

Looking Back

You might also be interested in our September 2007 edition: [Negotiations](#) or read other [previous issues of The Exchange](#).

"No one can make you feel small without your consent."

Eleanor Roosevelt

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Use The Right Words To Get The Right Results

Vincent Ivan Phipps

During my debate competition years, our undefeated team had a negotiation philosophy: "If someone tells you no, you asked the wrong way."

When dealing with difficult people, knowing how to say what you want is essential. Some may argue that as long as you have good intentions and seem sincere, the other side will adhere and respect you. They will not. Some people lack the ability to recognize sincerity and will judge you only by what you say.

With the speed of life today, it is imminent that you will encounter your next difficult person probably by the time you read the next article of this issue. Here are three tips on how to ensure you say the correct words and avoid giving a difficult person more pessimistic firepower.

1. Substitute the word "you" for "I" or just omit the "you".

Bad way: You said you'd have it by Monday and you are late.

Good way: Today is Tuesday. I understood it would be completed by Monday. What happened?

2. Reflect instead of Relating.

Bad way: I know just how you feel about losing your job. I was out of work 15 years ago.

Good way: It can be tough finding a satisfying career you enjoy.

3. Be specific and avoid exaggeration.

Bad way: This is way over budget again.

Good way: The budget is \$10,000. These revisions will cost \$12,500. We can consider either cutting costs or increasing the budget. Which would you prefer?

Dealing with difficult people may be unpleasant, yet when clear and solution-oriented wording is used, it can at least reduce the headaches during interactions. The good news about difficult people is that they are everywhere! Therefore, we have plenty of practice in communicating with them. Follow the tips and reap the rewards. ❖

Drive You Up The Wall

Challenging people can make you so upset that they drive you up the wall. But what does a wall, and being driven up it, have to do with being made upset by challenging people? We will not drive you up a wall and make you wait. Here's where this saying originated.

This expression first was developed in 1915 during World War One. A wooden wall about 20 feet high was used for training purposes. If you were unable to climb the wall unassisted, the commanding officer would become furious and yell at you in front of the other soldiers. If you were still unable to climb the wall alone, you were allowed to use ropes to pull yourself over. If you still could not do it, as a last resort the commanding officer, or even your comrad soldiers, would get underneath you and drive or push you over the wall regardless of your remaining desire or energy level.

As this term becomes more commonly used, we refer to driving someone up the wall anytime we antagonize him to the point where he can lose his cool.

Sometimes we all need that extra push. Sometimes we need a little pull. Just like the commanding officer wanted stronger, more capable soldiers, often, difficult people just want results. Listen to their motives instead of resisting their efforts and you might find those challenging people will become compelling leaders. ❖

In The News

Vincent Phipps will be the keynote speaker for National CareGiver's Day celebration. This annual day of recognition is devoted to those who are nurses, assisted living caretakers, physical therapists, and others devoted to the well being of those unable to physically take care of themselves. Vincent's speech promises to be filled with positive messages, high energy, humor, and easily applicable tips on how to remain motivated in a physically and emotionally challenging career field. His topic is entitled, "How to Lighten the Load for the Heavy at Heart." The date is Saturday, November 10. For more information visit: www.orangegrovecenter.org.

Helpful Hints

- ✓ Ask questions to ensure understanding.
- ✓ Request feedback about what they'd like as a resolution.
- ✓ Avoid all-inclusive words such as never, always, and every.

"We boil at different temperatures!"

Ralph Waldo Emerson

"If you keep on saying things are going to be bad, you have a good chance of being a prophet!"

Issac Singer

"Happiness does not depend on outward things, but on the way we see them."

Leo Tolstoi

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TLC Featured Service

Therese Padgett

KEYNOTE SPEECHES ON DEALING WITH DIFFICULT PEOPLE

When the subject of dealing with difficult people usually occurs, the focus is all too often centered on the person or group of people who are perceived as creating a difficulty or a conflict. Sometimes this even denigrates into water-cooler gossip and such gossip can inflame an already agitated situation. We also see this happening during political campaigns when personalities take center stage rather than real issue debates.

There are always at least two sides to any conflict. The interesting thing is that, on most occasions, both sides have valid contributions to make toward the resolution. The sad thing is that all of these contributions are seldom considered. We need to ask ourselves, "Why is this?"

In addition to seminars and individual coaching, the communication experts at TLC can provide your organization with keynote speakers who address dealing with difficult people and conflict resolution. They acknowledge that certain people and situations rile us up, or "drive us up the wall" (see previous article) while encouraging us to take ownership of our own participation in the conflict. They take us further into the "how" of mastering our attitudes and garnering information useful in the resolution of conflict. The keynote speakers of TLC do all this while entertaining you with antidotes and personal experiences (sometimes quite funny!) and inspiring you to return to work or home with new communication skills that you can immediately put to use in peaceful conflict resolution.

Beverly Inman-Ebel, TLC's Chief Executive Officer, will be presenting a keynote speech to an international audience in China about the time you are reading this article. She will be home soon and, along with our additional communication experts, will be available to speak to your audience.

Call TLC today to arrange a keynote address (1-888-BECAUSE) or visit our website at www.talklisten.com. ❖

Dear TLC,

I work in the complaint department of a call center. Believe me, I've had my share of challenging people. Our company policy is very strict about talking to irate customers. We usually transfer them, which takes time and only makes them madder because now they have to wait longer and repeat the complaint. What can I personally do to help my customers?

Signed
Phone Friend

Dear Phone,

It is admirable you care so much about your customers. Concern for the callers is the first step toward being successful in your position. To calm down an irate caller or to help them with their problems, do the following:

1. Restate to them what you feel is their concern. Confirm with them that you understand what they need.
2. Keep your volume and tone low, speaking softly and at a slower rate.
3. If you must transfer them, speak with the person to whom you are sending them and explain what the caller needs. This prevents the caller from having to repeat himself and replaying his negative experience.

What Our Clients Are Saying

"After going through leadership training, it is so easy to absorb it, but then have the strong impact diminish over time. The benefit of the entire TLC program is that it encourages this not to happen through the emphasis of communication partners and follow-up by TLC."

Tresa Vaudreuil

Remember To

- ✓ Use descriptive terms, speaking with more validation.
- ✓ Keep your volume low to reduce additional tension.
- ✓ Avoid taking any negative language personally; remain professional.

"We are what we believe we are!"

Benjamin Cardozo

"Most of the trouble in the world is caused by people wanting to be important."

T.S. Eliot

"All victories breed hate."

Baltasar Graián

"If I am not for myself, who will be for me? If I am only for myself, what am I? If not now – when?"

Hillel the Elder

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Happy Birthday!

Happy Birthday to the following TLC clients who are celebrating in October!

- » Tim Smith
- » Vonnie Beck
- » Aaron Petticord
- » Kay Tyson
- » Richard D' Angelo
- » Jeff Hope
- » Satya Mukhopadhyay
- » Marie Perry
- » Sheldon Harrell
- » Don Weatherly
- » Ken Brashear
- » Wanda Griffin
- » Heidi Keasler
- » Janet Baker
- » Kisha Johnson
- » Karen Robert
- » Lu Ann Brinkley
- » Mary Tegelaar
- » Pirjo Friedman
- » Kathy Schoendorf
- » Georges Gonzales
- » Angela Terrell
- » Darrell Clarke
- » Monica Roby

CEO Corner

Beverly Inman-Ebel

CHIEF OFFICER'S OPINION

I hold a core belief that most people desire to contribute, and will if the opportunities are present. The key to success is to create the opportunities.

Several years ago I was mediating with two groups via phone conference. I set the guidelines for the conference call in the beginning. The first time those rules were ignored; I warned that I would mute everyone on the next occurrence. Unfortunately, I did mute them because they were shouting at one another. We were able to resolve their differences eventually. Ever since then, I have been in conversations from time to time and wished I had a mute button to stop the destructive volume that people exhibit when they become negatively emotional. So here is my advice: when you are dealing with a difficult person or a difficult situation, keep your vocal volume down. Increased noise just gets everyone riled up.

Another way to create the opportunity for contribution is to listen first. When you are talking to

a difficult person, they probably are not listening to you. That just increases the level of difficulty. Instead, ask questions that are open and invite discussion. Keep focused even when you strongly disagree. Breathe. Nod your head, not in agreement but rather as an indicator that you are willing to continue to listen.

If you are an extrovert (a person who thinks out loud) you may need to prevent yourself from talking too much in groups. This last summer I attended an organizational meeting that was quite dysfunctional. They were discussing bylaws and Robert's Rules of Order and there were obviously two opposing sides. Since I have 7 years of experience working on national and international boards that wrote or revised their bylaws, I contributed to the dialogue. The next month, when the minutes were read, I was embarrassed by just how frequently I contributed. In that meeting, while still out of control, I held my thoughts and spoke only one time. I admit it was rather painful to do so. In difficult situations, extroverts need to shut up and introverts need to open up.

When I first realize that someone is going to be difficult, I really focus on what they are saying because I need to understand. To motivate this behavior, I remind myself that I am going to learn something. It makes sense to me. What are the benefits of spending time listening to someone who agrees with you? Nothing is added to your knowledge or opinions. Listening to someone who opposes you, however, can sharply increase your learning curve. Yet many people do just the opposite and are only comfortable listening to like minds.

Understand the difference between uncomfortable and difficult. Uncomfortable means you do not prefer it. Difficult means you may need to demonstrate much labor or skill to be successful. When I first started my physical fitness program of 6 days a week, it was uncomfortable. It cut into my time for other stuff I would rather do. It was also difficult because my body was weak. It is no longer so difficult. My body is stronger and leaner. Many days it is still uncomfortable because I would rather go to a movie or just crash. Do what is difficult and you will find fewer difficult people. Live your dreams!



"[Office] politics is the process of getting along with the querulous, the garrulous and the congenitally unlovable."

Marilyn Moats Kennedy

"There is a difference between attaching a decision and attaching the man who made the decision."

Maurice S. Trotter

"The eyes and ears of man are not always dependent upon his will, but a man's tongue is always dependent upon his will."

The Zohar

"Peak performers concentrate on solving problems rather than placing blame for them."

Charles Garfield
