

*"Anyone can become angry-THAT IS EASY. But to be angry with the right person, to the right degree, at the right time, for the right purpose, and in the right way-THAT IS NOT EASY"*

**Aristotle**

## **WHAT ARE PROBLEM PEOPLE?**

A problem, any problem, is the difference between what you have got and what you want. Whenever you think this difference comes about because of someone's actions or behaviour, you have what we are going to call a people-problem. It does not matter whether you are right or wrong in your thinking; all that matters is that you are aware of a gap between what you have got now and what you want and *believe* it is being caused by someone's actions. The actions may be those of your spouse, your children, your friends, your colleagues, your subordinates, your boss, your competitors-anyone, in fact, and even yourself. So, whenever you experience any of the following, you have got at least one person-problem on your hands:

- You believe that someone you are associated with could do better than they are doing.
- You feel disappointed about someone's actions.
- You grumble about someone behind their back.
- You complain to someone about some aspect of their behaviour.

Since these things are common, everyday occurrences, it is very likely indeed that you, along with everybody else, have your fair share of people-problems. If you eavesdrop on any pub conversation, there is a 70% probability that it will be about people and their inadequacies. Monitor your own conversations and discover how often they are expressions of various disappointments you have with people. Take any daily newspaper and count up how many articles or features are about people's behaviour and the problems it caused for someone else; you will find such articles in the majority.

The fact is that people-problems are rife. They are not necessarily dramatic or bizarre, quite the reverse in fact; more frequently they are the day-in, day-out niggles and frustrations we experience with the people we come into contact with. People-problems, like people themselves, come in all sorts of shapes and sizes: some are trivial, minor irritations, while others are more substantial and seriously impair relationships or performance of a job to be done; some are temporary, others seem more consistent and permanent; some are surprising and unexpected, others are understandable and predictable. How often do you encounter people who are negative, awkward, hesitant or uncooperative? Do you know people who are too verbose, will not come to the point, will not volunteer anything, resist change, are too autocratic, too soft, disorganised, too aggressive or are too slapdash? And what about the people you know who are argumentative, too compliant, rock the boat, too flippant or are not creative?

## Exercise

### Who are your difficult people?

Use the table below to identify your difficult people

PEOPLE PROBLEM	CAUSED BY			
	Bosses	Subordinates	Colleagues	Customers
Producing insufficient work				
Failing to work to deadlines				
Producing shoddy/slapdash work				
Bad timekeeping				
Being unreliable				
Being resistant to change				
Being negative				
Being awkward				
Getting people's backs up				
Being too autocratic				
Procrastinating				
Covering up mistakes				
Not co-operating				
Being too competitive				
Being aggressive/vindictive				
Being event-driven				
Not developing/growing people				
Not delegating				
Not communicating				
Being over-demanding				
Being too reticent				
Not being assertive enough				
Paying too much attention to detail				
Being flippant				
Being too cold and distant				
Others (please specify)				

Describe the circumstances, situations or people that you would classify as difficult.

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## WHAT DO YOU WANT FROM THIS COURSE?

Let's look at your reasons for taking this course, and what you hope to achieve from it. Think through the reasons why you decided to attend, and then write down as specifically as you can what you hope to achieve. Use the box below.

Perhaps there is a specific problem you want to resolve or a particular person you would like to confront. Do you feel let down by your current actions. If someone suggested you should attend the course, it might be helpful to ask them why they think you will benefit from it. Be clear about the benefits you wish to achieve from your outcomes as these will provide the motivation and give you the determination to confront and manage difficult behaviour.

**TIP:** Make your statements positive; rather than stating "*I don't want to be the office pushover, anymore*" say instead "*I wish I could say no more often so I can finish on time more often*" or "*I would like to express my real feelings more often so that I can say to my colleagues that I need help*".

WHAT I WANT TO ACHIEVE FROM THIS COURSE?

## **What is a difficult person?**

*Everybody is somebody's difficult person.*

Difficult people make the easy, difficult; the difficult, impossible and life in general miserable. Learning to deal effectively with difficult people can ease stress in your life, allow you to be more productive at work and at home, and teach you how not to be a difficult person in your own right.

### **Types of difficult people:**

- Bullies and aggressive personalities
- Snipers – negative people who make comments either in front of you or behind your back
- Grenades – touchy individuals that blow up and throw tantrums
- ‘Know-it-alls’ who arrogantly put down your ideas and actions
- ‘Think-they-know-it-alls’ are brash and boastful individuals that actually know nothing but ‘talk a good story’
- ‘Yes People’ who never deliver but say ‘Yes’ to everything and everyone to avoid conflict
- ‘No People’ will instantly shut your ideas down and will turn down any suggestions that doesn’t fit into their plan
- Maybe People - stallers who frustratingly never make decisions
- Nothing People – non-responsive people who show little or no response to your requests or communications
- ‘Chronic Complainers’ who will moan about anything and everything at the slightest opportunity

### **Three choices:**

Here are three options for you to choose from when dealing with difficult people:

#### **1. Do nothing:**

- Continue suffering; causing you stress and lack of sleep
- Annoy your friends with your complaining about their behaviours and antics

#### **2. Change your attitude:**

- Stop suffering around the difficult person and decide that their behaviour is not going to affect you anymore
- Manage the triggers that cause difficult behaviour so you can manage their behaviours more effectively

#### **3. Change your behaviour to their behaviour:**

- Alter your response to their actions
- Manage your emotions so that you don’t allow yourself to suffer when encountering their behaviours

Choice: The power, opportunity and right to select the best option for dealing with difficult person.

## Session 9

	Final Role-play - Putting it all together	Action Required
8.1	Explain to the group that this final session allows them to put all of their new techniques into action. The final role-play will be a group session, with the aim for delegates to observe, assess and review assertive techniques in action.	HO 2/ 3
8.2	Split delegates into two groups: A and B. Circulate HO 2, 'Final Role-play A', and HO 3, 'Final Role-play B', with the relevant copy going to each group, i.e. Role-Play A to group A. Each group will select a delegate to role-play the scenario with the selected role-player from the other group. Remember, only one person in each group will role-play with the rest observing the role-play.	
8.3	Explain to the groups that they will be allowed 5 mins to plan their strategy - with one of the groups leaving the room to allow both groups to plan in privacy. Delegates will also be given the opportunity to review and assess each group's progress during the role-play. Both the role-players and the observers have two 'time-outs' to be used during the role-play, should it become too difficult and should they need to regroup to redevelop their strategy – during the 'time-outs', the current role-player can be exchanged to allow others to role-play, however this is not essential.	
8.4	Once initial planning has been made, role-play can proceed. <b>TRAINER NOTE:</b> Whilst the role-play is in progress it is a good idea for the trainer to make notes so that when the groups reconvene after each time-out the trainer can recap what was said on either side.	
8.5	Once the role-play has concluded, discuss with the groups how the strategies helped with the role-play.	
8.6	Finish off the day by asking the delegates to complete their action plans and course evaluation form.	

### Optional Session

	Behavioural modification	Action Required
	<p>Explain that Behavioural Modification allows delegates to identify the triggers that cause difficult behaviour in others and plan a strategy to modify the difficult person's behaviour in order to produce more desirable outcomes. Refer to pages 48-51.</p> <p>Ask delegates to identify a colleague whose behaviour they would like to change and ask them in groups of two to plan how to bring about change using the strategy listed on pages 50 and 51.</p>	<p>Slides 60-64</p> <p>Manual pg. 48-51</p>