

Dealing With Difficult People



Presented By: Art Adams, MSW,
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First: Guiding Principles

A time to speak
and a time to
remain silent (Eccl
3:7)

Set for DEFENSE of
gospel (rebuke,
exhort) (Phil. 1:17)

Wisdom and James
2

That you may
know how to
answer every man
(Col. 4:6)

Let your words be
few (Eccl. 5:2)



Second

Lord, Is It I?

“As much as in you lies, be at peace with all men”
(Rom. 12:18)

“Be wise as serpents and harmless as doves (Matt. 10:16)

“That you might know how to answer every man” (Col. 4:6)



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Third

Difficult People Encountered By Jesus

Different types of people in Jesus' life.
(Pharisees/Sad/Apostles)

Pharisees tried to trap Jesus in
answers (Luke 11:53-54)

Those who strain at a gnat and
swallow a camel (Matt. 23:24)

Soft answer turns away wrath (Prov.
15:1)

Let some alone (Matt. 15:14)



Fourth

How Did Jesus Answer?

Rolling with Resistance to a man “trying to justify himself?” (Lk. 10:29, 36). Discovery method.

With a question (Lk.20:4)

Pointed out fallacy in thinking (Matt. 22:23-30)

Silence (John 8)

Held His peace (Mark 14:61-62)

Name calling (Matt. 23)



Fifth: Types of People

Some preach Christ out of envy and strife (Phil. 1:15)

Not all questions are sincere (avoid foolish and unlearned questions) (2 Tim. 2:23; Titus 3:9; 1 Tim. 6:4)

Answer a fool according to his folly vs. answer not a fool according to his folly (Prov. 26:45)

Fifth: Types of People

A fool utters all his mind
(Prov. 29:11)

First one with a story
seems right (Prov. 18:17)

Some are sincere and open
to hearing (Matt. 13:8)



Sixth: Christian Virtues as our Anchor and Motivator

Goodness

Knowledge

Self-control

Perseverance

Godliness

Mutual
Affection

Love

“For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; ⁶ and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; ⁷ and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love. ⁸ For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (2 Peter 1: 5-8)



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GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- **All people deserve to be treated with respect and dignity**
- **Our approach sets the tone**
- **We are here to support people, not just behaviors (good or bad)**
- **Our focus is on building healthy relationships**
- **People can be resilient. They can and often do get better through the process of change.**



VALUES AND VIEWS

- It is quite possible that spiritual values, while they may or may not be correct, may set people at odds.
- If we learn anything from the scriptures, it is that standing for truth and against error brings conflict.
- Consider the subtle power of spiritual abuse – beating folks up with the Bible.



SPIRITUAL CONFLICT IS INEVITABLE

- **“I came not to bring peace but a sword, to turn a man against his father; daughter against mother, daughter-in-law against mother-in-law. And your enemies shall be those of your own house” (Luke 12:53)**
- **Some think they are doing God a favor when they take a strong stand. Consider Saul’s dogmatic stance.**



Repairing spiritual conflicts requires:

- 1) honest and sincere hearts
willing to change if shown wrong,
- 2) egos parked at the door,
- 3) acknowledgment that one or
both may be wrong,
- 4) God is right.



Resolution will be a problem for the one(s) who “has to be right” if that person is wrong either completely or in part. However, each must look at their “own side of the street”, i.e. what part do/did I play in it?



GOD HAS SPOKEN - SELF CONTROL

**Matt. 5:44 “Pray for those
who despitefully use you...
bless them that curse
you...do good to them that
hate you, “**



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Techniques of Jesus...

- **“held His peace” - Mt. 26:63**
- **“Spoke with authority” – Mt. 7:29; Mk 1:22**
- **Spoke in stories... compassion...reasoned with them...challenged their thinking....directive...led to conclusions (instead of driving them to conclusions)**



Techniques of Jesus...

- **Strong language... Matt. 23**
- **“If it be possible, as much as in you lies, live peaceable with all men that you may be called children of God” Rom. 12:18
KJV**
- **“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God” – Mt. 5:9**

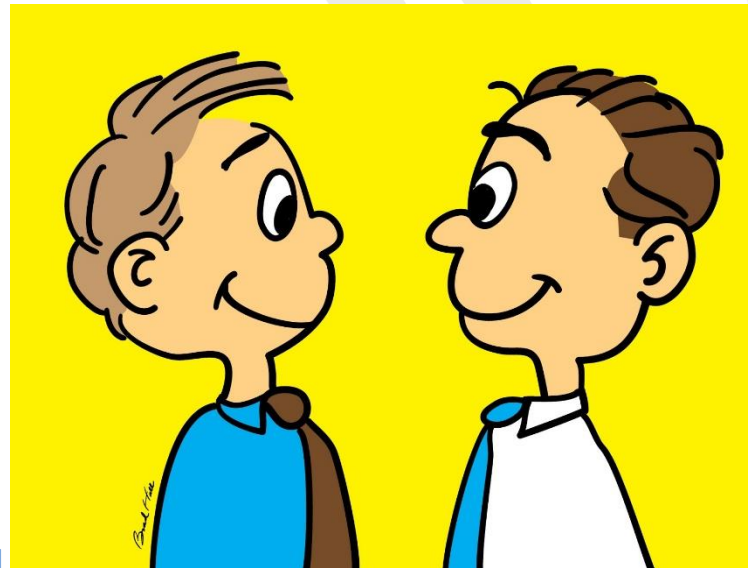


LORD, IS IT I? (Matt. 26:22)

- **Examining yourself and your role in the interaction is vital.**
- **“Lay hands hastily on no man. Neither be partaker in other men’s sins.” (1 Timothy 5:22)**



SOME FORMS OF CONFLICT CAN BE RESOLVED BY UNDERSTANDING EACH OTHER



FORMING PERSONALITIES AND RESPONSES TO LIFE

- Roles of temperament, environment, family styles of coping, socio-economic positioning, trauma-informed approaches.
- Recognizing the Types of Personalities (People are different. One approach does not fit all)



FORMING PERSONALITIES AND RESPONSES TO LIFE

- **Personality Can Drive Conflict**
- **Personality is a deeply ingrained pattern of behavior and approach to life that typically begins in early adolescence and continues throughout adulthood.**



FORMING PERSONALITIES AND RESPONSES TO LIFE

Personality styles affect cognition, emotion, interpersonal functioning and impulse control.

- **Early observations and experiences set in place what are the social mores, expectations and consequences of behaviors (good, bad or indifferent). Genetics and temperament play some part, but experiences tend to be the dominant factor in personality formation.**



FORMING PERSONALITIES AND RESPONSES TO LIFE

- **Consider the impact of early life experiences such as parental loss, emotional pain, physical abuse, sexual abuse, various traumas and wartime.**
- **High conflict personalities stand out by: exaggerated emotions, repeated inappropriate behaviors, urgency, drama, a preoccupation with blame**



THE DIAGNOSTIC STANDARDS MANUAL 5 (DSM 5) BREAKS PERSONALITY DISORDERS INTO 3 GROUPS

(NOTE: Those personality disorders with an * below tend to be the most difficult to alter and/or treat)

Group A

Group B

Group C



Group A

In general, cluster A is:

- **Uncomfortable in interpersonal situations**
- **Emotionally distant**
- **Difficult to engage**
- **Isolative**
- **Unlikely to tolerate intense, ongoing conflicts**



Group B

This cluster is the most challenging

- **They will likely:**
- **Push boundaries**
- **Be interpersonally inappropriate**
- **Be attention-seeking, demanding, manipulative, emotionally unstable**



Group B

- **Seek to be the center of attention (histrionic), grandiose and aloof (narcissistic)**
- **Be self-focused with lack of empathy**
- **Show characteristics that draw them into intense, ongoing conflicts on a regular basis**



Group B

Tips for Helpers

- **Maintain healthy skepticism**
- **Avoid being swayed by charm**
- **Avoid doing favors**
- **Resist the tendency to “save” him from himself**
- **Obtain Corroborating Information**



Group B

- **Explain Consequences of future misconduct**
- **Be prepared to impose and enforce consequences**
- **Pay attention to your fears and protect yourself**
- **Maintain clear boundaries**



Examples:

Histrionic Personality



Narcissistic Personality



Group B

***Histrionic**

- ***Feel very uncomfortable if they are not the center of attention**
- ***Feel much more at ease as the ‘life and soul of the party’**
- ***Feel they have to entertain people**
- ***Flirt or behave provocatively to ensure they remain the center of attention**



Group B

Summary of Histrionic Personalities

- **Fear of being ignored is the driving force**
- **Dramatic and Exaggerated speech and stories**
- **Demands to be the Center of Attention**
- **Theatrical Mannerisms and Appearance**
- **Superficial emotions and relationships**



Group B

- **Presents as Helpless. In need of being rescued**
- **Lacks detail and focus**
- **Will fabricate stories and lie for attention**
- **Falsely Persuasive as a victim of horrible abuses**



Group B

***Narcissistic**

- **Believe there are special reasons that they are different, better or more deserving than others**
- **Have fragile self-esteem, rely on others to recognize their worth and their needs**
- **Feel upset if others ignore them and fail to give them what they feel they deserve**
- **Resent the success of others**



Group B

- **Put their needs above those of others and demand others meet those needs**
- **Often seen as selfish and thinking they are “better than others”**
- **Take advantage of other people**

Group B

Summary: Dealing with Narcissistic Personalities

- **Fear of inferiority is a driving force in disputes**
- **Constantly demands attention, extreme respect**
- **Very self-centered and self-absorbed**
- **Expect special, superior treatment**
- **Extremely negative reaction to any criticism**
- **Frequent disrespect and disdain of others**
- **Oblivious to other's needs and feelings**



Group B

Tips on Dealing with these:

- **Avoid direct criticism**
- **Recognize Real strengths and accomplishments**
- **Listen with empathy**
- **Explain Benefits of following your advice**
- **Explain consequences of future misconduct**



Group B

- **Communicate clearly, in a non-punitive manner**
- **Emphasize facts, objective issues**
- **Set limits, tactful negotiation is helpful**
- **Validate concerns**
- **Expect outbursts (especially borderline)**
- **Channel their strengths (narcissistic)**



Group C

Group C tends to be:

- ***Anxious**
- ***Needy, clingy, and desire to be taken care of**
- ***Low self-esteem**
- ***Fear rejection (real or perceived)**
- ***Fear loss of control**
- ***Avoid conflict**
- *** Often get into relationships with Cluster Bs as the more passive partner**



TO AVOID UNNECESSARY RISKS:

- **Avoid Working Harder than your member. It is their problem. If you become part of the problem, you are not likely to be helpful in the solution.**
- **Avoid Direct Anger at this person. This will invite angry and demeaning responses.**
- **Avoid Believing your member. Empathize without agreeing. There are other sides to the story.**



TO AVOID UNNECESSARY RISKS:

- **Avoid Making it Personal.** In clinical settings we call this transference.
- **Pay Attention to your Fear.** If you sense a threat, do not ignore it.
- **Avoid Believing stories about others.** Splitting is common, but unproductive.
- **Avoid Becoming Isolated in Your work.** Resist being a “hero”. That makes you vulnerable.

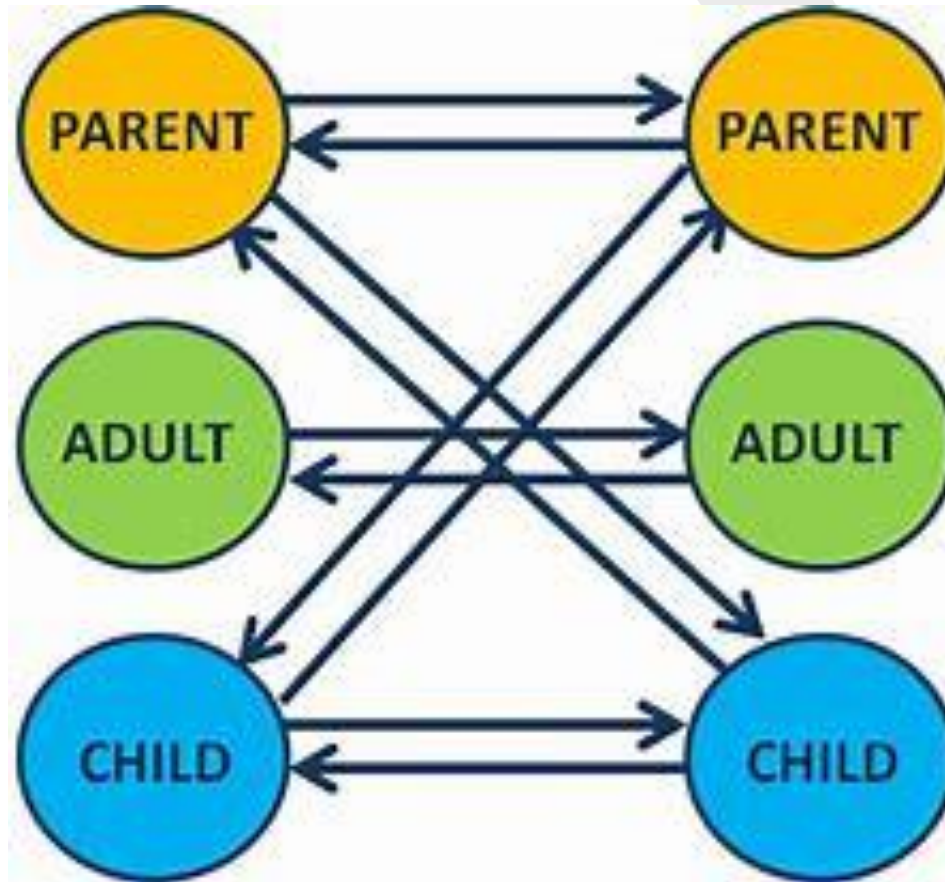


Tools to Assure Communication Happens Effectively

- **Active Listening**
- **Paraphrasing**
- **Summarizing**
- **Clarification**
- **Listen with your eyes**
- **See with your ears**



APPROACHING ONE ANOTHER - INTERACTIVE EGO STATES (Eric Berne)



CRISIS RESPONSE AND CORRECTIVE TECHNIQUES

“I’ve come to the frightening conclusion that I am the decisive element in my _____. It’s my personal approach that creates the climate. It’s my daily mood that makes the weather. I possess tremendous power to make _____’s life miserable, or joyous. I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration. I can humiliate or humor, hurt or heal. In all situations, it is MY response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated and a person humanized or dehumanized.”

(Adapted from Haim Ginott)



Treating People With Dignity and Respect

The goal is to help people manage themselves. The goal is **not** to control people.



Colossians 4: 6

“Let your speech be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer each person”

