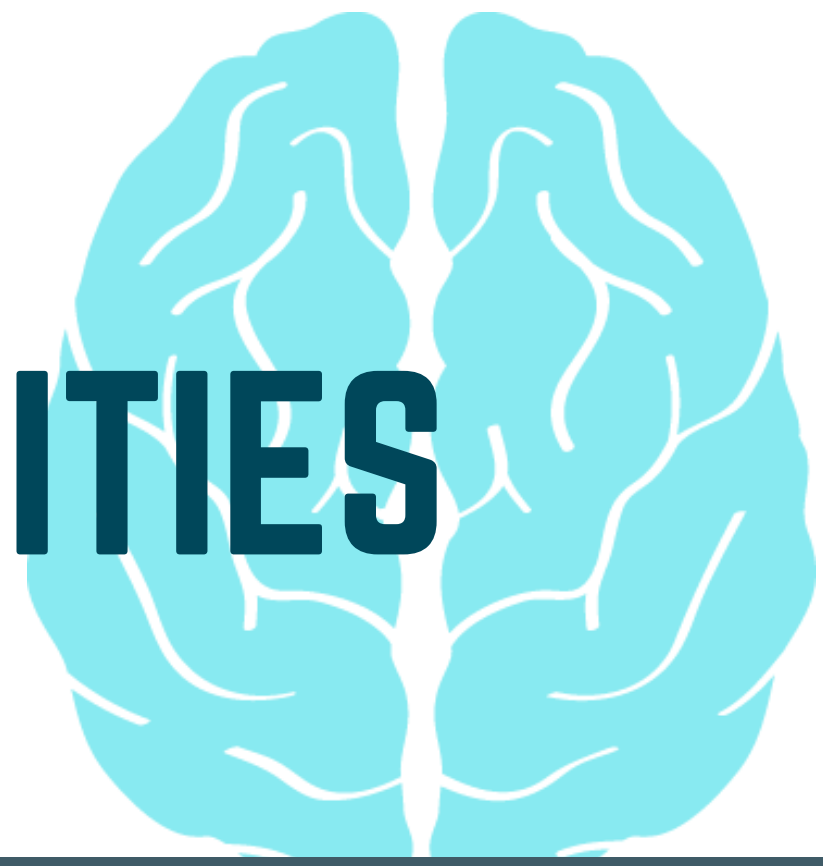




NAVIGATING DIFFICULT PERSONALITIES



THE COMMON STRUGGLE

We are all unique, so we are regularly confronted with a diverse range of personalities. Some resonate quickly with us, and others are more challenging. The times when you feel anxious about an upcoming conversation or interaction with a colleague can be an indicator that our personality characteristics do not match. Difficult personalities can cause us to avoid certain situations, possibly impacting on our performance or opportunities. This can leave us feeling somewhat unsettled, frustrated and even angry. Recognising that these personality traits are embedded and not easily changed is helpful, particularly when you understand that you can only control your own behaviours and actions, not others.

TIPS FOR ENGAGING WITH DIFFICULT PERSONALITIES



DON'T ASSUME THE PERSON HAS MALICIOUS INTENT TOWARDS YOU

It is frustrating to work with someone who is constantly argumentative or combative. Sometimes it feels only natural to assume the worst of that person. However, doing so will only increase your own frustration, anxiety and tensions. It is best to walk into the situation and assume the person does not have malicious intent towards you and try to listen to what they are really saying.

TAKE A STEP BACK TO AVOID REACTIVITY

- Check your emotions and be aware of your thoughts
- Breathe. Count to 5 before responding
- Consider your environment and body language
- Request the opportunity to think about the solution before responding.



More often than not, most of us feel the need to respond to a request or a question immediately. This not only increases our sense of stress and defensiveness, it can also lead to undesirable responses such as saying things that are not helpful or that we later regret.



WALK AWAY FROM THE SITUATION IF NECESSARY

A toxic exchange can leave us feeling depleted and deflated. If the conversation is quickly deteriorating and causing more frustration, walk away. Detaching from the situation and returning to it at a later time might be the most sensible option when engaging with a difficult character. Remember to stay professional and respectful.

LISTEN CAREFULLY TO WHAT THEY ARE SAYING, NOT JUST THE WORDS THAT ARE BEING SAID

Sometimes we spend too long insisting on our own points and not listening to another person when having a conversation. Concentrate on what the difficult person is trying to say and acknowledge their expressed emotions. Are they engaging with you this way because they are fearful? Perhaps they are unaware of how they come across? Taking time to truly listen before responding can dramatically reduce the hostility in any difficult conversation.



TAKE IT AS A LEARNING OPPORTUNITY

As challenging as it is, dealing with a difficult person can also be a real learning experience. Relationships can sometimes mirror our inner world and help us realise our own blind spots. Asking ourselves "what can I learn in this situation?" might be a confronting question. Yet it might lead to surprising realisation and insight into our own behaviours and thought patterns.

FOCUS ON WHAT YOU CAN CONTROL

Interactions with difficult people are ever-changing and there is no one quick fix for every situation. Remember, these suggestions focus primarily around our own perceptions of the situation rather than trying to change the behaviour of others. By practising our recommended steps, you will respond reflectively rather than reactively, taking your relationship and interactions to a more constructive level. As Maya Angelou said, "we do the best we can with what we know, and when we know better, we do better."

For more information about ways Assure can assist your teams to work more effectively, please contact us on OD@assureprograms.com.au

