

# Dealing with Difficult People

## SupportLinc Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

Penn State Health



# Disclaimer

The general views, thoughts and opinions expressed in this presentation are expressly those of the presenter. The presentation is intended to provide general tips, advice and coping skills, and may not entirely pertain to your circumstance or you as an individual in a professional or clinical capacity. For specific advice on your unique situation, please reach out to a licensed financial or clinical professional for a confidential, one-on-one consult. CuraLinc Healthcare and the presenter are not held responsible or liable for any consequences or damages due to an individual taking action based on the information presented herein.

# Objectives

## This training is designed to help you:

- Define “difficult”
- Identify traits and types of difficult people
- Develop an awareness of your role
- Learn 7 ways to deal with difficult people

# Defining difficult

**Merriam-Webster defines difficult as:**

**“Hard to do, deal with, manage or overcome.”**

**It can also mean:**

- **Not easily convinced, pleased or satisfied**
- **Troublesome**
- **Hard to persuade, stubborn**

# Common traits of difficult people

Low frustration tolerance

Impulsivity

Overly sensitive

Blaming

Complaining / whining

Exploding

Sense of entitlement

# Types of difficult people

Know-it-alls

Complainers

Silent types

Snipers

# Types of difficult people continued

Naysayers

Talkers

Gossips

Angry ones

# Know yourself

- Recognize how triggers affect you
- Defuse yourself before trying to defuse another
- What triggers affect you?





# Your role

- Your tone of voice
- Your choice of words
- Your body language
- Your attitude





L I S T E N

## Importance of listening

- Listening is essential when dealing with difficult people.
- We typically absorb only about 25% of a conversation. Where does the other 75% go?

# Improving our listening

Keep alert

Let the person talk

Keep an open mind

Maintain eye contact

Pay attention

Watch body language

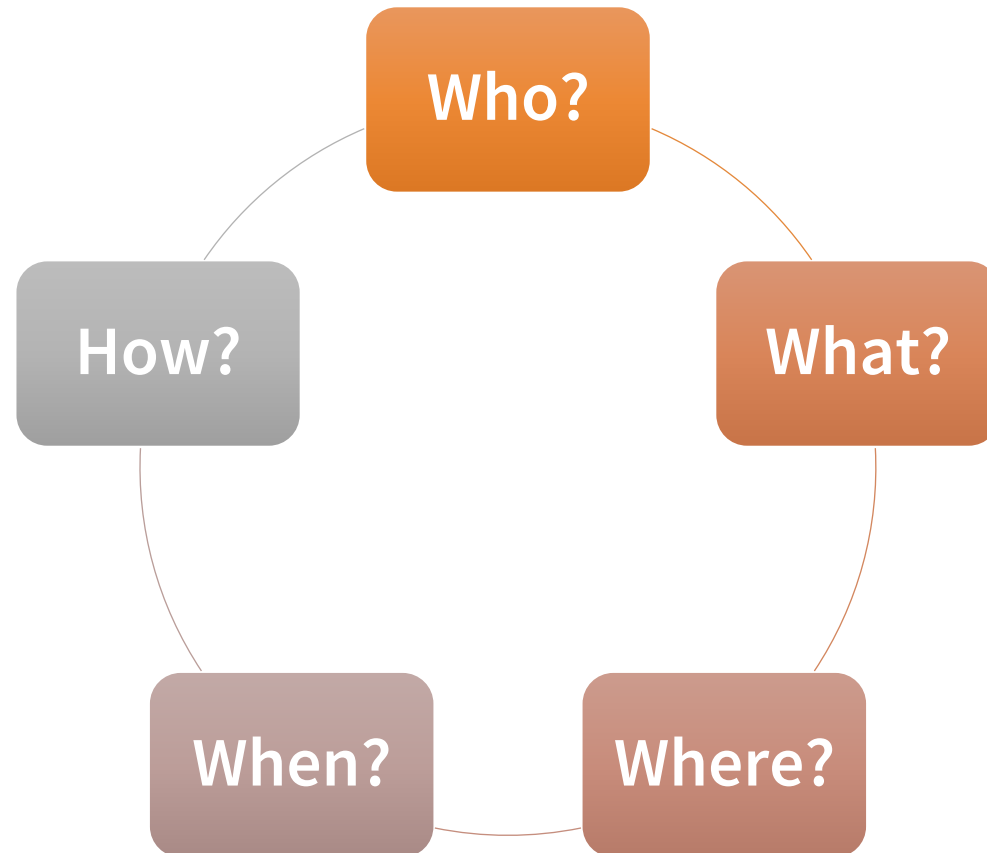
# Seven steps for dealing with difficult people

- Anchor yourself
- Assess the situation
- Stop wishing
- Get some distance
- Formulate a plan
- Implement a strategy
- Positive attitude



# Anchor yourself

## Ask yourself five questions



# Assess the situation

- Has this person usually acted this way in similar situations?
- Is my reaction out of proportion to what the situation warrants?
- Was there a particular incident that triggered the difficult behavior?
- Will direct and open discussion relieve the situation?

# Stop wishing



- Blaming doesn't change anything
- Give up the magical wish that they'll be different

# Get some distance

Get some distance between you  
and the difficult behavior



Labeling can help



Understanding can help

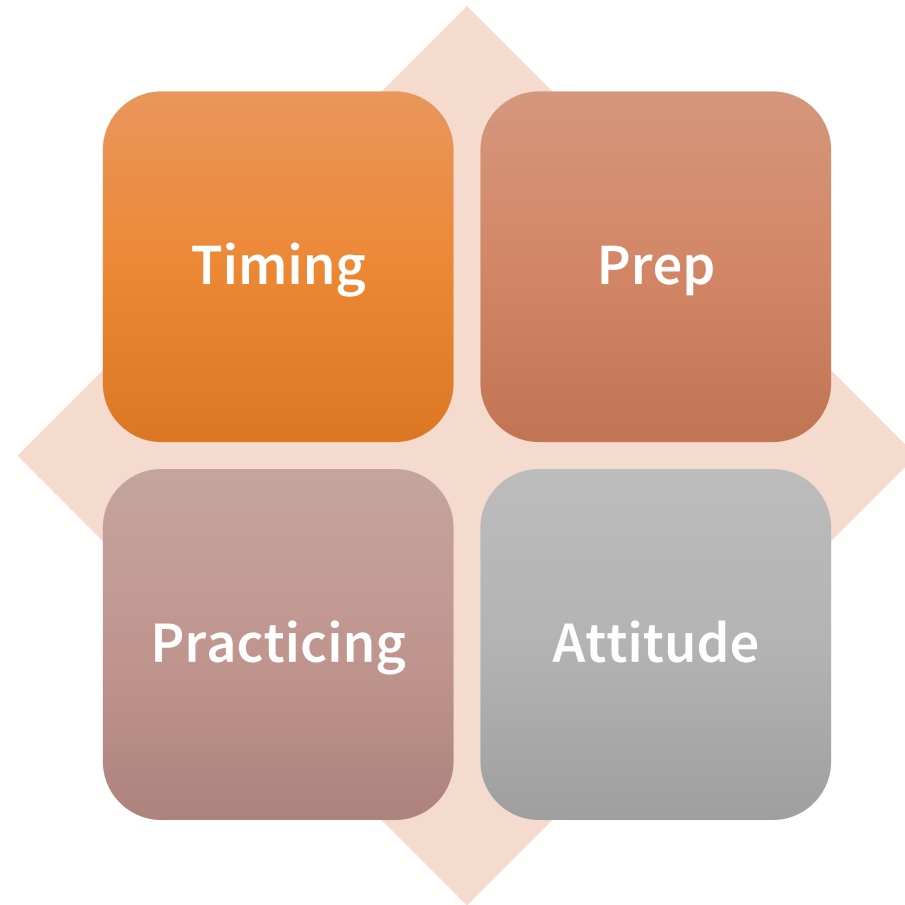


# Formulate a plan

- Look for the positives
- Have strategies ready for different types of people
- Keep the big picture in mind
- Don't expect to change the person



# Implement a strategy



# Positive attitude



## Attitude is crucial

- Attitude can make up 80% of the outcome
- Know what you are communicating

# Dealing with difficult people on the phone

- Learn the caller's name
- Listen respectfully
- Move into solution mode
- Don't escalate
- Hand the caller off



# Things to remember



- Seek first to understand
- Ask questions
- State facts
- Give choices
- Have realistic expectations

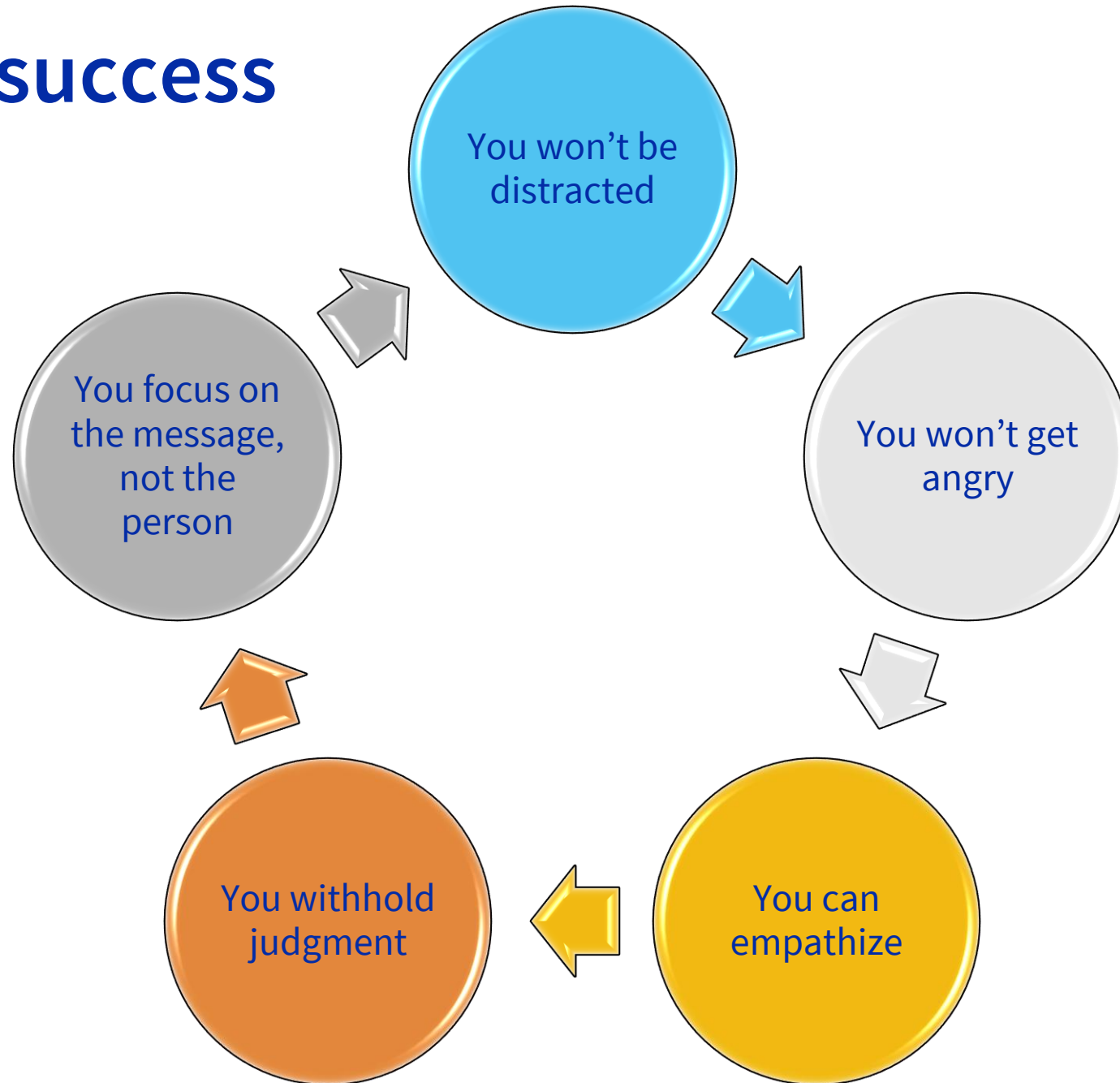
# Things to remember continued

- Consider other's feelings
- Speak slowly
- Ask for clarification
- Expect a positive outcome
- Don't personalize





# Signs of success



# Interactive toolkits

## Mindfulness

[www.mindfulness.tools](http://www.mindfulness.tools)

Practical tools and exercises for incorporating mindfulness into everyday life.

## Meditation

[www.meditate.tools](http://www.meditate.tools)

Easy-to-use collection of resources that includes guided meditations, tip sheets and more.

## Resiliency

[www.resiliency.tools](http://www.resiliency.tools)

Skill development resources to help you 'bounce back' from challenging situations.

## Sleep fitness

[www.sleepfitness.tools](http://www.sleepfitness.tools)

Information and resources to help you learn good sleep habits and achieve healthy sleep.



# What services are included?

## Work-life benefits



### Manager consultation

Expert guidance and referrals for: interpersonal communication, effective time management, conflict resolution, navigating team dynamics, cultural diversity in the workplace and more



### Legal consultation

Free in-person or telephonic consultation with a licensed attorney

No employment law



### Identity theft consultation

Free consultation with an identity theft recovery professional

Tailored recovery action plan



### Financial consultation

Expert guidance and consultation from financial professionals



### Dependent care referrals

Expert referrals to child and adult/elder care providers, facilities and other resources



### “Convenience” referrals

Guidance and referrals to a variety of daily living resources: home improvement, entertainment services, pet care, auto repair, wellness, travel, handymen, volunteer opportunities etc.

# Getting started



**Call:** 1-888-881-LINC (5462)



**QR Code:**



**Visit:** [www.supportlinc.com](http://www.supportlinc.com)



**Log in or create account**  
(code: psh)

## SupportLinc

Support for everyday issues. Every day.

# Additional resources

There are many circumstances in life where dealing with difficult people may be an unavoidable obstacle. Understanding how to navigate these situations with specific strategies can be helpful.

## Tips for dealing with difficult people and challenging situations

- **Understand the characteristics.** Being familiar with the different traits of difficult people will be helpful when faced with them. You may be faced with the following types of characteristics: low frustration tolerance, impulsivity, overly sensitive, blaming, complaining/whining, exploding and sense of entitlement. There may be other characteristics that are not listed that can also be frustrating. However, knowing the specific set of traits that is most upsetting to you is beneficial. Knowing your triggers is the first step in changing your reactions.
- **Know yourself.** After becoming familiar with the different types of characteristics you may encounter, it is important to identify which traits are most challenging for you to deal with. After knowing what triggers you, the next step is to evaluate how you typically respond when triggered. Noticing your actions when triggered will give you a chance to assess and change your behavior when triggered in the future.
- **Listen to understand.** Once you have an idea of what triggers you and how you typically respond, you can work towards changing that response. When you feel your typical triggered response starts to build, it can be helpful to shift your focus to how you are listening to that person. Changing this focus will help to decrease the frustration you may feel when triggered. For example – when feeling triggered, one strategy is to focus on the following aspects of how you are listening to that person: Keep an open mind, maintain eye contact, pay attention, and be aware of your own body language.
- **Assess the situation.** In addition to focusing on listening to the person who you find difficult, it may also be helpful to evaluate the situation by asking the following questions: Does this person usually act this way in similar situations? Is my reaction out of proportion to what the situation warrants? Was there a particular incident that triggered the difficult behavior? Will direct and open discussion relieve the situation? Evaluating the situation may help in redirecting the frustration and ease tension.
- **Always strive to have a positive attitude.** Remember that regardless of the magnitude of the situation, the attitude you have towards it is always a decision. Going into a potentially difficult situation with an attitude of openness and cooperation is much more likely to yield a positive outcome. You may not have control over difficult people or challenging situations but how you handle them is always up to you.

For further resources, please go to your portal and use the search bar to type in “Anger Management Flash Course,” “Conflict Resolution Flash Course,” “Dealing with Difficult People Flash Course” and “Effective Communication Flash Course.”

# Moving ahead



What did you get out of today's presentation?

Which concepts are working in your life and why?

Who can be a support for you to make change?

Which concepts are *not* working in your life and why?

What 3 ideas are going to be the most helpful for you?

How can you support someone else with change?

What can you do in the next 24 hours to apply these concepts?

What are your biggest barriers for change?