Dealing with Difficult People

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5 Universal Truths

All people want to be:

• Treated with dignity and respect.
• Asked rather than told to do something.
• Told why they’re being asked to do something.
• Given options rather than threats.
• Given a second chance.
Face-to-face interactions:
Not so simple

• People do not say what they mean.
  – Words only constitute 7% of the message.
  – The other 93% come from voice and other non-verbal indicators

• *Everyone* is under the influence!

• We cannot adjust people’s attitudes. We can only adjust how we interact.

• 2=6
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- A face-to-face encounter involves multiple interactions:
  - You
    - Real self
    - Self as seen by self
    - Self as seen by others
  - Client
    - Real self
    - Self as seen by self
    - Self as seen by others
What People Want

• Information
  – E.g., Why did you stop me?

• Empathy
  – Understand, even if we don’t agree

• Respect
  – How we want to be treated under similar circumstances
The Art of Representation

• We are only representatives; it is not about us.
• Our personal feelings and beliefs are irrelevant obstacles to effective communications.
• Amateurs are ruled by adrenaline.
• Let others have the last word; you have the last act.
• Lose the ego!
  – The first zinger that comes to mind, though satisfying, is the greatest speech you will live to regret.
  – 90% of all complaints come from tone, not actual words.
Things You Should Never Say

• Calm down.
• Come here.
• You wouldn’t understand.
• Because those are the rules.
• It’s none of your business.
• What do you want me to do about it?
• What’s your problem?
Things You Should *Never* Say (cont.)

- I’m not going to say this again!
- I’m doing this for your own good.
- You never...... or, You always......
- Why don’t you be reasonable?
Some tools

• Lose the ego.
• Understand your own triggers.
• Deflective phrases
  – I understand you think this is unfair, but you still need to do x because .....(reason).
• Take the giant LEAPS
  – Listen
  – Empathize
  – Ask
  – Paraphrase
  – Summarize
Some Tools (cont.)

• Paraphrasing is a key tool:
  – Sword of insertion: Hold on a minute. Let me make sure I understand what you are saying.
  – Actual paraphrase: You are saying you feel (emotion) because (reason).

• Appeal to one’s sense of selfishness
  – i.e., what’s in it for them.
5-Step Interaction

• Ask (ethical appeal)

• Set context/explain why (reasonable appeal)

• Provide options (personal appeal)
  – Positive then negative options

• Confirm non-compliance (practical appeal)

• Act (if necessary)
Remember.....

• A verbal interaction is like a dance.
• Leadership is dependent on followership.
• Lose the ego.
• It’s not about you. Know your weaknesses.
• Watch your voice (tone, pitch, pace and modulation). It’s what generates complaints.
• Empathize.
• Explain.
• Have fun; enjoy the challenge of difficult people.