

Practicing Difficult Situations Handout

Agree in Part

- **Situation:** Your friend called and asked you to come over, but didn't say what was wrong. You came an hour later.
- **Your friend says,** "You are late! You are never here when I need you. Nobody cares about me"
- *How do you usually react in this kind of situation?*
- Instead, you can **Agree in Part** - "I should have been here sooner. You did sound upset on the phone, but you didn't say it was an emergency."
- "I don't like being yelled at. I do care. That's why I'm here."
- "Now, instead of arguing, let's talk about the problem you called me about."

Stick to the Issue

- **Situation:** You are supposed to work on a project with a friend that you disagree with. You want to ignore the bad feelings, and find a solution.
- **Your friend says,** "This is terrible! How did I get stuck with having to work with you on this?"
- *How do you usually react in this kind of situation?*
- "You can **Stick to the Issue** by saying, "We have a project to do here, and I want to be able solve it without fighting."
- "Let's focus on the problem, instead of on our feelings about each other."
- "Let's agree to disagree. Then we can start our project."

Stall for Time

- **Situation:** When someone tries to pressure you into making a decision, you may want to take some time to think about it before answering.
- **Your friend says,** "I need to know what you think right now, so I can make my plans. You need to hurry up and make a decision."
- *How do you usually react in this kind of situation?*
- You can **Stall for Time** by saying "I don't want to rush into this decision. I don't want to say something I'll regret. Let me give it some thought and then I will get back to you."

Keep People from Taking Over

- **Situation:** Everyone needs a chance to take part in conversations, without one person "monopolizing it" or "taking over". You notice that your friend is doing all of the talking, and some others are not able to get a word in.
- *How do you usually react in this kind of situation?*

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- You can **Keep People from Taking Over** by saying “I like to hear your opinion, but we need to get back to what we are discussing. Let’s ask some of the other people here.”
- Stop paying attention or encouraging the person who is talking too much. If you do have eye contact, give a slightly discouraging look.

Practice:

- After reading this situation, choose to respond with one of the healthier response that you have learned.
- **Situation:** You just got home from a busy day, and a friend asks you to go with him to the mall and to a movie. He keeps saying, “You have to go with me. It’s too boring to stay here, and I can’t go alone. Hurry up and let’s go!” He begins to get angry about you not going along with his idea, and keeps talking about what he needs to do.
- *What would be a good response?*

Nonverbal Attacks

- **Situation:** A person frowns and gives you “dirty looks” and tries to ignore you when you talk. He refuses to answer your questions.
- *How do you usually react in this kind of situation?*
- Instead of getting angry or sad about **Nonverbal Attacks**, you can say, “I see that there is something bothering you. I need you to put it into words, so we have a chance to talk about it.”
- Even if they refuse to talk, it can help you to put an end to that difficult situation. Ignore them if they aren’t willing to say what the problem is.

Withholding

- **Situation:** You know your friend is angry and upset about something, but he/she won’t talk about it. When you ask questions, the answers doesn’t tell you the real problem.
- You know that she often says her family and friends don’t want to help her, but she “pushes them away” like this.
- *How do you usually react in this kind of situation?*
- You can **Confront Withholding** by saying, “I see that you don’t want to discuss this now. I can’t help you unless you tell me the problem. I will go back to what I was doing until you let me know you are ready to talk.”

Peer Pressure

- **Situation:** Your friends want you to celebrate with them after your team wins the game. But you see they are smoking “pot” and drinking alcohol.

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- **Your friend says**, “You have to try it. It feels good. If you don’t have some, people will think we are “uncool”. I want us to fit in with other people here. Just try it!”
- You can resist **Peer Pressure** by telling your friend, “I don’t do things just to impress people, especially if they are wrong. I don’t have to explain myself to you - I just don’t want to. And my answer is no.”

Safety Risk

- **Situation:** Your friend kept drinking and was in no shape to be driving when got in his car.
- **Your friend said**, “What a fun party! I’m going to take this girl home. I don’t want you coming along with us.”
- *How do you usually react in this kind of situation?*
- Try to avoid the **Safety Risk** by saying, “Since you have been drinking, it’s not safe for you to drive. I can drive you home or I’ll call someone to come and get you.”
- “Or you can leave your car here until tomorrow after you wake up. You need to be safe.”

Practice:

- After reading this situation, choose to respond with one of the healthier response that you have learned.
- **Situation:** Your friend doesn’t answer your questions about what is wrong. You think he might be in trouble. He looks angry and very irritable. He frowned at you, and said, “Leave me alone - You are ruining everything. I know what I’m doing.”
- You can practice using some of the responses that you learned as you reply to this difficult situation.
- *What would be a good response?*

Repeat Your Position

- **Situation:** If people try to distract you from what you want to say or do, you can act like a “broken record” - repeat yourself.
- **Your co-worker says**, “I want you to do the project. I’ll stay and give advice. I don’t want to get my good clothes dirty.”
- *How do you usually react in this kind of situation?*
- **Repeat your Position** by saying, “We are supposed to do this project together, so we both need to work on it.”

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- If your co-worker disagrees, you can say again and again, “This project is to be done by both of us.” and “We both have to work on it.” The person will probably give up arguing if you continue to calmly repeat your position.

Confront the “Attacker”

- **Situation:** If someone is rude to you in front of a group, you should confront him about it in private. But, they may continue making fun of you.
- **Your co-worker says,** “What a bunch of garbage! Your ideas are outdated, and they will never work – Just like you! (laughing).”
- *How do you usually react in this kind of situation?*
- **Confront the “Attacker”** by saying, “It seems like you are trying to make me look bad in front of the group. Let’s talk about your problems in private.”
- Tell him, “If you behave that way again, I will confront **you** in front of the group.” (Then stick to your word.)

Stand Up For Yourself

- **Situation:** When a person insults you, use your voice and body language to tell them you won’t put up with the abuse.
- **Your co-worker says,** “You are not smart enough to understand this project. Do what I tell you to do, because that is the only way it will be done right.”
- *How do you usually react in this kind of situation?*
- **Stand Up to the Attacker** by leaning forward, looking at the person directly, and raising your eyebrows. You can say, “When you talk to me like that, I will not do **anything** you tell me to do.”
- “I need you to talk to me in a respectful way.”

Get Away From a Hostile Situation

- **Situation:** If your co-worker is abusive or violent, you need to get away and report it to your boss. But sometimes people can work together again later when they can behave better.
- **Your co-worker says,** “You jerk! You are so clumsy with these tools. I should knock some sense into you. You don’t have a clue.”
- *How do you usually react in this kind of situation?*
- You can **Get Away From a Hostile Situation** by saying “I won’t be talked to that way. I’m leaving. If you calm down and treat me decent, we can talk about the project again tomorrow, and I’ll update our boss.”

Practice:

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- After reading this situation, choose to respond with one of the healthier response that you have learned.
- **Situation:** A co-worker or classmate who doesn't like you, saw that you made a small error while you were working on a project together. He yelled loudly, "What a stupid mistake! You messed up everything. Now we have to start over. I can't stand working with you."
- You can practice using some of the responses that you learned as you reply to this difficult situation.
- *What would be a good response?*

Avoid Being Manipulated

- **Situation:** You want to take some college classes, to start working toward getting a better job, and have saved up some money. When you tell your boyfriend, he says, "Why do you want to waste your money on that? I can think of better ways to spend it."
- *How do you usually react in this kind of situation?*
- You could **Avoid Being Manipulated** by saying, "I thought about this a long time. I want to take some classes. It is my money, and it's worth it to me."
- "You don't have to agree with me. But I know it will be hard, and I would like your support."

Recognize Situations "You Can't Win"

- **Situation:** Your husband lost his job and then he urged you change to full-time, so the bills could be paid.
- **Your husband complained,** "You are working *all the time*. I am getting tired of being alone so much. I don't like to cook meals and take care of the house."
- *How do you usually react in this kind of situation?*
- **Recognize Situations "You Can't Win"** by saying "You can't have it both ways," and asking him to stop complaining.
- "You wanted me to work more, so now you will have to do some things without me. Things might seem better when you find a job."

Keep From Feeling Guilty

- **Situation:** You sometimes come home about 30 minutes late from work, either because you needed to stay longer, or you stopped to get groceries.
- **Your husband says,** "You need to get home on time, or find a different job. You are late **all the time**."
- *How do you usually react in this kind of situation?*

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- **Keep from Feeling Guilty** by saying, “I don’t see it as a problem if I am a few minutes late getting home from work. I have things to do before I come home, like getting groceries. Would it help if I call you when I will be late?”

Don’t “Play Games”

- **Situation:** Someone in your class is frowning at you, and whispering to another person. Then they both glare at you.
- *How do you usually react in this kind of situation?*
- Instead, “**Don’t Play Games**” by ignoring the negative behavior, or saying, “Even if you are mad at me, I know I didn’t do anything wrong. It seems like you are just trying to make me feel bad. I don’t play those games.”
- “Just say what you have to say, or quit acting like that.”

Practice

- After reading this situation, choose to respond with one of the healthier response that you have learned.
- **Situation:** Your girlfriend has been trying to talk you into buying a new car, but you don’t think you have enough money yet.
- You spending a lot of money on taking her out to eat and to movies, but she does not seem to be satisfied. She complains when she has to ride in your old car on dates.
- *What would your usual response would be?*
- Look back at this worksheet, what are some other ways you could respond?
- Practice responding in by actually talking aloud.

West Virginia Department of Education. (2007). Dealing with Difficult Situations/Conflict Resolution: Student’s Manual. Retrieved from

<http://wvde.state.wv.us/osp/Transition/student18%20Dealing%20with%20Difficult%20Situations%20Conflicts%20Resolution.pdf>