

## What's the problem?

1. Think about the *work-related* experiences in which you routinely encounter someone who does (or doesn't do) something that makes your job more difficult. Choose *one* example that you will use as your focus in this exercise.

Customer                       Supervisor  
 Coworker                       Direct report  
 Other \_\_\_\_\_

2. A. Next, think about the behaviors you don't like or don't want. List all the things you *don't want* in the left-hand column (in the chart below).

B. Now, think about what you *really, really* want... **Imagine the best case scenario for you, the other person and your department, or, organization.** List all the things you *want* in the right-hand column. [NOTE. Choose positive, future-oriented language that describes the *ideal*. For example, instead of, "stop griping and complaining," you might write, "acknowledge what's going well," or, "offer helpful solutions."]

Behaviors you don't want	Behaviors you want



**kid glove** *n.* A symbol of elegance and gentility; made of fine, soft leather.

**handle with kid gloves** (*idiomatic*) To treat something very delicately or carefully. To be very gentle or tactful.

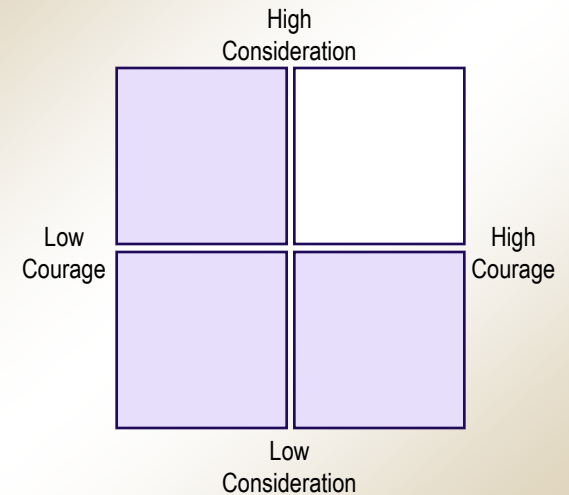
## Can You Hear Me Now?

### Defusing Difficult Situations



## What do you *really, really* want...

Source: *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* by Stephen Covey



### SUGGESTED READING

**crucial conversations** by Patterson, Grenny, McMillan, Switzler

**Law of Attraction** by Michael J. Losier

**Perfect Phrases for Dealing with Difficult People** by Susan F. Benjamin

ROBIN GETMAN, CSP  
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## Can You Hear Me Now? Defusing Difficult Situations

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Laugh from your toes...  
Lead from your soul...  
Serve from your heart...

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# A 3-Step Process for Collision Detection and Response

 <p><b>STOP</b></p>	<p><b>1</b></p> <p><b>Decelerate</b></p>	<p>Stay calm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Breathe</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Keep breathing</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Buy time             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sip water</li> <li>- Clean your glasses</li> <li>- Take a break</li> <li>- Call back or get more information</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><i>R-E-L-A-X</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Recognize <i>The Stress Response</i></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Exercise</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Laugh and let it go</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Accept what you cannot control</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> X-off time for yourself</li> </ul>
 <p><b>SLOW</b></p>	<p><b>2</b></p> <p><b>Assess the damage</b></p>	<p>Is this person:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <i>Inconvenienced?</i></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Or, <i>injured?</i></li> </ul> <p>*Is this a:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <i>Difficult person?</i></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Or, <i>difficult situation?</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Hear them out; take notes if appropriate</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Use restatement to ensure understanding</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Listen actively with an appreciation for diverse perspectives</li> </ul>
 <p><b>GO</b></p>	<p><b>3</b></p> <p><b>Exchange important information</b></p>	<p><b>This is a difficult <i>person</i>.</b></p> <p>Your best response? _____</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Avoid denying, defending, counterattacking and sarcasm</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Try "fogging." Listen to what the person has said and find something with which you can honestly agree. Then say something such as:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>You're right. Or, you may be right.</i></li> <li>- <i>That's true. Or, that may be true.</i></li> <li>- <i>You make a good point.</i></li> <li>- <i>There may be some truth in that.</i></li> </ul> </li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Use "I" messages</li> </ul>	<p><b>This is a difficult <i>situation</i>.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Empathize; acknowledge the difficult situation and their feelings – one of the greatest needs of customers is to feel that you understand their situation</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Apologize for the situation without accepting blame</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Take responsibility for action</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Focus on the problem and explain the solution             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- If <i>you</i> can't solve the problem, find someone who can</li> <li>- If you cannot do what the customer wants, help them save face</li> </ul> </li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Follow up to make sure the situation is resolved</li> </ul>

**\*Is this a: Difficult *person*? Or, difficult *situation*?**

	Example A		Example B	
1. Is this <i>unusual</i> behavior for this person?	Yes	No	Yes	No
2. Was their behavior triggered by a particular incident?	Yes	No	Yes	No
3. Are <i>you</i> reacting out of proportion?	Yes	No	Yes	No
4. Will direct, open discussion help?	Yes	No	Yes	No

\*If you answered "Yes" to **any one of the four** questions...

**This is a difficult *situation*.**

\*If you answered "No" to **all four** questions...

**This is a difficult *person*.**

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### Situation A

A resident with whom you've met and worked before – without incident– shows up at a City Council Meeting to voice a complaint on a topic about which you have had no advance warning and are not prepared to respond.

At one point, as the resident is detailing reasons for his dissatisfaction, he points a finger at you and begins to shout and swear, "Because of you and this city's asinine project, I may have to close my business!"

#### Step 1: **STOP** Decelerate

What are your initial thoughts and feelings?

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List 2-3 things you can do immediately in order to positively redirect negative or non-productive thoughts and feelings.

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#### Step 2: **SLOW** Assess the Damage

In your view, is this person...  Inconvenienced  Injured

Is this a...  Difficult person  Difficult situation

List 2-3 things you can do to ensure that you *fully* attend to this person and situation.

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#### Step 3: **GO** Exchange Important Information

List 3-5 things you might say or do to defuse or de-escalate.

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### Situation B

A Councilwoman – with whom you've had consistently difficult encounters in the past – responds to a resident's complaint at an open mike session by saying, "Sir, on behalf of the City, I sincerely apologize. I feel as surprised and angered – if not more – as you do, by these delays and missteps."

The Councilwoman then turns to you and continues, "Perhaps you can shed some light on the *real* reasons for the delays as well as how you propose to correct these missteps."

#### Step 1: **STOP** Decelerate

What are your initial thoughts and feelings?

---

---

List 2-3 things you can do immediately in order to positively redirect negative or non-productive thoughts and feelings.

---

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#### Step 2: **SLOW** Assess the Damage

In your view, is this person...  Inconvenienced  Injured

Is this a...  Difficult person  Difficult situation

List 2-3 things you can do to ensure that you *fully* attend to this person and situation.

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#### Step 3: **GO** Exchange Important Information

List 3-5 things you might say or do to defuse or de-escalate.

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## “I” messages sound like this:

*When I see or hear...* (describe the behavior)

*I feel...* (describe the emotional impact the behavior has on you)

*I'd prefer...* (describe the behavior you'd like to see instead)

- **When I heard you** tell Joe that I have been slacking off in my work, **I felt** surprised and angry; **I'd prefer** that you talk directly to me about my performance.
- **When** our team completed the project ahead of time, and **you** didn't say “thanks,” **I felt** disheartened. **I'd like** you to acknowledge the team's extra effort in the today's staff meeting.
- **I feel** frustrated **when I see you** take phone calls during our meetings; **I'd prefer** that you hold your calls when we meet.
- **I felt** uncomfortable and unprepared to take phone calls by myself this morning. **I'd prefer** additional training before I talk with customers by phone.
- **When he** talked about what his department is doing in the community, **I felt** hopeful and inspired. **I want** us to talk about ways in which the entire division can get involved.

## EXERCISE #2 : The impact

*Is it kind?*

*I feel...* (describe the emotional impact)

*Directions:* Place a “+” next to statements that are **respectful, diplomatic expressions of emotion** rather than thoughts that blame, accuse or evaluate.

- \_\_\_ 12. I feel aggravated when customer calls are routed to voicemail.
- \_\_\_ 13. I'm surprised and troubled by your caustic comments about...
- \_\_\_ 14. I'm concerned that you don't see the importance of this.
- \_\_\_ 15. The committee is frustrated by his lack of initiative on...
- \_\_\_ 16. I feel as if I haven't been clear about...
- \_\_\_ 17. I felt embarrassed when you said...
- \_\_\_ 18. Everybody is worried about you.
- \_\_\_ 19. This will sound silly, I know...
- \_\_\_ 20. I'm confused by your response to the client's request that...
- \_\_\_ 21. I'm excited and eager to work on this project with her.
- \_\_\_ 22. You're really making me angry now.

## EXERCISE #1: The observation

*Is it true?*

*When I see or hear...* (describe the behavior)

*Directions:* Place a “+” next to statements that are **clear, verifiable observations (objective language)** rather than labels, opinion, judgments, evaluations or interpretations (subjective language).

- \_\_\_ 1. You said you would come in at 8am and you came in at 9am.
- \_\_\_ 2. Your behavior in meetings is annoying to others.
- \_\_\_ 3. Why don't you care about me and my department?
- \_\_\_ 4. He's not pulling his share.
- \_\_\_ 5. You got up and walked out while I was talking to you.
- \_\_\_ 6. You humiliated me in front of that customer.
- \_\_\_ 7. I can see you're angry about something. What is it?
- \_\_\_ 8. When I said hello to you this morning, you didn't say hello to me.
- \_\_\_ 9. You were really rude to that customer.
- \_\_\_ 10. Several people commented that your committee work exceeded their expectations.
- \_\_\_ 11. Every time I make a suggestion, you look at me as if I'm crazy.

## EXERCISE #3 : The request

*Is it necessary?*

*I'd prefer...* (describe the behavior you'd like to see instead)

*Directions:* Place a “+” next to statements that are **clear requests that move the discussion in a positive, productive direction** rather than vague suggestions or unrealistic demands that confuse or derail the discussion.

- \_\_\_ 23. Whatever you decide is fine; I just know the current procedure is unacceptable.
- \_\_\_ 24. Would you be willing to hold your questions and meet with me after the meeting?
- \_\_\_ 25. If you can't say something nice, please say nothing at all.
- \_\_\_ 26. I would like to name a replacement before the end of the week.
- \_\_\_ 27. I agree with many of your points and want to discuss ways to address your concerns.
- \_\_\_ 28. I'd prefer that we stop talking about decisions that are outside of our control.
- \_\_\_ 29. I'd like you to tell me what part you disagree with.
- \_\_\_ 30. I'd like you to tell me one thing I did that you appreciate.
- \_\_\_ 31. I'd prefer that you phone the customer and apologize for the oversight. Can you tell me when you'll do that?
- \_\_\_ 32. Please read my proposal and tell me your first reaction.

## EXERCISE #4: All together now...

- A. Using your work-related example from page 1 of this worksheet, write a clear, factual observation about what the person does (or doesn't do). Imagine that you are talking directly to this person:

**[Name], when I see or hear...** (describe the behavior)

- B. Now, express—respectfully and diplomatically—how you feel when the person acts in the way you described above:

**I feel...** (describe the emotional impact the behavior has on you)

- C. Lastly, make an action request that will move the discussion in a positive, productive direction:

**I'd prefer...** (describe the behavior you'd like to see instead)

### (-) Feelings...

Afraid  
Aggravated  
Agitated  
Alarmed  
Angry  
Annoyed  
Anxious  
Concerned  
Confused  
Discouraged  
Distressed  
Embarrassed  
Exasperated  
Frustrated  
Hesitant  
Indifferent  
Insecure  
Irritated  
Impatient  
Nervous  
Overwhelmed  
Pessimistic  
Sad  
Tense  
Uncertain  
Unhappy  
Worried

### (+) Feelings...

Appreciative  
Calm  
Confident  
Content  
Curious  
Delighted  
Eager  
Encouraged  
Excited  
Grateful  
Happy  
Hopeful  
Inspired  
Interested  
Intrigued  
Invigorated  
Joyful  
Moved  
Optimistic  
Refreshed  
Relaxed  
Relieved  
Renewed  
Revived  
Secure  
Thankful  
Touched

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## Take-aways

It's easy to forgive people who have never done anything to make us angry. People who do make us angry, however, are our most important teachers. They indicate the limits to our capacity for forgiveness.  
--Marianne Williamson

# About Your Presenter



Want to create lasting relationships with your customers and coworkers? Want people to experience the best your organization has to offer? Want your customers to come back for more—and tell others about their experience too?

Tired of tiptoeing around sour attitudes and poor work habits? Feeling squeezed by tight margins and pressured to fill jobs – even as your best people weigh job offers from employers eager to take your top talent?

Hospitality expert, Robin Getman gets the job done. With 20+ years experience in training and management, she speaks frankly about workplace experiences that people can relate to. Robin's expertise in communication styles, service excellence, humor in the workplace and personal leadership is on the mark and immediately relevant in today's work environment.

With high employee turnover, low morale and job burnout reaching near epidemic levels, Robin steps in, inspires people to step up and gives them the skills to step out. She seamlessly demonstrates how to talk to customers and co-workers with purpose, passion and personality. Your organization will learn how to handle even the most challenging situations with finesse and professionalism.

Robin's hallmark is her humor and a broad experience in all manner of jobs including: managing three of Minneapolis' most popular restaurants, teaching two Minnesota governors' (no, not *that* governor) service staffs how to deliver exceptional guest service, administering a \$12 million operating budget with a staff of 600 supervisory and union employees, and, five gut-wrenching performances as a standup comic.

Entertaining, informative and inspirational with a gift for injecting humor to reinforce a powerful message, Robin thinks on her feet, delivering programs that are pertinent, memorable and uncommonly fun. Robin Getman is the positive, laughing difference you've been waiting for!

- ◆ Laugh for the Health of It!
- ◆ Can You Hear Me Now? Part 1: Communicating for Results
- ◆ Can You Hear Me Now? Part 2: Defusing Difficult Situations
- ◆ Mission Possible? The Truth about Customer Service Excellence
- ◆ Are You Leading from Your Soul? (Instead of a Position of Authority)
- ◆ *R-E-L-A-X*, Stress Isn't a Four-Letter Word

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