COURSE SYLLABUS

Positive Approaches to Difficult People Course

Gain strategies for interacting effectively with challenging personalities using empathy, structure, and communication frameworks.

> Group classes (Live Online) and onsite training are available for this course. For more information, email onsite@graduateschool.edu or visit: https://sdfm.graduateschool.edu/courses/positive-approaches-to-difficult-people



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Course Outline

Module 1: Difficult People

- Define what makes someone “difficult” in the workplace
- Identify personal behavior, communication, and listening styles
- Understand the CARE Profile and your assertiveness/focus quadrant
- Recognize patterns of difficult behavior and self-awareness

Module 2: Communication Barriers

- Explore 12 common communication barriers across three categories
- Learn how poor listening and ineffective communication trigger conflict
- Complete a Listening Inventory to assess personal listening habits
- Understand filters and biases that influence perception

Module 3: The Art of Criticism

- Redefine criticism as a tool for growth and development (TASK model)
- Practice the EPM (Empathize, Pinpoint, Move Forward) approach
- Apply the Four-A Formula for receiving criticism effectively

Module 4: Overcoming Conflict

- Evaluate common conflict behaviors through a self-assessment
- Address six key communication challenges that escalate conflict
- Practice non-threatening “I” statements to de-escalate tension

Module 5: Styles of Communicating

- Compare aggressive, passive, passive-aggressive, and assertive styles
- Apply the Six-Step Assertive Response model to real situations
- Use the “Questions Approach” to understand and clarify interpersonal needs

Module 6: Behavior Styles of Difficult People

- Learn the eight types of difficult people (e.g., Tank, Sniper, Complainer)
- Map these types onto four CARE quadrants (Commander, Analyzer, Relater, Entertainer)
- Identify goals, needs, strengths, and weaknesses for each quadrant

Module 7: Prescriptions for Handling Difficult People

- Determine the underlying needs and emotions driving difficult behavior
- Apply tailored strategies to address each difficult type effectively
- Learn to maintain control while building mutual respect

Module 8: Conclusion

- Create a personal action plan to apply course techniques
- Reflect on changes in self-awareness and communication style
- Commit to behavior shifts that reduce conflict long-term