

WORKPLACE COMMUNICATION WORKSHOP

Handling Difficult People with Confidence

Practical tools for professionalism, boundaries, conflict, and grace

PAUSE

**You cannot
control
the personality.
You can control
the response.**

1

Today's goal: stay effective under pressure

Recognize

Spot behaviors and your own triggers.

Regulate

Create space between stimulus and response.

Respond

Use clear language, boundaries, and options.

Repair

Address conflict and rebuild working trust.

03

2

Start with the interaction—not the label

Think of a behavior that tests your patience.

Describe what the person DOES—not what you think they ARE.

Quick audience poll

- Interrupts or dominates
- Avoids or delays
- Criticizes or complains
- Escalates emotionally

Humor helps us breathe. Respect keeps us productive.

02

3

A difficult moment has three moving parts

BEHAVIOR

**What happened—
observable
words or actions.**

STORY

**The meaning
your brain
assigned to it.**

CHOICE

**The response
that moves the
work forward.**

Your power usually lives between the story and the choice.

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Know your hot buttons before someone pushes them

Common triggers

- Feeling dismissed
- Loss of control
- Unfairness
- Public criticism
- Last-minute surprises

PAIR DISCUSSION

When I feel triggered, what do I tend to do?

- Fight: push harder
- Flight: avoid
- Freeze: shut down
- Fawn: over-accommodate

Awareness is not self-criticism. It is advance preparation.

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Use the P.A.U.S.E. before you answer

P

**Pause your
body**

A

**Assess the
facts**

U

**Understand
the goal**

S

**Select your
tone**

E

**Engage
briefly**

Try it: inhale for four • exhale for six • lower your speaking pace

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Listen for the need beneath the noise

1. Hear

Let the person finish the usable part of the message.

2. Name

"It sounds like the deadline and accuracy both matter."

3. Check

"Did I understand the concern correctly?"

Listening does not mean agreeing. It means reducing guesswork.

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Make the message clear, neutral, and actionable

Observation

"When the report arrives after noon..."

Impact

"...the review window becomes very short."

Request

"Please send it by 10:00 a.m."

Check

"Can you commit to that tomorrow?"

Specific beats dramatic. Short beats overloaded.

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A boundary explains what you will do

Boundary formula

WHEN this happens, I WILL take this action, SO THAT the work can continue.

Time

"I can discuss this for ten minutes, then I need to return to the deadline."

Tone

"I'm willing to continue when we can speak respectfully."

Scope

"I can help with X; Y needs approval."

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Scenario lab: the chronic interrupter

"Jordan interrupts, talks over others, and redirects every meeting back to their own priorities."

In groups of three

- What is observable?
- What might you say in the moment?
- What follow-up boundary is needed?
- What should be documented?

Roles: speaker • Jordan • observer

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Keep five professional phrases ready

- 01 "Let's slow this down and focus on the issue."
- 02 "Help me understand what outcome you want."
- 03 "I see it differently. Here is what I observed."
- 04 "I'm not able to agree to that, but I can..."
- 05 "Let's pause and return when we can be productive."

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Respond to patterns without becoming the pattern

BEHAVIOR	YOUR MOVE	USEFUL LANGUAGE
Negativity	Acknowledge once; redirect to options	"What is one workable next step?"
Passive resistance	Confirm ownership and deadline	"What will you complete by Friday?"
Aggression	Lower pace; set a tone boundary	"I'll continue when we can speak calmly."
Gossip	Decline the triangle; go to the source	"Have you spoken with them directly?"

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Humor can release tension—never target a person

HELPS

- Laughing at shared human moments
- Gentle self-awareness
- A playful reset
- Warmth without sarcasm

HARMS

- Mocking or labeling
- Inside jokes that exclude
- Sarcasm during conflict
- Humor that hides hostility

Rule of thumb: if the joke needs a victim, skip it.

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Scenario lab: the relentless critic

A coworker responds to every new idea with reasons it will fail—and then says, “I’m just being realistic.”

ROUND 1

Respond as you normally would. Notice what happens to the tension.

ROUND 2

Use acknowledgment + a focused question + a boundary.

DEBRIEF

Which words changed the direction of the conversation?

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Healthy relationships need deposits after conflict

Repair quickly

Own your part without overexplaining.

Reset expectations

Confirm what will happen next.

Notice progress

Reinforce improved behavior.

Stay consistent

Let your actions match your boundary.

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Choose your next courageous conversation

WHO

THE OBSERVABLE BEHAVIOR

MY REQUEST

MY BOUNDARY

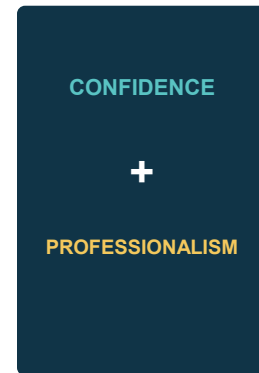
I will measure success by my clarity and professionalism—not by controlling their reaction.

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YOUR TAKEAWAY

**Calm is a strategy.
Clarity is kindness.
Boundaries create respect.**



One action I will take within 48 hours:

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