



DF 315
Dealing with Difficult People

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COURSE OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this course are to enable participants to:

- Identify behaviors of difficult people.
- Use different techniques for handling difficult people.
- Explain the differences in difficult people and crisis situations.
- Prepare to reduce the chances of becoming the difficult person.

TARGET AUDIENCE

The target audience for this training is supervisors and other employees assigned to a Joint Field Office and other disaster facilities.

CONTENTS

This course/module includes the following sections:

- Welcome
- Identifying Difficult People
 - Activity 1: Difficult Behaviors
- How to Deal with a Difficult Person
 - Do's and Don'ts
- Non-verbal Communication
- L.A.S.T.
 - Activity 2: L.A.S.T.
- Helpful Tips
- The Relentless Difficult Person
- Difficult People and Crisis Situations
- Awareness
 - Activity 3: Awareness Activity
- Am I Being Difficult
 - Activity 4: Group Discussion
- Summary
- Learning Check
- Course Evaluation

APPROXIMATE TIME

2 hours

PREPARING

Use the following checklist to help you prepare for this course:

Supplies and Equipment

- Visuals 1 through 21 (Prepare the visuals, if necessary.)
- Overhead projector with screen or laptop computer with projector
- Note cards
- Easel paper, easels, and markers
- Masking tape
- Name cards
- Pens, pencils, and note paper
- Copy Learning Check for participants from instructor guide.

Handout Materials

- Participant Manual

NUMBER OF INSTRUCTORS

One or two instructors may be used to teach this course.

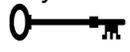
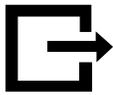
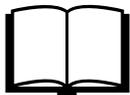
INSTRUCTOR QUALIFICATIONS

Instructors should have training experience as well as previous experience working at a JFO. This course should be taught by instructors with previous disaster field experience. If you are inexperienced, request an experienced instructor to co-instruct the first session with you.

COURSE CONTENT

Instructors delivering these course materials should ensure that the course objectives are delivered in their entirety in order to have the course completion recorded in the Automated Deployment Database (ADD). Additional material may be added, based on the need of the audience to enhance the understanding of the subject matter.

ICONS

Overhead Projector 	Projector 	Videotape 	Easel 	Key Point 	Instruct or Note 	Check List / Evaluation form 	Graduation / Diplomas 
Thank You! / Good Job! 	Activity 	Discussion Question 	Summary Transition 	Participant Manual 	Time Saving Tip 	Participant Handout 	

REFERENCES

- Psychiatric Association, 1400 K Street, N.W. Washington, DC 20005
- Christiansen, Martha Dennis, Ph.D., 2000. Dealing With Difficult People. University Counseling Services, the University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa.
- Department of Mental Health Services, 1990. Crisis Intervention Manual. St. Elizabeth Hospital, DC General Hospital Complex, 1900 Mass. Ave. S.E. Washington, DC 20009.
- Federal Emergency Management Agency, FEMA, 1995. Stress Management Manual
- Media Partners Corporation, 1996. The Difficult Guest. Advent Business Forms, Tukwila, Washington.
- California State University, Counseling Services, 2006. Dealing with Difficult People. <http://www.csustan.edu/counseling>
- Texas Coop Extension, Texas A&M University, Human Resources Department. 2006. Dealing with Difficult People. <http://www.agtraining.tamu.edu/ttvn-training-handouts.htm>

WELCOME



Visual 1

Begin by welcoming class

- Introduce yourself



Visual 2

Review class rules and safety items:

- Fire exits
- Restrooms
- Turn pagers and cell phones to vibrate.





Visual 3

Course Objectives

- Identify behaviors of difficult people.
- Use different techniques for handling difficult people.
- Explain the differences in difficult people and crisis situations.
- Prepare to reduce the chance of becoming the difficult person.

DFTO
Training Works for You!

August 2007 Visual 3

Review the following objectives:

After this course participants should be able to:

- Identify behaviors of difficult people. (Objective 1: page 10 and Activity 1)
- Use different techniques for handling difficult people. (Objective 2: page 13)
- Explain the differences in difficult people and crisis situations. (Objective 3: page 27)
- Prepare themselves to reduce their chances of becoming the difficult person. (Objective 4: page 31)



Visual 4

Have participants introduce themselves

- Name?
- Where they are from?
- Class expectations?

Introductions

- Your name?
- Position in the organization?
- Where you are from?
- Your course expectation is?

DFTO
Establish. Work. For. You!

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Visual 4



Visual 5

Difficult People

Everyone has dealt with a difficult person.

DFTO
Establish. Work. For. You!

August 2007

Visual 5



Ask participants to volunteer experiences with difficult people using the three questions. **Remind** them to not use names.

- How did you manage the situation?
- Was it resolved?
- How did you feel afterward?

Instructor Note



Don't spend a huge amount of time here. There will be additional opportunities for people to share experiences.

IDENTIFYING DIFFICULT PEOPLE



Visual 6

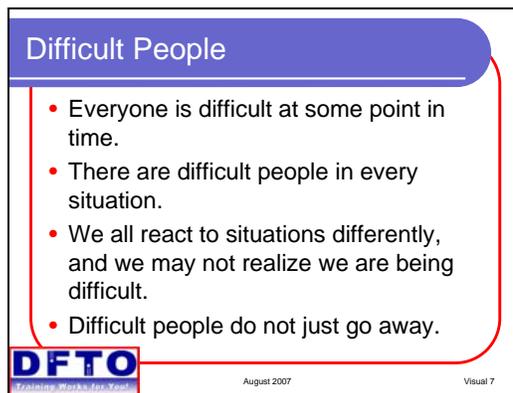


Ask participants for examples where they may encounter difficult people.

After some examples, **discuss** the fact that difficult people are in nearly every situation. Difficult people may or may not intend to be difficult. In either scenario, a resolution is required. **(Learning Check, Question 2)**

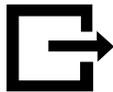


Visual 7



Review the following key points:

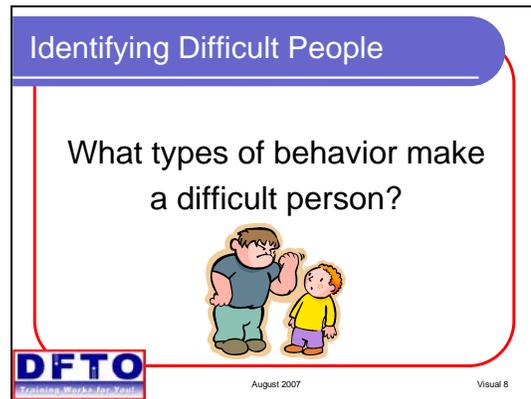
- There are difficult people in every situation.
- We all react to situations differently and we may not intend or realize that we are being difficult.
- Everyone is difficult now and then.
- Difficult people do not just go away. Difficult people want a resolution.



Now that we know that difficult people could be anywhere, let's study *who* they are so we can identify them.



Visual 8



Ask participants what behaviors make a difficult person.

(Objective 1, Learning Check Question 3)



Record the answers below on an easel chart. Suggest the behaviors not named below and add them to the list.

Answers:

- Bully
- Know-it-all
- Constant Complainer
- Impatient
- Negative
- Arrogant
- Stubborn
- Silent



After listing these behaviors on easel paper, leave the list displayed and transition to group activity.



Activity 1

Activity: Difficult Behaviors

(Objective 1)

Allow 20 minutes for this activity.

Divide the class into 8 groups. There should be as many groups as there are behaviors.

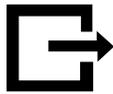
Assign a behavior to each group. Use list from page 10.

Provide a piece of easel chart paper and markers to each group.

Conduct activity as follows:

1. Have each group **write** their behavior at the top of the paper.
2. Ask groups to come up with a picture or symbol to **draw** on their paper which resembles their behavior.
3. While one person draws the picture, have the other members of the group **brainstorm** actions displayed by their behavior.
4. Underneath their drawings, **list** three actions that describe their behavior.
5. Have each group hang their paper on the wall and **present** their picture and behaviors to the class.

Leave each behavior hanging on the wall. They will be referred to later in the course when explaining tips on dealing with difficult people.



Some difficult people do not possess these behaviors/. They may have specific reasons for being difficult on any given day.



Ask participants to identify why people become difficult.

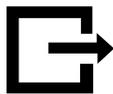


Record answers on an easel chart.

(Learning Check Question 4)

Answers may include:

- They are frustrated.
- They feel offended.
- They are unsatisfied.
- They are confused.
- They are having a bad day.
- They feel betrayed.
- They have financial problems.
- They have marital problems.
- They have work problems.
- They were promised something that wasn't delivered.
- Someone was rude to them.



Realize that difficult people are not necessarily difficult as a result of your actions. It is important to recognize there are many reasons why this person may be displaying difficult behaviors. They may usually be a difficult person or they may be reacting to a difficult situation. Either way, we need to learn how to effectively deal with difficult people.

The next lesson will teach us various methods to deal with difficult people.

HOW TO DEAL WITH A DIFFICULT PERSON



Visual 9



Refer participants to “Do’s and Don’ts” (next page)

Review the “Do’s and Don’ts” listed in participant manual.
(Objective 2)

DO'S AND DON'TS**(Objective 2)**

The following are some things to do and not do when dealing with difficult people.

Do:

- Stay calm, cool and caring.
- Listen.
- Let them talk.
- Find the source of difficulty.
- Take responsibility.
- Be ready to apologize, even if it's not your fault.
- Set limits on what you will tolerate. ("It is okay to be angry but it's not okay to yell at me.")
- Be consistent, continue to act professionally.
- Ask for their help.
- Issue a resolution.

**Don't:**

- Take it personally.
- Try to "cheer up" the person.
- Argue with them.
- Laugh or joke at them.
- Analyze them.
- Give orders.
- Fake attention.
- Tell them "It's not as bad as it seems".
- Overreact.



NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATIONS



Dealing effectively with difficult people involves effective communication skills. It is important to use verbal skills **AND** non-verbal actions.

Let's review the key points of non-verbal communications



Visual 10



Review the following key points on non-verbal communication:

- **Voice Tone** – Never show anger; use calm, soothing tone.
- **Body Language** – Show you're attentive with good posture.
- **Facial Expression** – Don't scowl; use good eye contact.
- **Gestures** – Don't cross your arms; use an "open" position.
- **Touch** – Never touch an upset person.
- **Swearing** – Never use profanity.

The same cues from non-verbal communication may provide you some ideas from the difficult person as to a specific behavior.

Regardless of the behavior or cues one needs to be able to effectively handle the situation

L. A. S. T.



Visual 11



L.A.S.T. refers to Listen, Apologize, Solve, and Thank. This is an effective formula for dealing with difficult people. Each step is simple. It is an easy to follow formula while under pressure.

(Learning Check Question 1)



Review the following key points on the L.A.S.T. acronym:

- **Listen**

Listen. Don't interrupt. Even if you know where they are going, hear them out. Let them vent their feelings and listen attentively. The more you understand them, the easier it will be to resolve the situation

- **Apologize**

Sometimes you have to apologize even if you are not at fault. You may need to apologize on behalf of someone else even if it is the difficult person at fault. An apology helps you win back your good will and gets the person on your side.

- **Solve**

You've listened and apologized, and now it's time to solve the problem. Even in cases where fixing the problem is out of your control, demonstrate that you take responsibility to do what you can. In this step, you take control back from the difficult person to make things better.

- **Thank**

Common courtesy and good manners are powerful gestures. Thank the difficult person for:

- Bringing the problem to your attention.
- Patience in working with you to solve things.
- Humor or positive attitude while you've worked together.



Activity 2

Activity: Applying L.A.S.T.

Refer participants to “**Case Study-Applying L.A.S.T.**”

Divide the class into 4 table groups. Give each group a different scenario.

Allow participants 10 minutes to complete their group worksheet.

Ask a participant from each group to provide suggested responses to each L.A.S.T. step.

CASE STUDY: APPLYING L.A.S.T

**Scenario #1:**

The Logistics Chief makes a request of the Planning Chief. The Support Branch Director in Logistics needs a document which will show specialized information. He needs it by late in the afternoon today. He has prepared a rough draft. The Logistics Chief is asking for Planning to more or less follow this example, but to structure the report officially and add more information.

The Planning Chief can see immediately that there are some inaccuracies in the draft. He gives the assignment to Documentation Unit Leader Pat, asking her to put her work on hold and respond to this request. A few hours later, Pat takes a finished document to the Support Branch Director, as requested.

This Support Branch Director glances at the document and responds as though he's offended. He says the figures (based on the original document) are all wrong. He says "Why do we need a document unit anyway?", and goes on to state that his section has already done its own report. He snaps the document into the folder; hands it back to Pat and stands there with arms folded, while glaring.

Worksheet:

Write a brief script for Pat, applying the L.A.S.T. technique.

L.

A.

S.

T.

CASE STUDY: APPLYING L.A.S.T



Scenario #2:

Lee has been working in the DRC for six weeks. An applicant walks in that Lee has seen two weeks previously.

“May I help you?” asks Lee. Lee remembered the Smith family very well. They had lost the roof off their house and most of the contents.

“You sure can. You can answer my questions and you can answer them now! Can’t you or FEMA do anything? It’s been two weeks and I haven’t heard a thing! My next door neighbor already has a crew working on his repairs. I can’t even get a blue tarp.”

Lee checks the applicant’s file and learns there have been no forms filed either for the insurance or for the SBA.

The tirade continues with “Why are you here, you can’t seem to get anything I need!”

Worksheet:

Write a brief script for Lee, applying the L.A.S.T. technique.

L. _____

A. _____

S. _____

T. _____

CASE STUDY: APPLYING L.A.S.T



Scenario #3:

You arrive late at night at the hotel. You expected a reservation. You have a confirmation number for the reservation at that hotel.

The hotel clerk says there is no vacancy and that confirmation number doesn't exist in the system. The hotel clerk offers no alternative and is not being helpful.

Worksheet:

Write a brief script for yourself, applying the L.A.S.T. technique.

L.

A.

S.

T.

CASE STUDY: APPLYING L.A.S.T



Scenario #4:

You have been working the JFO for seven weeks. You have two more weeks to be deployed. Your supervisor has thwarted any innovative ideas you have supplied.

The supervisor has criticized your work without offering constructive advice.

On Monday, you arrive at the JFO to discover your workspace, your computer, your supplies and equipment are not where they were on Friday. Coworkers report that the supervisor ordered the move.

Worksheet:

Write a brief script for yourself, applying the L.A.S.T. technique.

L.

A.

S.

T.

HELPFUL TIPS



Visual 12



Refer to “Helpful Tips” (next page)

Review Helpful Hints.

(Objective 2)

HELPFUL TIPS**(Objective 2)**

The following are more helpful hints in dealing with difficult people.

- Confront person privately.
- Focus on what the person is trying to say, look for the message behind the anger, watch for non-verbal cues.
- Ask how you can fix the problem.
- Ask non-threatening questions.
- Avoid being hurtful.
- Model the behavior you would like in return.
- Work toward a solution, not just “taking care” of a difficult person.
- Keep discussions professional.
- Give and request frequent feedback.
- Maintain eye contact.
- Do not place/allow blame on a person.
- Be specific.
- Avoid “always” and “never.”
- Encourage the person to listen.
- Pay attention to non-verbal communication of both yourself and the difficult person.
- Praise/Thank them in public.
- Document the solution in writing, if needed.
- If you cannot solve the issue, look for a temporary way out so you can seek resolution when the situation calms down.
- Understand your own limits, so you can ask your supervisor or co-worker for assistance.





Referring to Activity 1 charts, ask participants to volunteer helpful tips in dealing with that particular behavior. The participants can write in the answers in their workbook.

Answers may include:

The Bully

Tips:

- Get the attention
- State your point non-aggressively
- Don't allow the bully to interrupt
- Ask the bully to leave if the behavior persists

The Know-it-all

Tips:

- Ask questions
- Focus on the solution
- Do not question the know-it-all's knowledge

The Constant Complainer

Tips:

- Ask the person to identify specific needs
- Inform the complainer that you are trying to fulfill these needs
- Ask for input and feedback

The Impatient Person

Tips:

- Ask the person to identify specific needs
- Inform the impatient person that you are trying to fulfill these needs as quickly as you can
- Thank the impatient person for being patient while you help.

The Negative Person

Tips:

- Don't argue
- Ask the negative person for alternatives
- Switch from negativity to possibilities

The Arrogant Person

Tips:

- Acknowledge the arrogant person's abilities
- Make suggestions instead of statements
- Don't let the person interrupt

The Stubborn Person

Tips:

- Ask "what if" questions
- Help examine the facts
- Watch for anger or withdrawal

The Silent Person

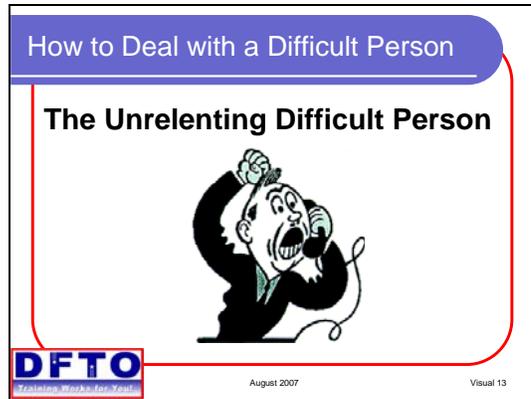
Tips:

- Meet individually
- Allow silent person time to open up
- Ask open-ended questions
- Wait for response

THE UNRELENTING DIFFICULT PERSON



Visual 13



Review the following key points:

- When dealing with a relentless difficult person you may choose to:
 - Emphasize that you are attempting to resolve the issue.
 - Remind the person that you need help to resolve the issue.
 - Suggest taking a break.
 - Inform you will leave the conversation if the person does not help you.
 - Ask a co-worker for assistance.
 - Ask a co-worker to take over.
 - Take a break after the problem has been resolved.
 - Remember that a resolution is necessary to satisfy everyone.

DIFFICULT PEOPLE IN CRISIS SITUATIONS



Visual 14



Ask participants what makes crisis situations different? What aspects of a crisis trigger difficult people?

(Objective 3)

Record answers on an easel sheet.

Answers may include:

- Urgency
- Time constraints
- Added responsibilities/stress
- Being overworked with less rest
- Emotional impact
- Fear of the unknown
- Being removed from typical situations
- Rise in tension
- Problem-solving ability slows
- Isolation

Remind participants to:

- Have more patience.
- Be more sympathetic and/or empathetic.
- Look at it from the perspective of the other person.
- Imagine yourself in the shoes of that person.
- Avoid over involvement.
- Avoid personalizing the problem of the difficult person.

AWARENESS



Visual 15

Review the following slide of things to be aware of when dealing with a difficult person.

Be Aware of...

- What was said to you.
- How it was said to you.
- What behaviors are displayed?
- Your perception of the problem.
- Your reactions/behaviors.

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Visual 15



Activity 3

Refer participants “**Awareness Activity**”

Part 1

Ask each participant to:

- **Choose** from the behaviors written on easel charts from Activity 1.
- **Name** the behavior.
- Use the behaviors listed to **create** a scenario with the person becomes difficult including:
 - a problem
 - language
 - behaviors

Allow 5 minutes to complete Part 1.

Part 2

Have participants pair with partners. Each pair will take turns role playing the scenario created. One participant will act as the difficult person while the other responds. After 2 minutes of role play, have the person responding to the difficult person answer the questions on the slide.

Reverse roles for two minutes and allow time for answering the questions on the slide.

Ask participants to volunteer answers to each of these questions:

- What was said to you?
- How was it said to you?
- What reaction did you see?
- What is your perception of the problem?
- What was your reaction?

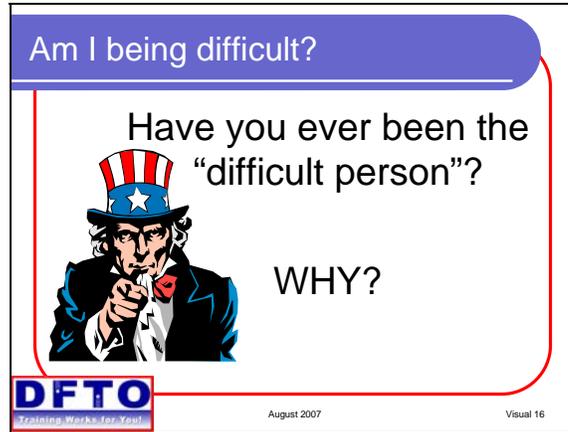


Ask participants why it is important to pay attention to each of these. What might go wrong if you don't?

AM I BEING DIFFICULT?



Visual 16



Ask participants if they've ever considered whether they were being the difficult person.

Ask participants WHY they were being the difficult person.

Discuss ways to recognize whether you are being difficult.



Review the following key points:

- Be aware of your emotions and whether you are expressing them in your voice and actions.
- Monitor your stress level and know when to allow yourself to cool down.
- Remove yourself from the situation and look at it from a different perspective. Decide whether you are being rational.
- Stop and take a deep breath.
- Recognize that being difficult does not make anything easier.

Difficult people just want a resolution to their issue.



Ask participants how they can reduce their chances of becoming difficult. What are some other ways to keep from being irrational?

(Objective 4, Learning Check Question 8)

Answers may include:

- Take a break.
- Count to ten.
- Let someone know if you are upset.
- Talk it out with someone.
- Stretch.
- Maintain a healthy lifestyle.
- Exercise.



Visual 17

Am I being difficult?

Thoughts to remember:

- Things will get better.
- Someone wants to help you.
- You have choices.
- There is a solution to every problem.

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Visual 17

Review the slide. **Suggest** participants remember these thoughts when they feel themselves becoming difficult.

GROUP DISCUSSION



Visual 18

Exercise: Group Discussion

Answer the Following Questions

- What makes some people display difficult actions with one another?
- To what are they reacting or responding?
- How are you going to work with them?
- Coworker and/or management strategies?


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Visual 18



Activity 4

Divide participants into small groups, and **ask** them to discuss the following questions:

- What makes some people display difficult actions with one another?
- What are they reacting or responding to?
- How are you going to work with them?
- What are some coworker and/or management strategies to use?

Allow 15 minutes of discussion.

Ask for a volunteer to answer each question.



Review the following key points:

- We all express some sort of difficult behavior under pressure.
- We each have our own method for dealing with ourselves and others.
- Some people are crisis prone and often cause problems in and out of the workplace.

SUMMARY



Visual 19

Course Summary

- Identify behaviors of difficult people.
- Use different techniques for handling difficult people.
- Explain the differences in difficult people and crisis situations.
- Prepare to reduce the chance of becoming the difficult person.


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Visual 19

Summarize the course by reviewing the objectives.



Visual 20

Course Summary

- How do you identify a difficult person?
- Why does a crisis situation make a person more difficult?
- What should you do/not do when dealing with a difficult person?
- What should you be aware of when dealing with a difficult person?
- How can you avoid becoming difficult?


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Visual 20



Summarize this course by asking the participants the following:

- How do you identify a difficult person?
- Why does a crisis situation make a person more difficult?
- What should you do/not do when dealing with difficult people?
- What should you be aware of when dealing with a difficult person?

- How can you avoid becoming difficult?



Ask participants to complete the Learning Check.
Allow 10 minutes. Participants may use their materials.

Correct the learning check as a group.



Visual 21

Evaluation

Please take a few moments to fill out your evaluation and hand it to the instructor.

Your input is important to us!



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Visual 21

A rectangular slide with a blue header bar containing the word "Evaluation". The main body is white with a red border. It contains two lines of text, a stylized "Thanks" graphic where the letter 'h' is a hand holding a pencil, and a logo for "DFTO" (Disaster Field Training Operations) in the bottom left corner. The date "August 2007" and "Visual 21" are in the bottom right corner.

Ask the participants to complete the course evaluation form.

LEARNING CHECK
ANSWER KEY

1. The L.A.S.T. technique means:
 - a) laugh, attack, sneer and talk about
 - b) listen, apologize, solve and thank**
 - c) listen attentively some times
 - d) love, apologize, share and trust

(IG page 16)
2. You only meet difficult people at work. TRUE FALSE

(IG page 9)
3. Some of the types of difficult people are:
 - a) know-it-all
 - b) constant complainer
 - c) arrogant
 - d) all of the above**
 - e) none of the above

(IG page 10)
4. The reason someone may be difficult is:
 - a) frustration
 - b) confusion
 - c) home problems
 - d) work problems
 - e) all of the above**

(IG page 12)
5. You should try to find the source of the problem in dealing with the difficult person.

TRUE FALSE

(IG page 16)
6. You should touch the arm of the difficult person to show support when dealing with them.

TRUE FALSE

(IG page 15)
7. When dealing with the difficult person be specific and avoid “always” and “never”.

TRUE FALSE

(IG page 23)

LEARNING CHECK
ANSWER KEY



8. What are some ways to reduce the chance of becoming difficult?

- a) Stay quiet and listen
- b) Show people you are in charge
- c) Take a break, count to 10, talk it out with someone else**
- d) None of the above

(IG page 31)

9. It is correct to suggest taking a break when dealing with a relentless difficult person.

TRUE FALSE

(IG page 26)

10. Describe a time you were a difficult person. How did you recognize and change your behavior?

LEARNING CHECK



1. The L.A.S.T. technique means:
 - a) laugh, attack, sneer and talk about
 - b) listen, apologize, solve and thank
 - c) listen attentively some times
 - d) love, apologize, share and trust

2. You only meet difficult people at work. TRUE FALSE

3. Some of the types of difficult people are:
 - a) know-it-all
 - b) constant complainer
 - c) arrogant
 - d) all of the above
 - e) none of the above

4. The reason someone may be difficult is:
 - a) frustration
 - b) confusion
 - c) home problems
 - d) work problems
 - e) all of the above

5. You should try to find the source of the problem in dealing with the difficult person.

TRUE FALSE

6. You should touch the arm of the difficult person to show support when dealing with them.

TRUE FALSE

7. When dealing with the difficult person be specific and avoid “always” and “never”.

TRUE FALSE

LEARNING CHECK



8. What are some ways to reduce the chance of becoming difficult?
- e) Stay quiet and listen
 - f) Show people you are in charge
 - g) Take a break, count to 10, talk it out with someone else
 - h) None of the above
9. It is correct to suggest taking a break when dealing with a relentless difficult person.
- TRUE FALSE
10. Describe a time you were a difficult person. How did you recognize and change your behavior?

Please take a moment to complete the following items. Your input may help to improve future training sessions. Thank you!



Date of Course _____ **Disaster Number** _____

Name of Instructor(s) _____

1. The instructor was knowledgeable and well-prepared.

Strongly Agree ___ Agree ___ Disagree ___ Strongly Disagree ___

Comments: _____

2. The instructor provided time for questions and review and encouraged group participation.

Strongly Agree ___ Agree ___ Disagree ___ Strongly Disagree ___

Comments: _____

3. The instructor related the material to disaster work and used FEMA-related examples.

Strongly Agree ___ Agree ___ Disagree ___ Strongly Disagree ___

Comments: _____

4. Based on your Requestor/Supervisor/Program Manager's expectations from this course, will you be able to meet or exceed them? Why? Or why not?

5. Overall, how would you rate this course?

Excellent ___ Very Good ___ Good ___ Adequate ___ Poor ___

6. Please list additional training that would benefit your JFO work or benefit the JFO workforce in general.

