

Coping with Difficult People

Jamie Linsin, Psy.D.

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How to Recognize a DP

- Impaired/failed communication
 - Typical strategies are not working
- Internal feelings/reactions
 - Irritation, anxiety, urge to escape, self-blaming thoughts
- Repeated experience
 - More than just someone's "bad day"

Why are people "difficult"?

- May have nothing to do with you
 - Accumulated stressors, previous experiences
- Difficulty managing anxiety, other intense emotions
- Not feeling heard/understood
- Interaction style has "worked" in the past

Response Strategies

- Listening
- Paraphrasing
- Expressing empathy
 - Understanding does not necessarily mean agreeing
- Asking questions to clarify, check understanding
- Providing emotional contrast
- Expressing options positively
 - "Here are your options"
 - "Here's what I can do to help you at this time"
- Setting limits as needed
 - Safety first!
 - "I" Statements
 - Express/own your feelings
 - List the behavior without criticizing the person/their character
 - State your wants/preferences
 - Remember your role
 - Interrupt, if necessary
 - Redirect the person back to something they have said
 - "Broken record" technique
 - Recommend other resources, options if available
 - There may not be a perfect solution
 - Debriefing and documentation as warranted
 - Self care