

THE AUTHENTIC EDGE

Helping you to become who you are meant to be -- in your **personal life, relationships** and **career**.

July 29, 2025



Most of my life, I've worn the label "difficult" simply because I ask a lot of questions and refuse to accept things at face value. From an early age, I was the one who wanted to know why, who challenged assumptions, and who argued every point—not because I wanted to be contrary, but because I wanted clarity and understanding. Somewhere along the way, that curiosity and persistence got misinterpreted as defiance. Over time, I learned that what people often call "difficult" is really just a reaction to someone who thinks differently, speaks up, and won't quietly go along for the sake of keeping the peace.

In this issue of The Authentic Edge, we take an honest look at the myth of "difficult people" and why so many ordinary interactions seem harder than they need to be. You'll find a feature article on how our brains misinterpret disagreement as danger, and why labeling someone as "difficult" is often a sign of our own unpreparedness rather than their bad behavior. There's also a Brain-Based Tip that walks you through a simple 90-second reset you can use the next time someone throws you off, and a Did You Know? section explaining how quickly the fight-flight-freeze response hijacks even normal conversations.

This edition also includes "Are You a Difficult Person?"—a self-inquiry to help you see yourself through someone else's eyes—and a personal reflection on the day I realized I was labeling almost everyone as difficult simply because they weren't following my script. These tools are here for a reason: learning to handle differences, rather than avoiding them, changes everything. When we shift from judgment to curiosity, we stop wasting energy on blame and start building better relationships—at work, at home, and with ourselves.

With you on the path,

Anne Dranitsaris



When someone disagrees with you or pushes back, your brain often reacts as if you're under threat. The amygdala—your built-in alarm system—can't tell the difference between a real danger and simple friction, so it kicks you into "fight, flight, or freeze" mode. That's why you might argue, shut down, or smile and nod while seething inside instead of listening. These automatic reactions are about survival, not skill, which is why so many ordinary moments end up feeling like you're dealing with a "difficult" person.

In This Week's Newsletter

Feature Article: Difficult People or Lack of Interpersonal Skills

Brain-Based Tip for Dealing with Difficult People

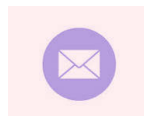
Did You Know? Emotional Bypassing Has Consequences

Food for Thought: Are You A Difficult Person?

Authentic Reflections: The Day I Realized Everyone Was Difficult

Upcoming Events: Fall 2025

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DIFFICULT PEOPLE OR A LACK OF INTERPERSONAL SKILLS?



People are difficult because we don't have the skills to handle them.

I've spent decades coaching and training leaders on how to "handle difficult people." If I had a dollar for every time someone sat across from me, sighed, and said, "Anne, my problem is that I have to work with so many difficult people," I would have retired on an island by now.

But here's what I've learned: most people aren't difficult. What we're really talking about is our lack of skill when faced with behavior we don't like, don't expect, or don't know how to respond to.

The Myth of the Difficult Person

We love a label. Calling someone "difficult" is quick, satisfying, and gets us off the hook. It means "The problem is them, not me."

But what does "difficult" really mean?

[Read the Full Article](#)

DEALING WITH DIFFICULT PEOPLE

Are they difficult or just not doing what you want?



The Day I Realized Everyone Was "Difficult" (Except Me)

The other day, I caught myself silently labeling someone "difficult." Not because they yelled. Not because they refused to listen. But because they said something radical: "I don't think that's the best way to do it."

That was it. No fireworks. No rebellion. Just an opinion that didn't match mine. And in my head, they were instantly promoted to Chief of Difficult People.

This made me laugh later, because I've spent decades training and coaching leaders on how to handle so-called "difficult people." I've built entire programs around navigating resistance, building emotional intelligence, and not taking things personally. And yet—here I was, mentally firing someone because they didn't follow my script.

A friend says, "Actually, I don't feel like going out tonight," and suddenly they're so difficult. A colleague asks, "Could we try a different approach?" and you'd think they'd set fire to the building. Anyone who doesn't read from our invisible script—where we say "let's do this" and they say "yes, absolutely"—ends up in the Difficult column.

[Read the Full Article](#)

Are You A Difficult Person?

We're quick to spot difficult people everywhere we go—but rarely do we stop to ask, "Could I be that person for someone else?" Being difficult isn't about having strong opinions; it's about how those opinions show up. Take a moment to reflect on how you handle conflict, disagreement, and other people's ideas.

Do you expect others to agree with you without question? When someone pushes back, do you become defensive, argumentative, or dismissive? If you find yourself thinking, "They just don't get it," more often than you ask, "What might I be missing?" that could be a sign that you're harder to work with than you realize.

Another clue is how you handle boundaries and differences. Do you listen and try to understand other perspectives, or do you push harder until you get your way? Are you willing to let go of being right in order to build better relationships? People who are seen as "easy to work with" aren't the ones who never disagree—they're the ones who know how to disagree without making it personal.

Finally, consider this: everyone is someone's "difficult person" at some point. The question isn't whether you'll be perceived that way—it's whether you're self-aware enough to notice it and skilled enough to adjust. So, are you difficult, or just unaware of the impact you have on others? That answer will tell you where to start.

What we call "difficult people" is often the result of unspoken expectations and avoidance of disagreement. Learning to handle differences—not just silence them—is where real progress begins. AD

Brain Tip for Dealing with "Difficult People"



When someone pushes back, disagrees, or surprises us with a response we didn't expect, it's easy to slap the "difficult" label on them. But if we're honest, what we're really saying is, "I'm having difficulty right now because I didn't expect this response." That's our reaction to own. It doesn't mean the other person is difficult; it means our brain was unprepared. In those moments, instead of labeling, pause and notice what's happening. Shift from judgment to curiosity—ask yourself why their response threw you off and what you need to do to stay open. That simple ownership can change the tone of the entire interaction.

When someone disagrees with you, your brain can trigger a quick threat response—treating the other person like an obstacle rather than an ally. Before reacting, pause and take three slow breaths. This shifts activity from your emotional brain (amygdala) to your thinking brain (prefrontal cortex), giving you space to ask: "Are they really being difficult—or just different?" This small pause interrupts your automatic judgment and helps you respond with curiosity instead of defensiveness.

Brain Tip: The 90-Second Reset Before You React

Research shows that what we often label as "difficult people" has a measurable impact on workplace dynamics. Employees spend an average of 2.8 hours a week dealing with interpersonal conflict, costing organizations billions in lost productivity each year. Nearly half of these conflicts (49%) are driven by personality clashes and ego rather than workload or stress, and 85% of employees say they've experienced conflict at work, with 29% calling it frequent. The cost isn't just time—53% of employees report stress as a result, 45% have taken sick leave, and 70% admit they avoid difficult conversations altogether.

Workshops for Women on the Path to Authentic Living

Fall 2025

These workshops and groups are designed to support breaking free from the limitations of roles, beliefs and fears to get on YOUR path to individuating and achieving your authentic potential.

- **60+ Women's Group: Continuing the Journey**

A soulful, supportive space for women 60 and older who are committed to deepening their journey of individuation. Share wisdom, reflect on purpose, and embrace the next chapter with intention.

- **Imposter Syndrome Workshop: Reclaim Your Inner Authority**

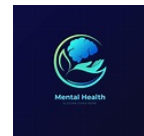
Quiet the inner critic and step fully into your worth. This experiential workshop unpacks the root causes of imposter syndrome and provides brain-based strategies to rewrite your internal narrative.

- **Breaking the Chains of Attachment: A Codependency Workshop**

Learn to identify unhealthy attachment patterns, understand emotional entanglements, and create boundaries that support freedom and authentic connection.

More information about the sessions is coming soon. If any of the groups or workshops sound interesting to you, contact me at anned@annedranitsaris.com. **Fall Sessions:** October. Limited group size – secure your place early

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH NEWS



Beyond the Baby Blues: Understanding the Impact of Codependency in Maternal Mental Health

This month in Behavioral Health News, I talk about something that isn't often part of the conversation about maternal mental health—the way motherhood reactivates old emotional wounds. For so many women, the moment we become mothers, those old patterns from childhood come rushing back: the pressure to be perfect, the fear of falling short, the relentless need to prove ourselves.

Motherhood can trigger codependent patterns we thought we'd outgrown—over-functioning, people-pleasing, self-abandonment—all in an effort to be the “good mother.” Instead of feeling connected to ourselves and our children, we can find ourselves exhausted, anxious, and living on autopilot.

In the article, I share why this happens from a developmental and brain-based perspective and, more importantly, how we can begin to break free. I offer three practices that have helped me and so many of my clients:

- Challenge the belief that a good mother must sacrifice herself
- Pause before reacting so we can respond with clarity
- Build a circle of support that sees us, not just the role we play

Motherhood doesn't have to be a performance. It can be a place of healing—when we stop trying to be everything for everyone and allow ourselves to show up as who we really are.

If you've ever felt like you're falling short no matter how hard you try, I hope it reminds you that you are not alone.

[Read the full article](#)



Anne Dranitsaris, Ph.D.

If you've spent your life taking care of others, overthinking every word you say, or feeling like you're never quite enough—you're not broken. You're just stuck in survival mode. For over 40 years, I've helped people untangle the emotional patterns that keep them small—patterns rooted in childhood, reinforced by culture, and masked by roles like the “strong one,” the “fixer,” or the “people pleaser.” Whether it's codependency, imposter syndrome, perfectionism, or trauma-driven relationships, I guide clients out of the past and into their Authentic Self—the version of themselves they were always meant to be.

I work with emotionally intelligent people who feel like they “should” be able to handle things but secretly feel overwhelmed, unseen, or lost. Therapy with me isn't about coping—it's about changing how your brain is wired so you can finally live from a place of clarity, courage, and connection.

If you're ready to stop managing symptoms and start transforming the root of the issue, I'm here to help. Reach out at www.annedranitsaris.com. Because you don't have to keep carrying what was never yours to hold.