

Difficult People Lesson *Relationships are mirrors*

Difficult people, by definition, are those who trigger your negative, judgmental thoughts and uncomfortable emotions. What’s up with that? Do you want to buckle down on the judgements and blame or search for insight and life lessons? Difficult people teach us about our unhealed issues and human imperfections. Once you learn the lesson, you are no longer triggered. What we do not love or accept about ourselves, we will find irritating or annoying in others. To dig deeper into your issues, complete the exercise below for each difficult person in your life.

My difficult person is _____.

List all of your complaints about your difficult person. Use additional paper as needed.

S/he/they _____

S/he/they _____

S/he/they _____

S/he/they _____

Your list may look something like this one:

My difficult person is my partner, parent, child, sibling, in-law, friend, co-worker or boss.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <i>S/h/they makes me feel inadequate.</i> | <i>S/h/they is never satisfied with anything I do.</i> |
| <i>S/h/they is difficult to talk to.</i> | <i>S/h/they try to control me with guilt or manipulation.</i> |
| <i>S/h/they has a temper.</i> | <i>S/h/they is not honest with me.</i> |
| <i>S/h/they doesn’t accept me.</i> | <i>S/h/they does not treat me with love or kindness.</i> |
| <i>S/h/they doesn’t listen.</i> | <i>S/h/they think I am a failure.</i> |

Transform your blame into insight.

Cross out the name of your difficult person and replace it with the word “**me.**” **The sentence now reads: “My difficult person is me.”** Using your list of complaints about your difficult person, cross out the word **s/he/they** and insert the word “**I**”.

Your transformed list may now look something like this one: *My difficult person is me.*

- | | |
|--|---|
| <i>I make myself feel inadequate.</i> | <i>I am never satisfied with anything I do.
(Also consider...I am never satisfied with them).</i> |
| <i>I am difficult to talk to</i> | <i>(Also consider I have difficulty talking with myself).</i> |
| <i>I control myself with guilt or manipulation.</i> | <i>(Also consider I control others with guilt or)</i> |
| <i>I have a temper.</i> | <i>I am not honest with myself.</i> |
| <i>I don’t accept myself.</i> | <i>I do not treat myself lovingly or kindly.</i> |
| <i>I don’t listen to myself.</i> | <i>I think I am a failure.</i> |

Projection provides emotional protection.

Projection is a *psychological defense mechanism* whereby one "projects" one's own undesirable thoughts, motivations, desires, and feelings onto someone else. Until you completed the sentences on the previous page, you had no idea that you were projecting YOUR own issues onto your difficult person. When you report what YOU THINK someone else is thinking, you are usually acknowledging your own thought process. The thought bubbles below illustrate projection.



- ☞ **Telling someone how they feel is [checkers cheating](#).** Fair play is either asking them how they feel, or owning your thoughts/emotions. "I don't feel respected or loved"
- ☞ **Self-critical people are quick to feel criticized or unloved by others.**
- ☞ **The more self-critical you are, the more difficult it is for you to believe or respect that another person's relationship with you has positive intention.**
- ☞ **Self-critical, judgmental people may also be more critical and judgmental of others.**
- ☞ **Your urge to blame others offers an opportunity for inner self-reflection.**

Additional Insight

Your history plays a key role in projection reflection. The next time you encounter your difficult person ask yourself,

1. *"How do **I** really feel? No more focus on the other person, what is going on **within me**?"*
2. *"When have **I** felt like this before, what does this remind **me** of, do **I** have a pattern?"*
3. *How old do **I** feel around my difficult person? Do **I** feel infantile or childlike? An angry toddler or rebellious teen? Do **I** feel like an older authority figure—a parent, or boss?"*
4. *Where am in on [the map](#)? What do I want [to choose](#)?"*