

NAVIGATING DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS: STRATEGIES FOR DEALING WITH CHALLENGING PEOPLE



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BIO

- Over two decades of experience in library administration and leadership roles.
- Robust background from directing public libraries and managing educational resources to coordinating web services.
- Experience includes the Department of Corrections, Juvenile Services, and Mental Health Management. Over 132 hours of hands-on education in mental health. M.A.N.D.T certified by the State of Nebraska.
- Expert in learning technologies, change management, human resource management, finance oversight, and employee development.
- Hold a Master's in Information Science & Learning Technologies and an MBA in Human Resource Management.



Ever find yourself at the end of your rope?



Getting yelled at by patrons?



WHAT CAN CAUSE ESCALATION?

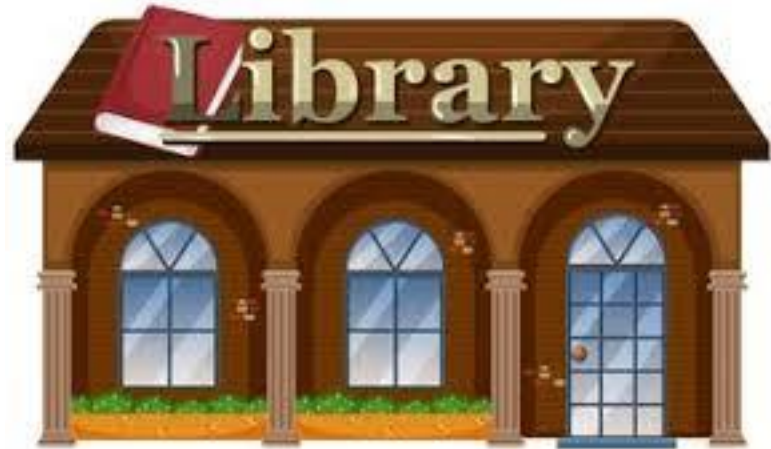
- Not enough clarity on tasks/roles
- Clashing personalities and values
- Poor communication
- Overwhelming workloads
- Exclusion and marginalization



WHERE ARE DIFFICULT PEOPLE?

○ Everywhere

- Work
- Home
- School
- At a store
- At a public location
- In the parking lot
- In line at the grocery store
- **At the library**
- Airport
- Restaurant



DIFFICULT PEOPLE: DEFINITION

- A person not easily convinced, pleased, or satisfied
- Someone that is hard to deal with
- Someone difficult to control
- Someone with whom it isn't easy to work/deal with



QUALITIES OF HARD-TO-HANDLE PEOPLE

- hair-trigger defensiveness that obliterates the ability to listen,
- a sense of worthlessness that leads people to bulk up self-esteem by putting down others, just to name a few,
- meanness.





- Raised voices
- Increase pitch or tone of voice
- Offensive language
- Parroting



EXAMPLES

- Customer returning a broken item to a store but lost the receipt
- Person that does not realize their behavior is offensive or disruptive to the workplace
- Co-worker that can't take criticism / is NEVER wrong
- Professional that knows everything and can never learn from someone else
- Customer who calls to get late fees waived
- Classmate that talks all the time and disrupts the learning process



WHY ARE THEY DIFFICULT TO DEAL WITH?



PERSONALITY CONFLICTS

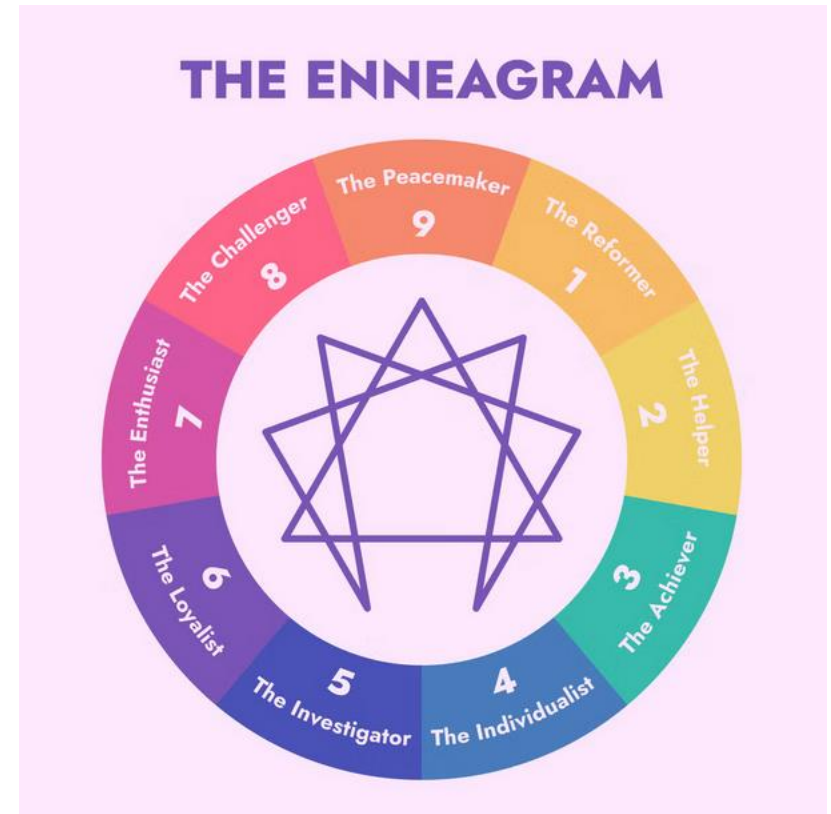


- There are 9 types of personalities in Enneagram test.
- Personalities can cause conflict just because they exist.
- Need to recognize that we all don't think the same way. Personality differences.
- Recognize personality issues and respond accordingly.
- Learn to work with other types of personalities.
- Enneagram Test



PERSONALITY CONFLICTS

- There are various tests and personality types.
- Personalities can cause conflict just because they differ.
- Need to recognize that we don't all think the same way. Personality differences.
- Recognize personality issues and respond accordingly.
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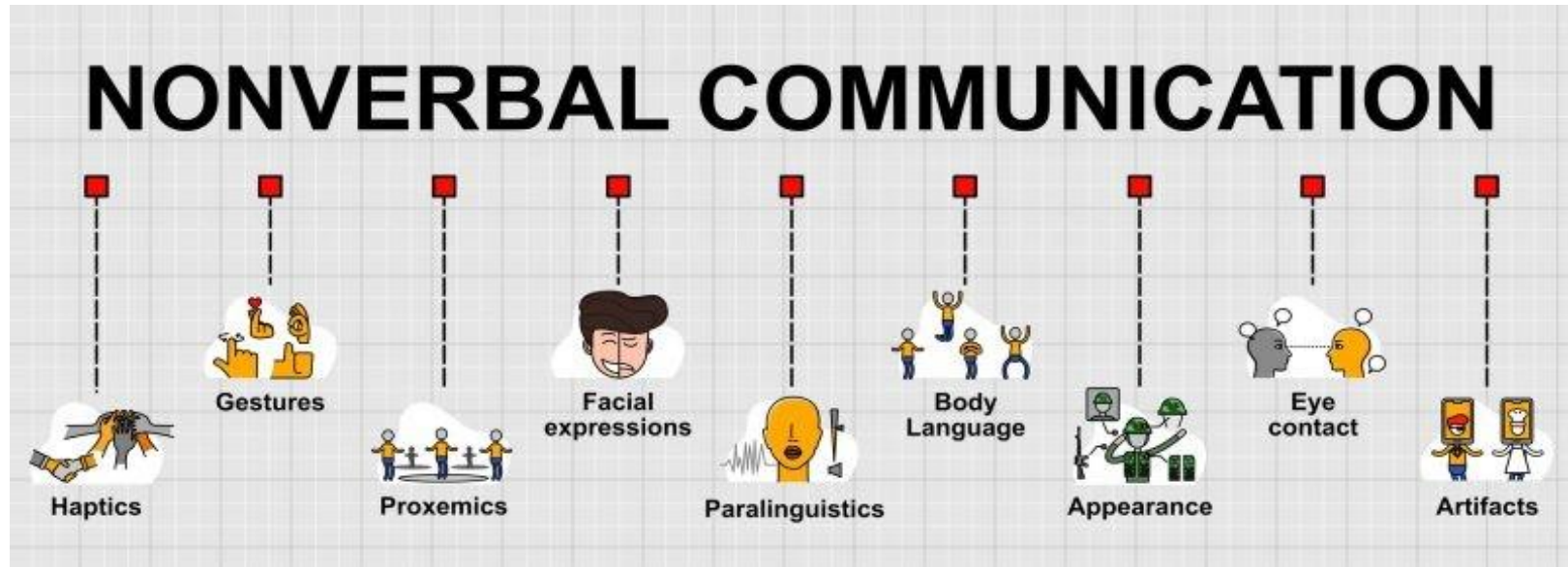
CONFLICT RESOLUTION BY TYPE

- 1. Show respect and have proof, facts, and knowledge to back up your attitude and capture One's attention.
- 2. Validate their emotions, show them the respect they deserve, and move on to facts only when you are sure they feel seen and heard.
- 3. Focus on facts, logic, and practical aspects of the situation to get their attention.
- 4. Never point out how sensitive they are. Share your feelings and validate theirs.
- 5. Fives will do everything in their power to avoid direct confrontation. If you have anything to discuss with them, you must inform them in advance, set up a meeting, and act calmly and rationally.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION BY TYPE

- 6. You need to be open, reliable, honest, and respectful. If you get into an argument with them, be sure to be yourself.
- 7. Conflicts with 7 are fun and inspiring experiences. They are not aggressive, stubborn, or irrational, and they always offer fresh takes on an issue. Keep an open mind, foster their imagination, and refrain from criticism and aggression.
- 8. Be direct, honest, and patient with them.
- 9. Keep it low-key; don't put them under pressure to take sides and make final choices. Listen actively and encourage to express their needs about the issue.

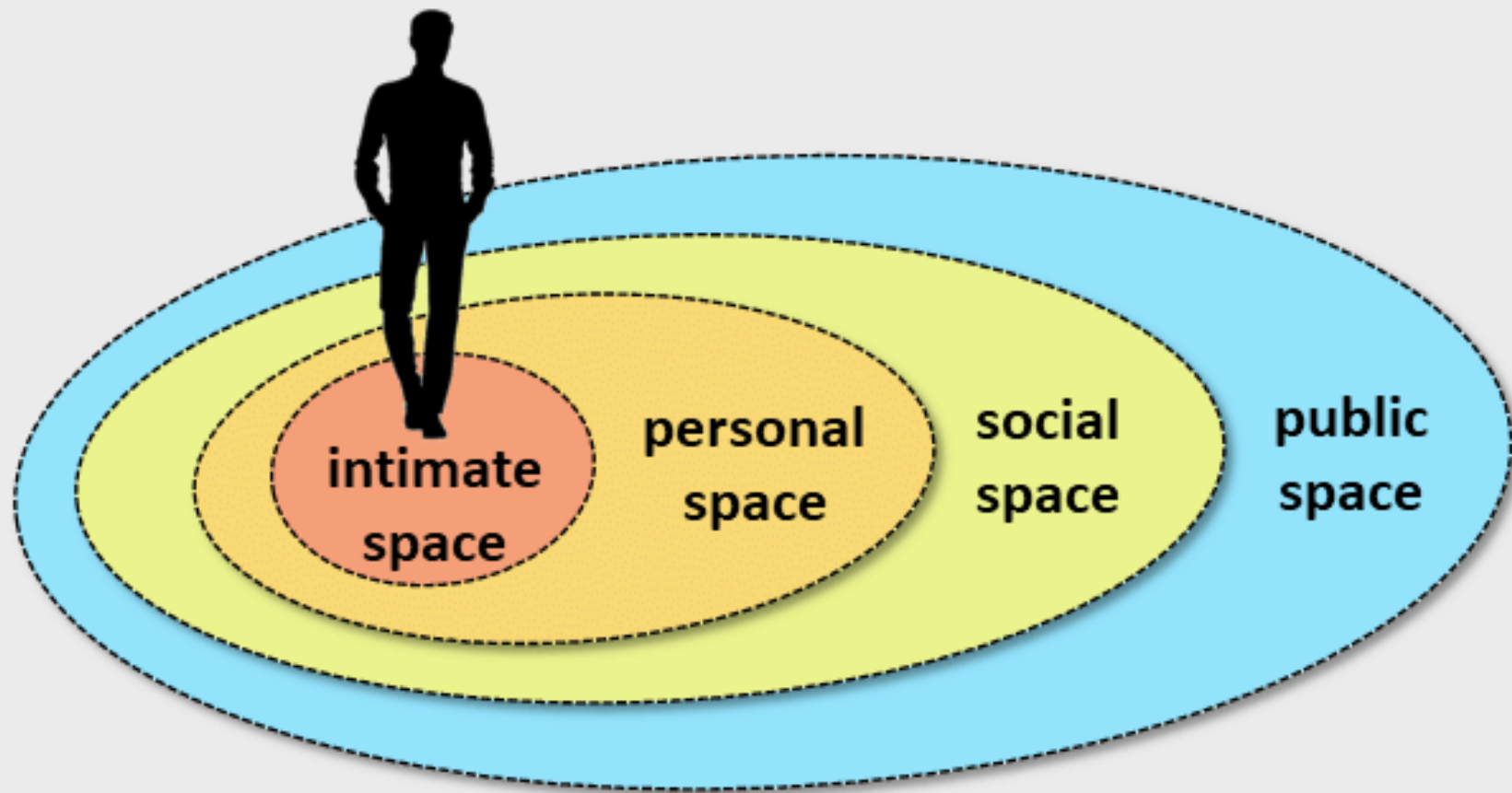
NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION PROBLEMS



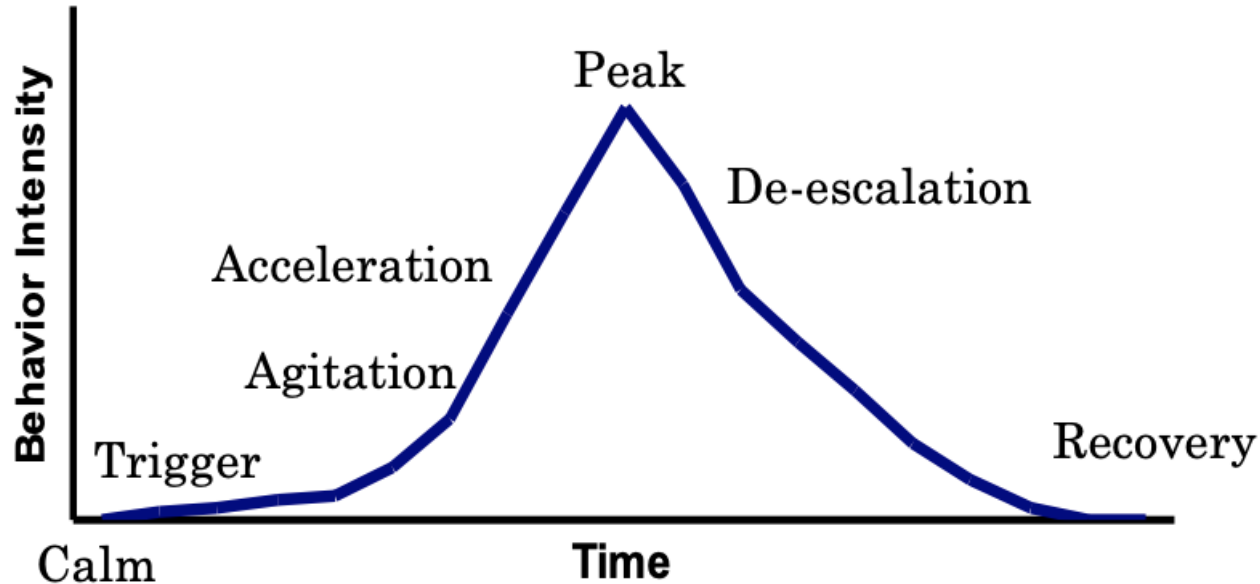
<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/power-nonverbal-communication-jeffrey-sun-ow39c/>

- 70% of your communication comes from nonverbal actions
- You may be speaking one thing, but your body says another
- What does multi-tasking while talking say?
- Space/proximity
 - Personal
 - Public
 - Social





ESCALATION STAGES



1. Trigger – what set them off (can be small or big) – level 1
2. Agitation – stew about it or conversation deteriorates - level 2-3
3. Acceleration – conversation or bad response from staff - level 3-7
4. Peak - no thinking – all emotions - jumps level 7 - 10
5. De-escalation – calming down – may reboot anytime
6. Recovery – almost calm/not out of woods – may retrigger



HOW TO USE KNOWLEDGE OF LEVELS

- Level 1-7 is where you try to de-escalate people. Prefer to keep them 1-4 to keep them thinking clearly.
- Once a person reaches level 7 they are no longer using their brain – testosterone & emotion have taken over
- Violence can ensue Level 7 – 10
- Once de-escalation begins, do not “stir the pot” again. Be careful to not fan the flames.
- Goal should always be to keep them from getting to level 7
- Recognize people who may trigger faster than others- know when to cut your losses



RESOLUTION

57 Phrases to De-Escalate Any Angry Customer



Myra Golden
Presents

57 PHRASES

**TO DE-ESCALATE ANY
ANGRY CUSTOMER**



IN THE WORKPLACE

- Must follow proper procedures. Policies must follow the law.
 - Read the employee handbook & the union contract.
 - Document, document, document.
 - Attitude should reflect the situation. When it comes time to “be the boss”, then act like one.
 - Try to correct the behavior, including follow-up.
 - May have to dismiss the person or change jobs if the situation can't be remedied.
 - No job is worth the stress of lack of management and difficult co-workers that are not dealt with.
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ATTITUDE IS EVERYTHING

- Emotional intelligence (EI) is the ability to identify, assess, and control the emotions of oneself, of others, and of groups
- BE STRONG WHEN NEEDED
- BE LENIENT WHEN NEEDED
- BE THE BOSS WHEN NEEDED
- BE SYMPATHETIC WHEN NEEDED
- Attitude drives the situation. If you can't match your attitude to the situation, it may escalate.
- Know your weaknesses when it comes to communication. Improve them or know when to step aside and let someone else handle the situation. (Are you the problem?).



CUSTOMER SERVICE

- **Listen with empathy** (STAY CALM)
 - Don't comment. Let them speak.
 - Hear why they are angry. Try to be in their shoes.
 - Use good body language. (open stance)
- **Apologize** (even if you are not wrong) (STAY CALM)
 - NEVER RAISE YOUR VOICE – speak softly
 - “I am so sorry you have gone through this”
 - “I am very sorry the product did not meet your needs”
 - “I am sorry you were not satisfied with the service”
- **Take responsibility** (own the problem) (STAY CALM)
 - Our library prides itself on quality
 - We want to make our customers happy
- **Plan for a resolution** (STAY CALM)
 - Alternative resolution / Flex rules to satisfy customer



DEBRIEF AND GET SUPPORT

- Talk with supervisors and coworkers about situation to debrief.
- Speak with supervisors about how far you can bend the rules when dealing with situations.
- Regular team meetings helpful.
- If have to deal with difficult people often, can cause burn-out: Headaches, Stress, Tired, Depression
- Ask supervisor or director for help when you see that patron come in – if they have been abusive in the past and it didn't go well, let someone else try – authority sometimes helps.



SITUATIONS WITH NO RESOLUTION

- Customer continues to yell / can't be appeased
 - Need to know when enough is enough – don't let the situation get out of hand.
 - Being yelled at or disrespected IS NOT acceptable and should NOT be allowed to happen.
 - Ask them to step to the side until a manager can arrive to work with them. Need to keep line moving. Indicate the people waiting.
 - If customer is swearing, "Excuse me but if you continue to swear at me or be vulgar, I will have to disconnect/call security/ask you to leave, etc..."
 - Have a relationship with local law enforcement ahead of time – use emergency buttons or call 911



LIBRARY PATRONS ARE SAINTS...AREN'T THEY?

- Bad Behavior in the Library: (0-2:50)
- <http://wsvn.com/news/investigations/check-this-out-librarian-raises-security-concern-after-incidents-at-broward-county-libraries/>
- Bad Behavior in Barnes and Noble
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uv7LwFPp3SY>

