



DEALING WITH DIFFICULT PEOPLE

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We all encounter people with whom we have difficulty dealing.

Transactional Analysis or TA provides resources that help us cope with difficult people. Hi, Wayne Hart here, sharing some thoughts about applying TA.

There are a lot of different ways that people seem difficult, from frustrating, tedious, and wrong-thinking, to argumentative, threatening, and dangerous.

One skill for coping with difficult people is managing our attitude toward them. That means paying attention to two different things about a person at the same time...their actions and their essence.

It is natural, and important, for us to pay attention to people's actions. Actions are what make people seem agreeable or difficult. Sometimes we applaud actions. Sometimes we confront or avoid them.

But what causes us to experience a person as "difficult"? That label comes from us based on our experience in response to the other person's actions. We interpret or judge the other person's action based on how it impacts us. The impact we experience is a pattern of thinking, feeling, and acting. TA calls such patterns ego-states.

For example, imagine that someone tells a joke. Several people experience it as funny, and they laugh. A couple of other people experience it as tasteless and disgusting, and they frown and criticize the joke teller. All the people heard the same joke. But different people experience a different impact. We create the impact, not the joke teller. We are responsible for the impact we experience, though we tend to blame the joke teller: "He made me laugh!" or "She disgusted me!"

Since we can influence the impact someone has on us, we can modify that impact. TA provides tools to help us do that. One is thinking about how the other person is OK, regardless of their actions which might be totally not OK. So, what does a "You are OK" attitude toward another person really mean?

The particular actions, associated with the impact we experience, are the other person's way of meeting 3 universal needs, or as Eric Berne called them in Transactional Analysis, psychological hungers. They include "Stimulation," "Recognition," and "Structure." We all have the same needs, though we satisfy them in different ways. A "You're OK" attitude, or life position, means that we respect the fundamental human striving to satisfy those needs. That is their essence, even when we disapprove of the actions a person takes to do so.

We can help ourselves have a more resilient and flexible response and reaction to disagreeable actions by practicing the "You're OK" life position attitude, at the same time we are coping with the difficult actions. This is not easy, but you can practice and get better at it.

Before I end, please hear me say this. I am not arguing against dealing directly with another person's actions. Sometimes we need to confront, negotiate, set limits to, or explore them. Applying this TA tool simply makes it easier to get the best results by coping with an attitude, in us, that respects the other person's essence.

I invite you to download the text of this video. And I invite you to learn more about essence, impact, ego-states, psychological hungers, and life position at TransactionalAnalysisNow.com, or TA-Now.com,



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where we offer the Applying TA Basics Workshop, which is a good place to learn about TA. We offer the TA User's Group which is a good place to get coaching and support for becoming better at using TA. And we offer TA Practitioner training and supervision for people who want to apply TA in their work-lives.

In closing, when someone's actions trigger a negative impact within you, respect both your need to cope with the action and the other person's need to satisfy those three psychological hungers, which is their essence.

I'm Wayne Hart wishing you an "I'm OK, You're OK" life experience.

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March 2023