



Connie Podesta's Life Would Be Easy Series - Part 1 Communication: The Good & The Bad

By Connie Podesta

Let's face it – there's some real intolerable, grumpy, difficult people in this world-- and more than likely you're running into them on a daily basis thinking, "What the heck? Why do they have to be LIKE THAT?"

Truth is, there are a whole lot of reasons they are and we're going to walk you through the good, the bad and the ugly of it so that you can better steer clear of the ones that are over-the-top trouble and leverage the ones whose actions can help you. I'm also going to share how to assert yourself in situations to get what you need, what you deserve and make it clear to the "my way is the highway" people out there that you mean business and your needs and opinions count! (Be prepared, however--you just might realize that once in a while YOU are the difficult person! Oh my!)

The Good News...and the Bad

What's funny (and not in a ha-ha kind of way) is that difficult people have really been trained and taught to act the way they do since they were children. In fact, many have been rewarded for their negative behavior throughout their **entire** lives. Difficult behavior worked for them as children, and more importantly, it continues to work for them as adults. That makes that whole "but I can change them thing" seem like a tough ship to turn around doesn't it?

I truly believe that most of us are born with the capacity and desire to love and be loved. As we grow, we learn to respond to verbal and visual cues, and we begin to adjust our behavior to obtain the positive responses we want. Children who can manipulate their parents soon learn to enjoy feelings of power and control over others.

When it comes down to it...The game of life is basically about getting our needs met. And guess what? You play a part! We reward difficult people by giving in to their needs. Think about it. If someone's behavior is consistently inappropriate or unacceptable toward you, ask yourself if in any way you are rewarding their negative behavior.

Here – I'll give you an example: Helen gets upset every time Harry mentions that he wants to play golf. Rather than face a two-hour lecture, Harry usually finds it easier to just stay home. One day though he gets angry and accuses her of being a nag who never understands him. Instead of answering back, Helen gets her feelings hurt, stomps off, and gives Harry the silent treatment. He takes advantage of her "cold shoulder" and plays a few holes of golf! NOTE: Harry did NOT view her silent treatment as a punishment (as Helen intended) but rather as a REWARD!

Jennifer wins the same "reward" at her new school. Few of the kids would talk to her and some were even making fun of her. She asked to stay in during recess, but the teacher said no. Eventually she gets into a fight and pushes another girl down. The teacher tells Jennifer that fighting is against the rules and she will have to stay inside. What did Jennifer learn? Ask the teacher respectfully and you will not get what you want. Push someone around and you can avoid recess!

Any bells ringing yet?

We have three choices each time we respond to another person:

- 1.) be positive
- 2.) be negative
- 3.) avoid or ignore them

Here's a little tip: Difficult people see avoidance as a **positive** response. They win! When we ignore unacceptable, inappropriate behavior, it will usually happen again because our avoidance tells the difficult person that we are willing to accept their behavior.

What do they really want?

Difficult people want to do their own thing, in their own time, in their own way, without interference. In addition, they expect everyone around them to cooperate – even work extra hard – to ensure that this happens. And they do not see anything unreasonable about these expectations. There is little in their experience to signal them that their actions are inappropriate. They also really have very little (if any) desire or motivation to change their habits.

Holy cow! So what's a person to do?

First up – know this: Change a difficult person? Nope, probably not going to happen. But – we can change **OURSELVES** and our **REACTIONS** to their behavior. Listen, they can't go it alone. Those tough nuts NEED our **cooperation and permission** to intimidate, control and repeatedly manipulate us to get their way. Here's where we get to interject the big: **ACCESS DENIED!**

In most relationships, we are treated exactly the way we allow ourselves to be treated. The **good news** is that because we are partly responsible, we've got **OPTIONS!** (Love those!) By focusing on **ourselves** and the changes we can make in our own behaviors and reactions, we can begin to take control of how other people treat us – today! **R-E-S-P-E-C-T!** (Aretha Franklin would be so proud!)--I know--those of you under 40 don't even know who Aretha is. Look her up on YouTube--great songs with great messages.

No more tolerating their behavior and attitudes as “part of life.” No more holding back our feelings and swallowing our words. No more making concessions even when we do not receive anything in return. No more compromising even when it is 90/10 instead of 50/50. And for the love of Pete, (who is Pete anyway?) no more questioning our own ability to relate and communicate with others reasoning that, “Maybe it’s me.”

Here’s your homework...Take Action!

Think about two difficult people in your life. Identify the behaviors of these difficult people. Ask yourself if you’re doing something – anything – that could possibly be rewarding these difficult people. If so – how you will handle them in the future.

Next up – (this is the tougher part) - Would they describe YOU as the difficult person? Were you seeing any of yourself in the traits we’ve covered? If so – it’s time for a change.

If you’re DONE dealing with DIFFICULT people and you’re eager to learn more techniques and strategies for making the most of your life and career, then visit my site at www.conniepodesta.com today!