

Navigating Difficult Situations in the Workplace

How to control your reactions
and respond effectively



Program Workbook

Video Session 1

By **Kathy Obear, Ed.D.**

Navigating Difficult Situations in the Workplace: How to control your reactions and respond effectively

The 6 training videos that
correspond to each section of this
workbook can be found at:

www.drkathyobear.com

You don't have to be miserable at work. You don't have to fight every battle or suffer fools any longer. You don't have to live in fear that your colleagues and supervisor will think you are incompetent when you are about to explode in anger or burst into tears.

This program will help you respond effectively in difficult situations and leave with your integrity intact.

I know you can control your emotional reactions because I have helped thousands of leaders navigate challenging, emotional workplace dilemmas.

My wish for you is to find the respect and joy you deserve at work. You can speak your truth and stand in your power. I hope you join me on this journey.



Dr. Kathy Obear has over 30 years of experience as an organizational development consultant and trainer specializing in creating inclusion, team and organizational effectiveness, conflict resolution, and change management. She has given speeches, facilitated training sessions, and consulted to top leaders at hundreds of universities, corporations, human service agencies, and K-12 organizations across the United States and internationally designed to increase the passion, competence, and commitment to create inclusive environments for all members of the organization. Kathy is regarded as an expert at training leaders and facilitators to navigate difficult dialogues and triggering events. She is a certified Life Coach and an Executive Coach and delights in supporting people to reach their potential and live their best life.

Kathy Obear, Ed.D.

The Six Part Process

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Part 1

What Pushes Your Buttons?

Video Session 1

The first step to having more control over your emotions at work is to recognize the types of situations and comments that set you off or make you want to shut down and leave. Knowing your “hot buttons” and “triggers” will not only help you anticipate and prepare how to better respond, but also give you insights into how to avoid these incidents in the first place.

In this initial session you will identify the common difficult workplace situations in which you feel unexpected, intense emotional reactions and respond in unproductive ways. You no longer have to automatically react like this ever again. There is a way out.

Further Consequences of Mismanaged Difficult Situations

Directions: As you review the following, check (☑) which of these seem familiar to you in your current work environment.

- ☐ There is much more tension, stress, discomfort and conflict in the workplace
- ☐ Our work relationships are damaged, possibly beyond repair
- ☐ We end up over-working to complete projects when others refuse to work with us or passive-aggressively “forget” to complete assignments on time
- ☐ Peers and supervisors don’t trust us or depend on us as much
- ☐ We are left out of the loop and not included in important discussions and meetings
- ☐ Others hold grudges towards us and gossip in ways that may damage our reputation
- ☐ We are often misunderstood and misinterpreted
- ☐ We keep obsessing about the difficult dynamics and miss what’s going on around us in the present moment
- ☐ Team dynamics feel more competitive than collegial
- ☐ There is far more debating as people try to win arguments rather than find creative solutions to workplace dilemmas
- ☐ We often feel guilty or ashamed for how we reacted
- ☐ We waste a lot of time and energy in follow-up meetings and workplace gossip
- ☐ We feel depleted, exhausted, alone, and isolated

How Do You React in Less Than Productive Ways

Directions: Below, write about a recent difficult workplace situation in which you felt a wave of unexpected, intense emotions and you reacted “on automatic pilot” in a way you later regretted.

What happened?



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How did you feel?



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What did you do?



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What was unproductive about your reaction? How did it negatively impact others?



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As you look back, how would you have wanted to react in more productive ways?



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A Time You Responded Effectively

Directions: Below, write about a recent difficult workplace situation in which you felt a wave of unexpected, intense emotions and you reacted in effective, productive ways that aligned with your core values and furthered organizational goals.

What happened?



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How did you feel?



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What did you do?



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What was productive about your reaction? How did it positively impact others?
And advance organizational goals?



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As you look back, what do you believe helped you to respond effectively in
this situation?



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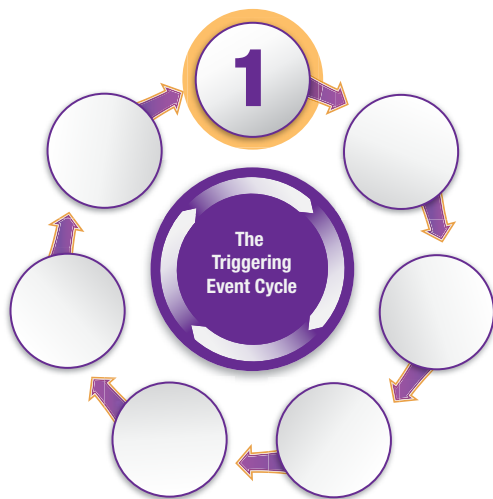
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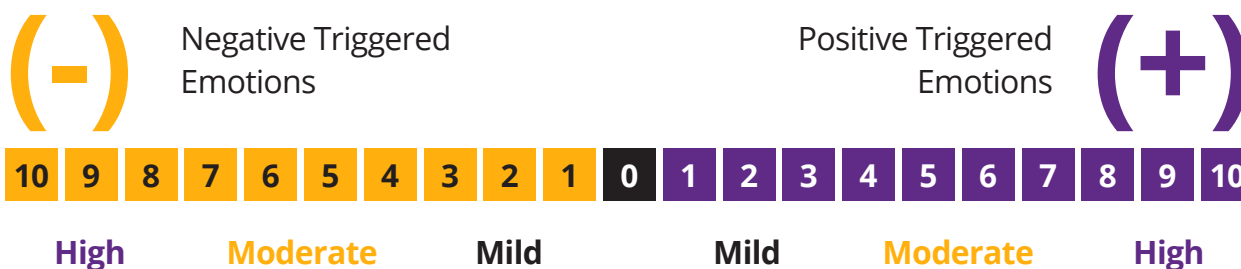
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Step 1: Identify Your Common Hot Buttons

Directions: Below is a list of some of the difficult workplace situations people have shared with me over the years. As you read each one, consider how much of an emotional reaction you would most likely have in that situation. Use the following -10 to +10 scale to rate each item.



A When someone (colleague, direct report, supervisor, client, etc.):

- Doesn't do what you ask or follow your instructions
- Doesn't acknowledge or respect your leadership
- Takes over as you are leading a meeting or making a presentation
- Doesn't follow through on what they said they would do
- Produces low-quality work
- Keeps making the same mistakes
- Is not very competent at their job
- Takes advantage of you
- Takes your idea and presents it as their own
- Takes credit for your work
- Keeps you out of the loop or excludes you from important conversations

- | | |
|---|----------------------|
| ➤ Lies to you | <input type="text"/> |
| ➤ Engages in side conversations during meetings | <input type="text"/> |
| ➤ Is on their computer or cell phone during meetings when you are talking to them | <input type="text"/> |
| ➤ Gets distracted when they are talking to you | <input type="text"/> |
| ➤ Goes behind your back to undermine you | <input type="text"/> |
| ➤ Gossips about you | <input type="text"/> |
| ➤ Gets angry about what you said or did | <input type="text"/> |
| ➤ Is moving too slowly, slowing down your agenda | <input type="text"/> |
| ➤ Tries to derail the planned approach or agenda | <input type="text"/> |
| ➤ Is late and keeps you waiting | <input type="text"/> |
| ➤ Interrupts you or others | <input type="text"/> |
| ➤ Ignores your ideas | <input type="text"/> |
| ➤ Cuts off the conversation before you have a chance to express your thoughts | <input type="text"/> |
| ➤ Loves an idea only after someone else suggests something very similar to what you had recently said | <input type="text"/> |
| ➤ Dismisses your ideas | <input type="text"/> |
| ➤ Rephrases or rewords your comments | <input type="text"/> |
| ➤ "Corrects" you in public | <input type="text"/> |
| ➤ Is belittling or demeaning | <input type="text"/> |
| ➤ Is controlling | <input type="text"/> |
| ➤ Dominates the air time | <input type="text"/> |
| ➤ Continually brings the conversation back to their ideas and opinions | <input type="text"/> |
| ➤ Will not consider your input and thoughts | <input type="text"/> |

- Keeps pushing their point
- Is unwilling to listen to others
- Has a very blunt or impersonal style
- Has an aggressive or forceful style
- Disrupts the conversation with "jokes," inappropriate laughter
- Makes snide, sarcastic, or passive aggressive comments
- Is arrogant or self-righteous
- Is patronizing or condescending
- Makes an insensitive or offensive comment
- Raises their voice to try to silence you or others
- Demonstrates bullying or threatening behavior
- Wants others to calm down, just "get over it," and move on
- Accuses others of complaining when they raise concerns about exclusion or what is not working well
- Only focuses on how much progress has been made, rather than on how much more needs to change
- Shuts down and withdraws if you try to confront them
- Is "set in their ways" and unwilling to shift their perspective
- Pressures you or others to assimilate, fit in, and "not rock the boat"
- Mistakenly assumes someone else is the leader when you are
- Gives excuses or PLEs (Perfectly Logical Explanations) for disrespectful comments and behaviors
- Rationalizes away disrespectful and inappropriate treatment of others as individual incidents or the result of something the target of the behavior did or failed to do
- Defends others whose behavior is disrespectful and offensive

- Colludes and “goes along to get along” ☐
- Will only focus on their “good intent,” and not the impact of their behavior ☐
- Is only focused on themselves as a “good person” and refuses to acknowledge the cumulative impact of their repeated negative behaviors ☐
- Refuses to consider feedback from you or others ☐
- Debates and disagrees with everything you say ☐
- Believes they are always right ☐
- Pouts if they don’t get their way ☐
- Challenges the validity of the information or statistics being presented ☐
- Criticizes your style or approach ☐
- Never gives any positive or appreciative feedback ☐
- Questions your competency or that of others ☐
- Gives unsolicited coaching or advice on how you should act, think, or feel ☐
- Only appreciates and acknowledges other people’s work, not yours ☐
- Is given a prime opportunity to advance but you are not, even though you have far more experience and competence ☐
- Doesn’t volunteer for difficult team assignments and you end up doing all the work ☐
- Does something unethical or dishonest ☐
- Is talking loudly in an impromptu meeting outside your office or cubicle ☐
- Introduces your peers with their titles or degrees, and introduces you by your first name ☐
- Sends you a blasting, critical email and copies your supervisor ☐
- Is more concerned with protecting their “turf” than achieving the overall goals ☐

B When your supervisor or manager:

- Insists on you doing something a certain way, then changes their mind after you have invested significant time and energy in the project ☐
- Micromanages and second-guesses you ☐
- Is controlling rather than inspiring and empowering ☐
- Expects that you stop what you are doing and focus on what they want you to do ☐
- Doesn't ask for your input in decisions that affect your work ☐
- Doesn't give you as much guidance and direction as you ask for, and then is highly critical of the outcome you produced ☐
- Expresses their disappointment in you, your work ☐
- Gives you very vague, critical feedback ☐
- Is more ego-driven than mission-driven ☐
- Wastes your time in mismanaged meetings ☐
- Doesn't pass along critical information from senior leaders ☐
- Avoids holding all employees accountable for high-quality work ☐
- Has favorites and "go to" members of the team ☐
- Avoids making the hard decisions and makes you play the "bad cop" ☐
- Does not hold people accountable for low quality work, poor performance ☐
- Accuses you of something you did not do ☐
- Gets defensive and argumentative ☐
- Confronts you about your behavior but not others who do the same thing ☐
- Expects you to work late and come in early for no additional compensation ☐

- Is angry with you
- Is only concerned with “moving up the ladder” and “looking good” to the leader
- Gives you a challenging “stretch” assignment (something “positive” can still be triggering)

C When you

- Make a mistake or an error
- Do or say something inappropriate or offensive
- Do not know the answer to a question
- Don't know what to say or do next
- Don't have a solution to a problem
- Can't figure out how to effectively respond in a difficult situation
- Believe the conversation is about to “get out of control”
- Are the only person to bring up controversial issues
- Have a strong opinion and no one else agrees with you
- Get promoted to an exciting new position (something “positive” can still be triggering)

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EXECUTIVE/LIFE COACH



choose courage. speak your truth. live on purpose.

If you are interested in inviting me to speak to the members of your organization or if you would like to explore ways to work with me as an Executive Coach or Life Coach, please contact me:

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