

Dealing with Difficult Situations and Difficult People

Not everyone is a joy and pleasure to be around every day. We all have our good days and our bad days. On some days personalities, actions, behavior and/or dispositions may not come close to the tolerable level but still we need to interact with them. Tolerance levels can be raised by understanding what they are all about.

When individuals are labeled “difficult” it generally means that others have problems interacting with them. Since difficulty is all about unmet needs, the behaviors which make people hard to get along with are the result of their needs not being met.

When needs are not met, people react in different ways and may become:

- Withdrawn – retreat and refuse to interact
- Uncooperative – not willing to respond or be helpful
- Manipulative – use devices or dishonest means
- Critical – find real or perceived faults in others
- Intimidating – bully others to make them do something or not do something

Difficult personalities display certain types of behavioral patterns. Being familiar with these patterns will enable Home Care Assistants to better work with these clients more effectively.

A difficult person might knowingly or unknowingly:

- Take the opposite point of view regardless of what the issues or opinions are.
- Complain, whine and blame others constantly
- Not let an issue go, even when situations are different. This affects other people by causing them to feel frustrated and drained.

Don’t make the difficulty an issue. Try not to hold their behavior against them, but try to understand where they’re coming from.

Avoid making judgments against them as people. Show that you value their opinions.

Be kind and treat them how you think they would like to be treated.

Ask them what they want. This will be a good starting point for developing an understanding trust between you and them.

It is inevitable that Home Care Assistants will face complaining clients – some days the complaints will seem endless. If Home Care Assistants know what to do, they will feel less stressed. Knowing and applying a few simple principles can minimize or sometimes eliminate complaints:

- Pay attention by listening carefully and objectively
- Be empathetic and sincere in your desire to help
- Avoid defensive reactions
- Don't give excuses or place blame

Dealing with angry clients can be an awkward and uneasy task, especially if you are not familiar with the techniques. However, there are a few things Home Care Assistants can do to prevent them from becoming even more emotional:

- Remain calm, speak slowly, soften/lower your voice
- Acknowledge the person's anger
- Get the facts...this will allow you to focus on the issue and not their emotions
- Maintain an open and friendly demeanor
- Resist the temptation to fight back. Keep your emotions under control – respond instead of react.

Conflict occurs when people do not get what they want and are looking after their own self interests. Sometimes they are not aware of the need and unconsciously start to act out. Other times they know exactly what they want and actively try to get it. Below are some tips for dealing with conflict:

- Remain calm
- Explore all relevant information concerning the event
- Explore solutions that would benefit all concerned
- Offer fair exchange proposals

Negativity is not uncommon in the general population. Negativity can be due to dispositions, attitudes or it can be caused by certain events or individuals. Home Care Assistants may have clients who are negative but there are methods that can be used to prevent this negativity from getting them down:

- Realize it's useless to argue
- Keep your self confidence
- Be positive
- Don't allow yourself to be verbally abused
- Be polite, but firm, as appropriate

Remember, at the core of every conflict is an unmet need. Ask yourself, what is the unmet need in this situation?