



Creating Positive Relationships

by Barb Abramson

Copyright © 2015 Barb Abramson all rights reserved

Why can't we all just get along?

It's an age-old question that really has no definitive answer. But what we can do is create our own personal environment that when projected outward, builds and strengthens relationships.

There are really several factors involved and they apply to adults in a business environment and to kids as well. Imagine, if we were all raised to respect, assist and be kind to each other, what a changed and enlightened world this would be!

Sooner or later, we all encounter "difficult" people. Perhaps they are nice people having a not-so-nice day or maybe they just are not nice. In business, the ability to deal with a difficult person or situation will enable you to really stand out as the group leader. It also has the pleasant side effect of making your life easier and much more pleasant in the long run.

While this information is priceless for adults, children can reap great benefit from it as well. They too have many challenges in school and if they do not have the skills to deal with difficult kids, they often get picked on or bullied. While this epidemic needs to end, until then, you can protect your child by giving them the tools they need to navigate the awkward years as they transition into adults. The more skills they have in dealing with others, the greater their confidence and success as adults will be.

Let's start with Perception

Who is that difficult person you are dealing with? Does thinking about them irritate you? Do you try to avoid them so they don't ruin your day? Do you stiffen up each time you have to interact with them?

Let's take a step back and ask a deeper question.

Are others looking at you the same way you are looking at them? People can read each other. They recognize characteristics in others that they either embody, good or bad, or they wish they had. When you are encountering someone you perceive as difficult, if you are honest, you have to look inward as well. Is there anything you are contributing to the situation?

Changing how you interact with others can change how they interact with you.

This doesn't mean you are a bad person or have negative qualities. Not at all! It is all about awareness of simple things such as a smile, body language, attention to detail, attention to the conversation. As you become aware of yourself, you will begin to understand how others are reacting to you.

Perhaps the person who came to mind as difficult always has a frown on their face. You perceive them to be difficult, and speak minimally to them or avoid them as much as possible. Your actions could give them the same perception about you!

You both may have made a judgment about the other without really knowing what the other person is thinking or feeling. It happens more than you may realize. We act and react to others based on how we are feeling and based on our experiences.

We internalize our emotions into our body. "He is a pain in the neck," "She gives me ulcers," or "I get a headache just thinking about her," can actually manifest into those symptoms.

The next time you encounter that “difficult” person, be aware if you are responding or reacting. Are you smiling? Making eye contact? Are you listening to what they are saying and hearing their words, or are you looking for the nearest escape route? Is your body language relaxed or stiff? Do you disagree with every point they make, or can you see that another point of view may be valid?

These are all factors that become trained responses. Awareness of how you act and react around others can change the course of a relationship! Try this experiment the next time you approach someone that you deem difficult (or when they approach you.)

Be aware of how you are feeling. If your internal meter registers stiff and tense, then commit to letting that go. Take a deep breath and allow a feeling of calm to prevail. You have the power to control your own emotions. No one can ever make you feel bad, only you can allow yourself to be irritated and annoyed.

As you smile and engage with them, they will in time, smile and engage with you. It may not happen in the first few encounters but be patient. Consistency will forge the way.

You will walk away from the encounter with a different, pleasant feeling. Be aware of that too. You will feel lighter and more joyful because that icky feeling you always felt from talking with “that person” is no longer there.

Not only will your interaction with “difficult” people improve, but you will find that all your relationships improve as you become more aware of how you are part of the equation.

It’s all about perception.

You have to build Trust

Relationships in any aspect of life, if they are meaningful and productive, require trust.

Some people will choose the path of trusting first until there is a reason not to. Others, based on their own life experiences, will have a wall up, having had their trust broken before. Still others believe trust is to be earned and will hold back.

It is not something you can control, and how you approach others will set the tone, because the only factor that can be consistent in relationships with others is you.

How do you foster trust with others and build those relationships? It is all about being your best authentic, genuine, sincere self.

First examine your own beliefs on trust. Have you had trust issues with others before? Do you trust others easily or does someone have to prove themselves to you first?

It always takes two or more to engage in a relationship and each person brings their own values and experiences to the table. But there is another factor involved too, one that projects out to the world.

Do you trust yourself? Are you confident with your own decisions? Do you hesitate or are wish-washy about choosing a path or answer? Other people pick up on those traits and react to you accordingly. What are the messages you are delivering to others. What are the messages they are sending out?

Everything begins by looking at ourselves first!

Don't Make Assumptions

We often base our feelings and thoughts on our own experiences. If someone is difficult to be around, it is very easy to jump to conclusions as to why they are acting that way.

We might think they have always been difficult or don't like being around other people. The truth is, we have no idea what is happening in their life that could be contributing to their demeanor.

I have witnessed people who go to work or meetings who have lost spouses, children, pets, or found out they or someone else had a serious disease. I have known people who were homeless, living in their car, had no reliable transportation, or lost everything.

These are things that people may or may not share. We all carry around our stories inside of us and deal and process in different ways. Sometimes being around others, or in a work routine, can take our mind off what is troubling us. Sometimes people don't realize that while they think they are holding it all in, they are not.

Someone may have trust issues as well and have their safety net up at arm's length. Financial and relationship issues can play a role in how we act toward others. It could be something that happened recently and it could be a chronic issue as well, one that has been going on for a while.

So what can you do when someone is less than kind toward you or others? What would you want someone to do if the tables were turned? You probably don't want them making assumptions about your life and if you stopped for a moment and thought about it, the answer is simple.

Reach out with kindness. Open yourself up to them. Even if they are just grumpy because that is all they have every experienced, your kindness could change their life!

How can I HELP?

Have you ever heard the phrase “People don’t care about you until they know how much you care”? Businessman and life expert Zig Ziglar knew what he was talking about.

Many people have a “me, me attitude” in business. What’s in it for me, how can you help me? They are takers and often are struggling in both business and life. They don’t see the big picture or what wonderful things happen when you focus on others instead of yourself.

When you give to others first and purposely set out to make someone else’s day brighter by offering to help them succeed, relationships that may have been difficult in the past, can morph into something positive.

Difficult people are often taken aback by an offer of help, assistance or even just support. They might have a wall up, as protection from people approaching them the way they approach others. They are protecting themselves from others just like them! Isn’t that ironic!

The last thing they expect is someone to offer to be on their side and make their life easier and better. Don’t be surprised if they think you have an ulterior motive. After all, why would you want to help them? Once they see you are genuine in your desire to just help, their wall will come tumbling down!

The best part – When you lead with giving to others first, and your sincerity comes through, the other person will go out of their way to return the gift of generosity!

It requires an attitude of Gratitude

Not everyone is going to be on the same page about what is important to you. Your wants and needs may be perceived as petty. You might even be wanting of what someone else has that you don't. Without realizing it, you might appear difficult to others because you are feeling unfulfilled. Or perhaps you recognize this in someone else.

Notice the act of complaining. How does it make you feel when others complain? Irritated? Annoyed? How do you feel when you complain? Unhappy? Resentful?

Let's shift for a moment and think about what we are grateful for. Are you wondering what this has to do with complaining and difficult people?

Feeling grateful for what we have creates incredible tolerance in our lives. When you can tap into the feeling of gratefulness, you create a huge internal shift in your own center of balance and emotions. Things that used to bother you, no longer do.

Imagine this scenario. You are on your way to work and someone cuts you off in traffic. You slam on the brakes, shake your fist, yell and feel your blood pressure soar. You are irritated and in a bad mood. You get to work, and carry that irritation with you inside. A co-worker makes a comment that worsens your mood even further and you have a difficult day. It seems everyone is out to get you and is adding to your bad mood.

So the question is ... Who is the difficult person at work? Everyone who is irritating you? Or could it even be you? Do you see how your bad experience can affect your day?

Let's take it a step further. Consider if one of your co-workers had the traffic experience I described for you and they came in to work feeling irritated. You greet the co-worker with a comment that seems innocent enough to you and they reply with harsh words. Now you are wondering why this person is attacking you!

We never know what is going on in someone else's experience. Something as simple as not sleeping well to getting aggravated in traffic or perhaps bad news can cause adverse reactions to surrounding people.

So how do we deal with those situations? Let's take a deeper look at what gratitude can do for us. The amazing part is it will work if we are the one irritated or if someone else is!

When we can feel grateful for the things that are good in our lives, it softens the things that irritate us. We naturally become more tolerant of situations that would normally our buttons.

Take the guy who cut you off in traffic. In a state of gratefulness, the scenario might look quite different. You might suppose that for whatever reason he needs to get somewhere faster than you do and you generously ease off the gas to let him in. You smile, knowing you may have helped someone else have a better day. That smile gets carried into the office and instead of walking down the hall with a frown or scowl, radiating irritation with every step, you are now light on your feet, spreading the joy that you feel inside.

What does a smile do for others? It can spread like wildfire and warm and brighten a room. You can literally change someone else's frown to a smile if yours is genuine.

If you aren't the irritated co-worker and someone else is, your lighter, grateful attitude with your new sense of tolerance will allow what is bothering them, to not bother you! And the more you have to be grateful for, the more you will find to be grateful for. You will start to be more aware of the positive things and people in your life. Negative experiences won't feel that way because you are not giving them attention.

Being grateful takes practice.

One of the best ways to accomplish this is by writing down what you are grateful for. You may want to use a journal specifically for this purpose. Some people like to start their day with what they are grateful for and set the tone for the day. Others like to end the day with gratefulness. There is no right or wrong, you can do both!

As you begin noting and paying attention to being grateful, also note what changes are occurring in your life that are more positive. Has your tolerance of situations and people who previously irritated you decreased? Have you had a positive effect on others? Who knows, that might just be an entry in your grateful journal!

What are three things you are grateful for right now?

They don't have to be big major things. Being grateful for even the smallest experiences opens your heart. Here are a few examples from my grateful journal.

I am thankful and grateful for:

Being able to take a deep breath and clear my lungs.

The vivid colors and textures I can see and feel.

The new blooms in my vegetable garden that promise a good meal in the future.

My dog curled up at my feet.

The people in my life and the relationships I am building with them.

Writing them down and going back and reading them at a later day can be very affirming too! The more joy you feel, the more you will radiate out to others!

A message for our Kids

Bullying is in the news a lot these days. It happens at school, in the park, and on the internet.

Bullies are often victim bullies, they have been bullied and they feel empowered by picking on someone else. They may feel socially awkward and don't know how to interact with others so they make a snarky remark. Somebody laughs and they feel better about themselves. Pretty soon they have a posse behind them and they feel empowered.

Many adults bully as well. There are bosses who bully, and co-workers too. But it all started somewhere.

We have to work hard to change the tide. Building relationships is still the key, even with kids. Discovering common ground and focusing on how to build trust and help others as children, will carry over into adulthood.

Empowering children to be problem solvers is important. Instead of telling them how to handle a situation, ask them what they would do. Praise them often and be a positive example and role model in their life.

Kids that have confidence and a sense of community in their lives are less likely to be bullied and make poor decisions. They pick up signals from the adults in their lives on how to act, react and respond. Imagine the positive energy that can radiate out into the world by being kind, respectful, and caring about others and encouraging our children to do the same!

Where do I START?

Life should be fun; filled with joy and laughter and people. We were not meant to live our lives alone, in a vacuum without others to interact with. There is so much to learn from each other, our world is a diverse and amazing place. The opportunities to explore other cultures, languages, and perspectives are exciting.

Not everyone we encounter is going to be on the same page as we are, in the same mood, or have the same goals and aspirations. We can't control how anyone else is feeling, or their actions and reactions.

We can control how we feel and how we interact with others. And sometimes, we can influence how others feel by being kind, by not assuming what is going on in their lives and by taking steps to build trust.

We can teach our kids to be thoughtful and polite, and show them by example how to be genuine and thoughtful, encouraging them to be grateful for even the simplest things in life.

I am so passionate about working with people to help them connect more deeply to themselves, to each other, and to the opportunities in their lives that I have developed a series of workshops designed to take people from an Acquaintanceship to a Relationship – in businesses, schools, senior centers, and in any environment or organization where people gather on a regular basis.

I'm all about increasing happiness and profitability, and decreasing bullying and depression, by helping friendships evolve, partnerships develop, and aha moments occur.

I would love to connect with you too!



*Barbara
Abramson
brings
synchrony to
corporations,
Board of*

*Directors and Networking groups
through workshops and team-
building exercises.*

*For more information, contact
her at 407-947- 6287 or via email
at Barb@BarbAbramson.com*



Making Meaningful Connections