

HOW TO HANDLE VIOLATORS AND TENSE SITUATIONS

- Managing Difficult Conversations
- Staying Safe

Scott Koehnke and Kay Lutze

- ▣ *“Regulators, under unprecedented pressure, face a range of demands, often contradictory in nature: be less intrusive – but be more effective; be kinder and gentler – but don’t let the bastards get away with anything; focus your efforts – but be consistent; process things quicker – and be more careful next time; deal with important issues – but do not stray outside your statutory authority; be more responsive to the regulated community – but do not get captured by industry”*. Professor Malcolm Sparrow (2000)

They may forget what you said,
but they will never forget how
you made them feel.” – **Carl W.
Buechner**

OBJECTIVES

- Conflict – what is it?
- Empathy – Perspective Taking
- Holding Difficult Conversations and how to deal with angry individuals

CONFLICT IS INEVITABLE

- You cannot avoid it but you can manage it

“What are some examples of negative results of poorly managed conflict – discussion?”

WHAT CAN RESULT FROM POORLY MANAGED CONFLICT?

- Increased complaints with property owners/stakeholders/clients
- Decreased morale and safety, workplace violence within your organization
- Ruined relationships within family

WHAT IF CAUGHT ON CAMERA?

- Assume that every interaction is being recorded
 - Audio
 - Video

QUESTION OF THE DAY

- Why do people goof up and fail to treat people with dignity?

WHY PEOPLE GOOF UP

- Don't understand that treating people with dignity drives better results
- Don't understand it's good for you
- Don't know HOW
- Operate from an emotional response

ACTIVE INTELLIGENCE GATHERING = EMPATHY

- Empathy is not sympathy, not feeling sorrow and it is not agreeing
- Practicing Empathy:
 - Acknowledge their perspective is their truth
 - Seek to understand
 - Anticipate their needs

TREAT OTHERS WITH DIGNITY BY SHOWING RESPECT

- See world through their eyes
- Listen With All Your Senses
- Ask, and Explain Why
- Offer Options, Let them choose
- Give Opportunity to Reconsider

BRENE BROWN ON EMPATHY VS SYMPATHY



**LET'S GET INTO
“TALKING” WITH
VIOLATORS**



WORDS

tone

NON-VERBALS

INITIAL CONTACT

- **Introduce Yourself (universal greeting) – this sets the tone**
 - Who Are you?
 - Why are you Here?
 - What is Your Authority?
 - What's in it for me?/Prompt of what's next/Opening
- **Address the landowner – appropriate greeting**
- **Engage and Explain Goals**
- **Encourage the person to take an active role.**
- **Minimize anxiety by addressing any needs or concerns.**
Acknowledging personal limitations
(walking/hearing/understanding)

SUCCESSFUL STRATEGIES

- Tell the person what he/she has to say is important.
- Tell person to ask you if he or she doesn't understand something.
- Paraphrase (asking if what you heard was what they are saying) "What I'm hearing you say is?"
- Take your time and be patient.
- Educate – Regulation w/out education doesn't work.
- Provide options when available
- Don't use the word unfortunately.
- Do not take ownership - Remove the personal reference from the conversation. "It is the Department's decision....." "The ordinance states....."

THE SANDWICH

- “Thanks a lot for ordering up this beautiful weather” or “your home/property looks amazing”.
- We are going to have to talk about what needs to be done as far as site restoration goes and hopefully at the end of the day we will have an understanding of what fill needs to be removed.
- Recognize the difference between “but” & “and”.

THE RELUCTANT OR ANGRY LANDOWNER

- Expect to be interviewed by the landowner – know your goals and purpose
- Use “Soft,” non-threatening language.
- Start with easy unobjectionable questions.
- Work toward specific questions.
- Solicit their support and help to solve the problem.
- Get “comfortable” with holding uncomfortable conversations. Be upfront and honest.

THE RELUCTANT OR ANGRY LANDOWNER

- It is easier to start from no and get to yes.
- Don't rush or allow yourself to be rushed to make a decision.
- Reminder: this isn't about changing someone's mind, it is about providing them with the information they need to make an informed decision.

TRIGGERS

- Universal triggers, which are those that drive conflict in almost everyone:
 - * Indignity, which are violations of our intrinsic value as human beings
 - * Vulnerability that often make people a target of bullies.
- Personal triggers, which are those things that may not set everyone off, but they certainly do that to you. *They are your “hot buttons”.*
- When any of these triggers are present, a disagreement or slight — that might otherwise be a routine human interaction — can rapidly escalate to all-out conflict.



INDIGNITY/DIGNITY PHRASES

Calm down”

“What can I do to help?”

“Come here”

“Excuse me, may I talk with you?”

“Those are the rules”

“Can you work with me here?”

“What’s your problem”

“For your safety and mine”

“You wouldn’t understand”

“Let me try to explain”

“You people”, “No other alternative”

* Never categorize people

TENSE SITUATIONS

- Staying safe is the most important goal
- Abusive, Inappropriate or Physically Intimidating Situations
- How and When to dis-engage

STAYING SAFE

- **Situational Awareness** – observing the site
- **Scene Safety** – where are you parked?
Standing?
- **Buddy System** – are you alone? Do people know where you are?
- **Separate Presentation** that deals with this topic

ABUSIVE, INAPPROPRIATE OR PHYSICALLY INTIMIDATING SITUATIONS

- Listen to your “Spider Sense”
- Sharing some examples of these types of situations
- Personal Space/Screaming/Swearing – Context
- Bribery/Gifts
- Assigning Guilt for doing your job

I pay your salary.

I am going to have your job.

I'm friends with the County
Board/police/Zoning/judge.

You work for
me!!

Do you know how
much I pay in
taxes?



HOW AND WHEN TO DIS-ENGAGE

- Setting Boundaries
- Calling Time-Out
- Physically Threatened? Verbally/Mentally abused? The conversation is over.
- Need to document the experience – case activity report immediately. Bring to supervisor attention.

TREAT PEOPLE RIGHT

- When our differences divide us, treating people with dignity establishes the common ground for managing conflict.

QUESTIONS ?

- What do you need help with? Any scenarios someone wants to run through?
- Let's partner when you need help