Leadership Training Written Assignment 1: Working with Difficult People

When working with difficult people it is important to accrue several strategies in dealing with them and the situation. Whether the difficult person is a child, parent, co-worker or boss, having the skills to deal with them will save you time and future problems further down the line. I will share with you some strategies to implement when working with difficult people. One simple way to deal with someone such as a difficult child is leading by example. Say the child is being difficult and won’t wash his hands; you can lead by example by also washing your hands.

Communication is key; it’s an important skill for all of us to have. Sometimes we forget how powerful communication is. The difficult person might not even know or think they are being difficult if it has not been communicated to them. How will they know to stop they’re difficult behavior if, in their mind, they think it’s completely normal and okay. When communicating with others it is important to do so in an appropriate and positive manner.

If a conflict arises due to a difficult person, you should always ask yourself, “Should I engage this conflict?” If you’re not sure what to do, stop, breath and really ask yourself, “What does this mean?” What is the real meaning behind the difficult person’s behavior? Does the individual feel unheard, are they feeling like they are being taken advantage of, are they tired, or maybe they’re just hungry. If you stop and ask yourself what all this means you can help to find the real cause of the difficult behavior and a solution to the problem.

Sometimes to reach a compromise you have to ask yourself how important the relationship is versus the goal. Is it going to be smooth or forceful? Are you going to negotiate or withdraw? It all depends on how much you value the relationship and the goal. When engaging in conflict you want to use assertive communication to ensure that both you and the other party can feel validated as opposed to using passive or aggressive communication, which can leave both parties feeling invalidated.

Another strategy that is useful when dealing with difficult people is the use of yielding language such as, “you seem frustrated” or “I see what you’re saying,” rather than using blocking language such as, “I don’t agree” or “I don’t think so.” It is also important not to place blame on the individual or make them feel attacked. For example, instead of saying, “you’re mean,” you could say “I feel sad when you push me out of your way.” This strategy also gives the other person insight on how their actions affect you. As you can see, communication is crucial in order to preserve the dignity of both parties.

I took a class called Staff and Family Relations where I learned how to manage conflicts by being assertive and describing the action of the conflict, describing the feelings induced from the conflict, and explaining the importance of relevance while indicating an alternative solution. We also learned to negotiate the conflict back and forth insuring that both parties have been heard. The set of steps are to solve the problem by first clarifying the problem, gathering facts and information, developing a number of alternatives to the problem, evaluating and setting priorities to determine the best solution and finally picking the most acceptable solution and implementing it. If your solution does not work, you must then repeat the process over again until a solution has been found that can be agreed upon by both parties.

After researching the topic of working with difficult children, one strategy I found really valuable is observation. This is a strategy that could be easily implemented in the classroom if the teacher has had proper training and possesses the ability to observe. In my opinion this would serve as a valuable strategy when difficult behavior occurs. This gives the teacher insight as to why the difficult behavior is happening because during this time you can observe if the behavior is triggered by something, the setting the behavior occurs in, if the child is feeling over stimulated or tired, or if the child could be trying to communicate something. Taking a step back to observe the situation at hand can make a huge difference in how you handle the situation and valuable information can be gained about the child in doing so. http://www.kaimh.org/Websites/kaimh/images/Documents/difficul.pdf