



News Release

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DEALING WITH DIFFICULT PEOPLE

Tampa, Fla. (March 1, 2006) Have you ever encountered an individual in your family, personal life or professional life that you would describe as “difficult?” What were the particular characteristics or behaviors that led you to describe them as “difficult?” How did you respond to the person? And, an even larger question is whether others might describe us as “difficult!”

Each person that we meet comes with “baggage” – that is, their family history, what they have learned in terms of how to conduct relationships, how they have learned to handle their emotions etc. Each person has their own individual personalities as well. As we grow and interact, certain behaviors are considered normal within a given context and are reinforced. Other behaviors are not accepted and perhaps even criticized. In short, as we mature, we often edit out certain responses and develop others.

Do you know anyone who is like a match that is always lit? Do you know anyone who constantly whines and complains? Do you know anyone who is unable to render an opinion or make a decision? Do you know anyone who always looks at the negative? Do you know anyone who is a “know it all?” We could go on and on listing various characteristics of difficult

people. And what is a difficult person to you might not be a difficult person to me!

In dealing with such individuals, we first need to be honest with ourselves as to why we view them as difficult. This often says more about ourselves than the other. What are our expectations when it comes to the other person? Do we not like a person who expresses anger because we grew up in a household where issues were suppressed and not discussed? On the other hand, do we not like the indecisive person because we were raised to “put it all out on the table?”

Expectations of others get us in trouble for two reasons: first, because others are different; second, because once we advertise to another what we want, we give them power over us. How so? Because, they can demonstrate control by doing the very opposite of what we expect. How often have you asked yourself how a certain individual knew what would upset you?

It is important to keep our expectations in line with reality. Second, it is important to not take such individuals “home” with you. Third it is important to remove the “filters” that we put on and that build up over time. This is where we get into “always” and “never” type thinking. For example, Joe leaves the jelly jar on the counter. Maybe he has done that for the first time in months but you find yourself saying that he “always” leaves a mess.

A helpful book on this subject is Coping With Difficult People by Robert M. Bramson, Ph.D.

Remember that the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is a benefit available to all employees and dependents of companies contracted with Wood & Associates for providing confidential free professional assistance 24-hours a day, 7 days a week. Remember that you or a dependent may contact the EAP regarding any concern that you might have – you don’t have to wait until a problem becomes big to seek help. Above all, keep in mind that relationships are based on respect, trust and love –

not abuse. So, if you are having trouble dealing with someone you consider to be “difficult” – help is a phone call away.

About Wood & Associates

Wood & Associates is an Employee Assistance Program and behavioral health consulting firm that helps employers maintain productivity, safety and behavioral health in the workplace.

Wood & Associates is a pioneer in the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) industry and has served employers and employees in the greater Tampa Bay area and nationwide since 1982. The firm’s diverse group of clients includes a number of major employers who also contract for its mental health and substance abuse services.

Gary L. Wood, Psy.D., founder of the Wood & Associates consulting practice, is a pioneer in the field of Employee Assistance Program (EAP) services. Since 1979, his practice has centered on providing solutions to employee and organizational problems. Wood is a licensed clinical psychologist, a member of the National Register of Health Service Providers in Psychology, and a graduate of Rutgers University, West Georgia College and Mercer University.

Patricia N. Alexander earned a Ph.D. in mental health counseling at the University of Florida. Trained in critical incident stress management through the International Critical Incident Stress Foundation, she is a Florida Licensed Mental Health Counselor and nationally certified counselor. Through her work experience she has addressed all types of critical incident situations, including explosions, multiple homicides, suicides, line-of-duty deaths, serious accidents and robberies. Alexander conducts training on stress management for law enforcement and businesses, and has developed peer support programs for law enforcement and industry. Alexander is an educator and consultant on a wide variety of behavioral health concerns.