

A Leader's Biggest Challenge: Dealing with Difficult People

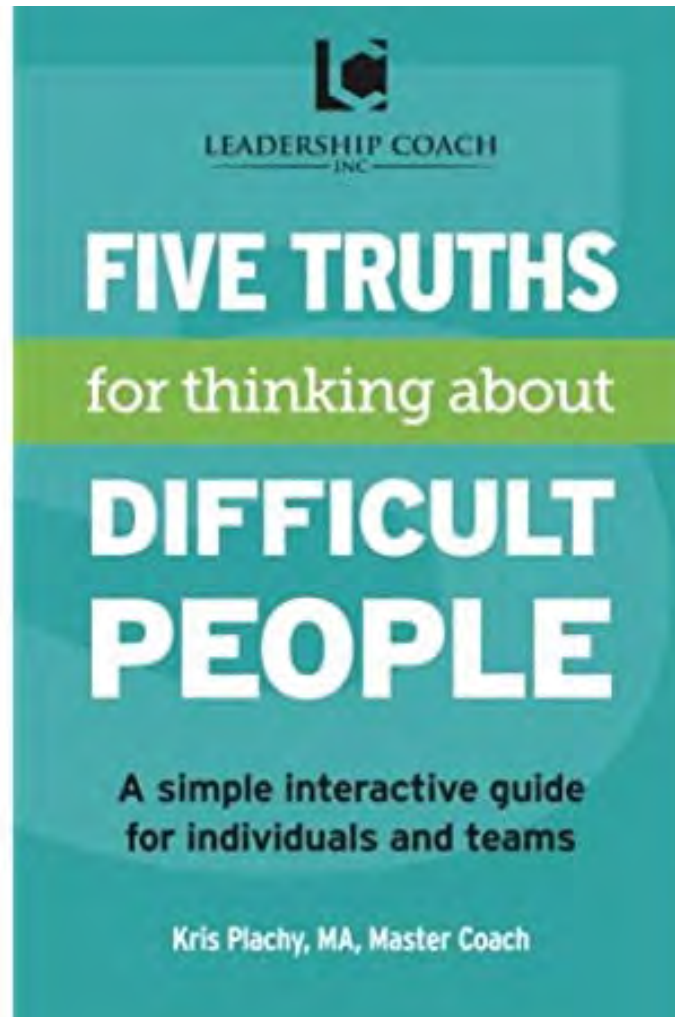
Dr. Susan Murray
Chair & Professor
Psychological Science Dept.



Based on the book



**PRESENTER
HEAL
THYSELF !**



MISSOURI
S&T

Is there someone “difficult”
in your life?



Please feel free to share in the chat

**DIFFICULT PEOPLE ARE NOT
DIFFICULT UNTIL SOMEONE ELSE
BELIEVES THAT THEY ARE.**

- > Most of the 'difficult' people we encounter are just being who they are.
- > Because they behave differently than our expectations, we perceive them to be difficult.

What behaviors or characteristics makes your 'difficult' person difficult?

Please feel free to share your answers in the chat or out loud



As soon as we believe something or someone to be difficult, it impacts how we interact with them.



In fact, I am likely someone else's difficult person and you are someone else's difficult person.

Example – My Father



Disclaimer: this are NOT actual photos from my childhood home

Someone with **high attention to detail**, need for **precision**, in different settings.



WHAT WE THINK ABOUT, COMES ABOUT.

- > It takes two people to have an interaction.
- > Often we spend most of our time thinking about how other people should or shouldn't behave with us, we spend very little time examining how we are reacting to them.

- > *What I think drives how I feel.*
- > *How I feel drives how I act.*
- > *How I act leads to my results.*



How this can play out

- > So, if I think that my colleague is difficult and hard to work with I may feel frustrated.
- > When I feel frustrated with her I may ignore her or speak bluntly or curtly to her.
- > When I speak bluntly or curtly what kind of results might I get in the relationship?
- > When I ignore someone I work with, what kind of results might I get in the relationship?



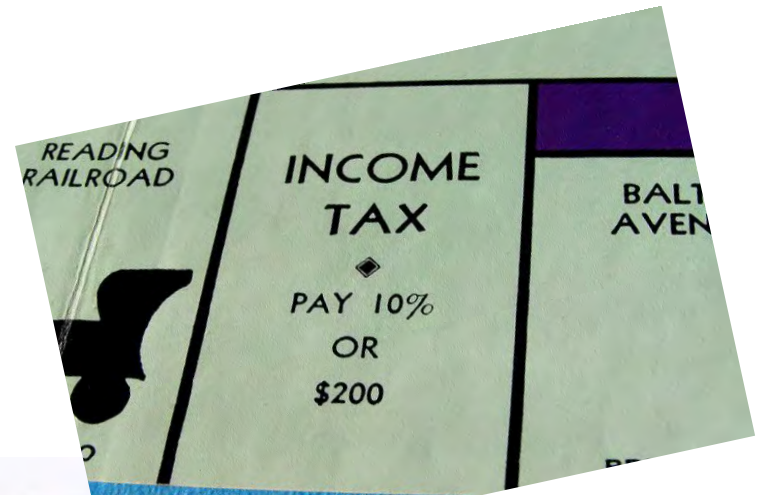
Imagine a situation where you present an idea as the leader of a group.

Your 'difficult' person does their "thing".

What happens next depends on your response.

How will things transpire if you get defensive vs being open to discussion and change?

What playing games with my older brother taught me...



- > When you see someone as an adversary, it's likely you will find them to be one.
- > To get a different result from yourself, you have to start thinking differently about this person and yourself in this relationship.



How do you see your “difficult” person?
Does that contribute to the difficulty?
Share in the chat or “unmute”



From Chris Plachy

“You may not like what other people do or say, but not liking how they behave is not an excuse for you to not accept accountability for how you behave. Stop waiting for them to change, in order for you to act differently. Your behavior is your choice, not a reaction to someone else. You alone are the one in charge of yourself and your results. This is also true for the ‘difficult’ people. The only way they will ever change is if they choose to. Not because you want them to.”



**THERE WILL ALWAYS BE A
DIFFICULT PERSON.
ALWAYS.**

From Chris Plachy

“People don’t change for your reasons; they change for their own. Yelling at them to be different doesn’t work. Understanding this and accepting this invitation is probably one of the most liberating gifts you can give yourself.”



Thought Questions

What truth have I been resisting about this person or this relationship?

What do I wish would change?

What am I resisting?

What can I change in the relationship?

**EVERYONE IN YOUR LIFE IS
THERE FOR A "SEASON."**

From Chris Plachy

“In my experience, it is the clients who are the most unclear about their future, that are also the most impacted by difficult people in their lives.

When you don't have a plan for where you are going, it can make the challenges of today feel extremely big and unmanageable.”

Does your department or unit have clear common goals? Does working together towards those goals help people work together and reduce the “difficulty”?



**YOU DON'T HAVE TO GIVE UP
WHO YOU ARE TO WORK
WITH A DIFFICULT PERSON**

From Chris Plachy

“Often, clients believe that they have to over-compromise to get along with a difficult person. They believe they have to give up a part of who they are to make it work. I see it quite differently... What I’ve experienced instead is that when we encounter someone we believe to be difficult it is our cue to learn a new skill, manage ourselves and others differently and to embrace the discomfort and challenge to broaden our capabilities.”

The “difficult” people we encounter can truly be some of our greatest teachers.



What new skills do you think you could learn to help you improve how you deal with difficult people?



Five Truths

- 1. Difficult people are not difficult until someone else believes that they are.**
- 2. What we think about, comes about.**
- 3. There will always be a difficult person. Always.**
- 4. Everyone in your life is there for a “season”.**
- 5. You don't have to give up who you are to work with a difficult person.**

Was this helpful?

What can you do differently
with your difficult person?

