

## **Dealing With Difficult People**

**Gerri King, Ph.D.**

**Presented at the CLMA Conference on April 8th**

People don't get up in the morning saying, "How can I be as obnoxious as possible?" And they aren't hoping that, with luck, nobody will like them today. People do what they do because they either don't know how else to do it, or they're anxious, afraid, powerless, or confused. Any of those behaviors may come across as difficult and may cause conflict and tension. Further, because we mostly communicate through body language, we may observe certain physical characteristics in others and assume that they're being difficult.

What can we do about it? When people are resistant to change, allow them to talk about the losses *and* the gains that the change will bring. When they spread rumors, understand that it's because they're lacking information. When they complain about so-called "small or petty things," recognize that it's indicative of something much bigger, such as lack of power, fear, or concern about their competence levels. When you want to tell them how you feel, use "I" messages rather than "you" messages, i.e. "when you raise your voice, I shut down and don't hear what you're saying."

And, remember, there is an emotional and logical aspect to almost every issue. If we respond logically to emotion, it is like speaking Spanish to a French-speaking person. We need to stay with the emotion – not necessarily understand it or share it – just acknowledge that the other person is experiencing it. S/he will feel like you "get it" and will begin calming down.

These are just a few responses that work in a difficult situation. For more detail, check out my article on Conflict Resolution  
<<http://www.gerriking.com>>

**BIO:** Gerri King, Ph.D., one of the nation's leading human relations experts, consults to over 150 corporate, healthcare, educational, non-profit and governmental clients throughout the United States. Gerri also facilitates,

coaches and presents for multinational, national, regional and local organizations, conferences and seminars.

A social psychologist and nationally recognized speaker and seminar presenter/educator, Dr. King offers a wide range of topics that are described on her web site <<http://www.gerriking.com>>

Gerri is a founding partner of the 24 year old Human Dynamics Associates, Inc., a consulting and counseling firm in Concord NH.