DEALING WITH DIFFICULT SITUATIONS

GACE
Welcome and Introduction

• Opening Remarks
• Introductions – Who’s in the Room?
  o Name
  o Organization
  o Job
  o What would you like to get out of this course?

Course Review

• Course Description
• Learning Goals
• Content
• Teaching Methods
• Ground Rules

Course Description

Code enforcement officers are faced with difficult situations with co-workers, citizens, and others. These situations can be upsetting to all those involved. In this course, officers will learn different methods, strategies, and communication tactics for managing and diffusing difficult situations.

Staying calm, diffusing conflict, and maintaining dignity will be the central concepts in this course.
Learning Goals

• To learn different methods, strategies, and tactics for dealing with difficult people.
• To learn different methods, strategies, and tactics for managing and diffusing difficult situations.
• To learn to stay calm and maintain dignity.

Content

• Examples of Difficult Situations and People
• Discuss Anger — the Cause and Control
• Tips for Controlling Your Temper

Teaching Methods

• Shared experiences and discussion
• Lecture (via power point presentation)
• Group Exercise
• Reflection ~ learning to action (“now what?”)
Ground Rules

• Academic Freedom/Non-Attribution
• Interaction (learn from each other)
• Respect for the Speaker (whoever that may be!)
• Identify and Highlight “Best Practices” and Innovations

What are Some Examples of Difficult Situations in the Workplace?

What are Some Reactions to Those Difficult Situations?
How to deal with difficult people

So What is Anger?

Anger is “an emotional state that varies in intensity from mild irritation to intense fury and rage.”

“ An EMOTIONAL State”

What causes you to be angry?

Understanding and Identifying the Cause of your Anger

Resentment
You may feel angry when you’ve been hurt, rejected or offended.
Disappointment
Anger often results when expectations and desires aren’t met.

Annoyance
You may react in anger to minor irritations and daily hassles.

Fear
Anger is a natural response to threats of violence or to physical or verbal abuse.
Understanding and Identifying the Cause of your Anger

Frustration
You may get angry if you fail to reach a goal or feel as if things are out of your control. You could be angry at a specific person (such as a coworker or supervisor).

Understanding and Identifying the Cause of your Anger

Stress
Stress related to work, family, health and money problems May make you feel anxious and irritable. Memories of traumatic or enraging events can also trigger angry feelings.

Group Activity #1
What happens to you on the inside when you are angry on the outside?

- Increased Heart Rate
- High Blood Pressure

Expressing Anger

The instinctive, natural way to express anger is to respond aggressively. Anger is a natural, adaptive response to threats; it inspires powerful, often aggressive, feelings and behaviors, which allow us to fight and to defend ourselves when we are attacked. A certain amount of anger, therefore, is necessary to our survival.

Expressing Anger

However, on the other hand, we can't physically lash out at every person or object that irritates or annoys us; laws, social norms, and common sense place limits on how far our anger can take us.
Handling anger well can help you:

- Overcome problems
- Reach your goals
- Stay healthy
- Feel better about yourself

Everyone gets angry sometimes

but too much anger or uncontrolled anger can cause problems

- Alcohol or other drug problems
- Physical issues
  - Sleep problems
  - Digestive problems
  - High blood pressure
  - Heart problems
  - Headaches
- Poor decision making
- Problems with relationships
- Low self-esteem
- Depression
- Problems at work

Hidden Anger

Warning Signs:
- Tense muscles
- Tight fists
- Clenched jaw
- Sweaty palms
- Racing heartbeat
- Fast breathing
- Trembling or feeling shaky
- Feeling warm or flushed
- Upset stomach
- Loud or mean voice
Is your anger out of control?

- Are my level of anger and my reaction out of proportion to the trigger?
- Am I directing my anger at an innocent person?
- Am I taking something personally?
- Is this how I usually respond in similar situations?
- Am I trying to take charge with my anger?

Three Main Approaches to Processing your Anger

The three main approaches are:

Expressing...

Suppressing...

and Calming...

Expressing

Expressing your angry feelings in an assertive—not aggressive—manner is the healthiest way to express anger. To do this, you have to learn how to make clear what your needs are, and how to get them met, without hurting others. Being assertive doesn’t mean being pushy or demanding; it means being respectful of yourself and others.
**Assertive or Passive or Aggressive Behaviors?**

Assertive people state their opinions, while still being respectful of others.

Aggressive people attack or ignore others’ opinions in favor of their own.

Passive people don’t state their opinions at all.

---

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Passive Person</th>
<th>The Aggressive Person</th>
<th>The Assertive Person</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Afraid to speak up</td>
<td>Interrupts and ‘talks over’ others</td>
<td>Speaks openly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaks softly</td>
<td>Speaks loudly</td>
<td>Uses a conversational tone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoids looking at people</td>
<td>Glares and stares at others</td>
<td>Makes good eye contact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shows little or no expression</td>
<td>Intimidates others with expressions</td>
<td>Shows expressions that match the message</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stands and withdraws</td>
<td>Stands rigidly, crosses arms, invades others’ personal space</td>
<td>Relaxes and adopts an open posture and expressions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoids conflict</td>
<td>Controls conflict</td>
<td>Participates in groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agrees with others, despite feelings</td>
<td>Only considers own feelings, and/or demands of others</td>
<td>Speaks to the point</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values self less than others</td>
<td>Values self more than others</td>
<td>Values self equal to others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hurts self to avoid hurting others</td>
<td>Hurts others to avoid being hurt</td>
<td>Tries to hurt no one (including self)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does not reach goals and may not know goals</td>
<td>Reaches goals but hurts others in the process</td>
<td>Usually reaches goals without elevating others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You’re okay, I’m not</td>
<td>I’m okay, you’re not</td>
<td>I’m okay, you’re okay</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Suppressing**

Anger can be suppressed, and then converted or redirected. This happens when you hold in your anger, stop thinking about it, and focus on something positive.

The aim is to inhibit or suppress your anger and convert it into more constructive behavior.
Finally, you can calm down on the inside. This means not just controlling your outward behavior, but also controlling your internal responses, taking steps to lower your heart rate, calm yourself down, and let the feelings subside.

Can how we Communicate in the Workplace Contribute to One’s Anger?

Angry people tend to jump to and act on conclusions, and some of those conclusions can be very inaccurate!

How Well We Handle Criticism Contributes to How Well we Manage Anger in the Workplace

It's natural to get defensive when you're criticized, but don't fight back.
**Peace or Pieces you Choose?**

Be real clear... anger destroys your Peace!

Are you a real life “Humpty Dumpty?”

**Cognitive Restructuring**

Simply put, this means changing the way you think...

So the question you have to ask...

Is It Good To “Let it All Hang Out?”

**Things not to say...**

“They don’t know who they dealing with...”
“ I don’t know who they think they talking to...”
“You don’t know...You better asks somebody...”
“You don’t want this!”
“I wish you would...”
“I will turn up in here..”
Cognitive Restructuring Continued

If there is a way to improve an unpleasant, difficult situation, what point is there in being unhappy?

On the other hand, if it is completely impossible to improve the situation or to fulfill our wishes, there is also no reason to get upset, for how will our becoming unhappy help?

Group Activity #2

Think before you speak - In the heat of the moment, it's easy to say something you'll later regret. Take a few moments to collect your thoughts before saying anything — and allow others involved in the situation to do the same.

Once you're calm, express your anger - As soon as you're thinking clearly, express your frustration in an assertive but non-confrontational way. State your concerns and needs clearly and directly, without hurting others or trying to control them.

Get some exercise - Physical activity can help reduce stress. If you feel your anger escalating, go for a brisk walk or run, or spend some time doing other enjoyable physical activities.

Ten Tips to Help you Keep your Temper
(from the Mayo Clinic)
Ten Tips to Help you Keep your Temper

Take a timeout - Timeouts aren't just for kids. Give yourself short breaks during times of the day that tend to be stressful. A few moments of quiet time might help you feel better prepared to handle what's ahead without getting irritated or angry.

Identify possible solutions - Instead of focusing on what made you mad, work on resolving the issue at hand. Remind yourself that anger won't fix anything and might only make it worse.

Stick with 'I' statements - To avoid criticizing or placing blame — which might only increase tension — use "I" statements to describe the problem. Be respectful and specific.

Ten Tips to Help you Keep your Temper

Don't hold a grudge - Forgiveness is a powerful tool. Forgive someone who angered you, you might both learn from the situation. It's unrealistic to expect everyone to behave exactly as you want at all times.

Use humor to release tension - Lightening up can help diffuse tension. Use humor to help you face what's making you angry.

Practice relaxation skills - When your temper flares, put relaxation skills to work. Practice deep-breathing exercises, imagine a relaxing scene, or repeat a calming word or phrase, such as, "Take it easy."

Ten Tips to Help you Keep your Temper

By far this last tip is the most important:

Know when to seek help - Learning to control anger is a challenge for everyone at times. Consider seeking help for anger issues if your anger seems out of control, causes you to do things you regret or hurts those around you.
Did We Accomplish Our Learning Goals?

✓ To learn different methods, strategies, and tactics for dealing with difficult people.
✓ To learn different methods, strategies, and tactics for managing and diffusing difficult situations.
✓ To learn to stay calm and maintain dignity.

Final Thought

Don’t Sweat the Small Stuff!

Worry does not empty tomorrow of its sorrow. It empties today of its strength.
~ Corrie ten Boom

Evaluations and Learning to Action Plans