



A Communications Module: **Working with Difficult & Combative People**

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE SUPERVISOR

Step One:

- Make a copy of the Instructions for the Learner page. Return your original to the sheet protector. Add the following information to the copy:
 1. The name (or position) of the person to whom the aides should direct questions.
 2. The name (or position) of the person to whom the aides should turn in their quizzes.
 3. The date by which the quiz page should be turned in.
 4. The name (or position) of the person who will initial the aides' Inservice Club Membership Cards.
- Use this copy as your "master" as you make up the inservice packets.

Step Two:

- Have the following copied for each learner:
 1. The **Instructions for the Learner** page.
 2. The **10 Page** Inservice newsletter.
 3. OPTIONAL: Your workplace policy on using restraints, and handling violence in the workplace.
 4. The **Quiz** page.

Step Three:

For Self-Study Use

- Distribute as desired—in employee mailboxes; folded in paychecks, etc.
- You may want to post the Quiz Answer Sheet in a prominent spot.

For Group Use

- Read over the Suggested Participatory Activities, the Suggested Teaching Tips and the Suggested Discussion Questions.
- Select the activities you want to use during your inservice hour.



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SUGGESTED PARTICIPATORY ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITY # 1: GRUMPY BIRD!

- Get a copy of "Grumpy Bird" by Jeremy Tankard at your local library, or purchase it for as little as \$0.01 on Amazon.com.
- **Synopsis:** *Bird wakes up feeling grumpy. Too grumpy to eat or play — too grumpy even to fly. "Looks like I'm walking today," says Bird. He walks past Sheep, who offers to keep him company. He walks past Rabbit, who also could use a walk. Raccoon and Fox join in, too. Before he knows it, a little exercise and companionship help Bird shake his bad mood. This winsome, refreshingly original picture book is sure to help kids (and grown-ups) giggle away theirs, too!*
- Read the story out loud to the group. This may take about 3 to 5 minutes.
- Use the story as a jumping off point to discuss:
 - The problem with "bad moods."
 - The power of a positive attitude.
 - The best way to turn around a bad mood in yourself or someone else.

ACTIVITY #2: WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF...?

Ask the group for solutions to the following situations. (If you'd like, ask for two or three solutions for each scenario. Consider giving a "treat" to those who participate.)

What would you do if...

- You found out that your client's visitor was carrying a dangerous weapon?
- Your home health client threatens to let his mean-looking dog loose on you?
- A family member corners you in the hallway and begins cursing at you?
- A coworker is giving you the "silent treatment" and you have no idea why?
- Your confused client suddenly begins to scratch and pinch you during bath time?

ACTIVITY #2: IT'S A MATTER OF OPINION

Ask the group to describe the personality of a famous person (with a reportedly "difficult" personality) such as Barbara Streisand, Kanye West or Alec Baldwin. Notice when individuals describe this difficult person differently. For example, some may make excuses for the bad behavior. Others may attempt to understand it. And some may just feel happy for the opportunity to trash the person. **After everyone has had a chance to describe the person, ask:**

- Why do we see the same people in different ways?
- How does our view of ourselves influence our views of others?
- Is there a possibility that our perception is unreasonably harsh? Why or why not?
- What "difficult" behaviors do we tolerate in others, and why?



Developing Top-Notch CNAs, One Inservice at a Time

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SUGGESTED TEACHING TIPS

TEACHING TIPS

- Make an overhead of the Quiz Answer Sheet.
- Take advantage of this inservice time to go over your workplace policies on using restraints, and handling violence in the workplace.
- Take some time to allow participants to discuss their reaction to:
 - The “Connect It” box on page 4,
 - The “Get Out” box on page 7, and
 - The “What I Know Now” box on page 10.
- Bring some “toys” to the inservice, such as a Slinky, a wind-up doll, bubbles, balloons, etc. Then, take a few moments during the inservice to take a “Good Mood Break”. Let everyone have some fun being silly...and brightening their moods!
- Provide appropriate support to any staff member who has experienced abuse from a client or coworker.
- Praise employees when you notice them making an effort to get along with “difficult” people.

RESOURCES

The following resources were used in developing this inservice. You might want to check them out for further information:

- [The REAL Healthcare Reform: How Embracing Civility Can Beat Back Burnout and Revive Your Healthcare Career](#) by L. Leekley and S. Turnure
- Occupational Safety & Health Administration at www.osha.gov
- American Nurses Association at www.nursingworld.org
- American Society of Consultant Pharmacists at www.ascp.com
- Legal Eye Newsletter at www.nursinglaw.com
- [Coping with Difficult People](#) by Robert M. Bramson, Ph.D.
- [Since Strangling Isn't an Option](#) by Sandra A. Crowe, M.A.

More to Learn!

Your staff may enjoy the following related In the Know inservices:

- Being Assertive
- Working with a Team
- Professionalism & Work Ethic
- Understanding Restraints & Alternatives
- Understanding Alzheimer's Disease
- Working with Mentally Ill Clients
- The Patient Bill of Rights
- Sexual Harassment in the Workplace
- Understanding Abuse & Neglect

If your In the Know library doesn't include these titles, they are available for purchase by calling our toll-free number:

877-809-5515



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SUGGESTED DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

DISCUSSION QUESTION #1

Why do you think some adults have temper tantrums?

Answer: When adults have temper tantrums, it's usually for the same reason that little children have them. They feel afraid, helpless or frustrated. And, they want everyone to know it! Having a tantrum is not the best way to get your message across or to get people to help you, but for some people, it's an old (bad) habit. If you have clients or coworkers who tend to have tantrums, it may be best to just let them get all their feelings out. Then, when they are in a more reasonable frame of mind, you can try to help them solve their problem.

DISCUSSION QUESTION #2

If a home health aide leaves a client's house because the client is being violent, can the aide be sued for abandoning the client?

Answer: No, not if the aide truly feels that his or her safety is being threatened. However, the aide should follow the proper procedure, such as calling 911 from the nearest telephone and/or calling the home health agency to report the incident.

HERE ARE MORE QUESTIONS THAT MAY SPUR SOME INTERESTING DISCUSSION:

- What role does the media play in encouraging or discouraging "difficult" behaviors? For example, do you think watching people get angry and even say hurtful things to each other on reality television shows leads to more anger and incivility in those who are watching?
- Many times, when employees feel threatened on the job, they will simply quit and look for another job, while the person or situation that is causing fear stays behind to torment others. What could be done to break this cycle?
- Think of one difficult person at work. What would you like to have from him or her? (For example, from a coworker you might want as much help as you give her, or from a client you might want respectful conversation instead of yelling.) Have you ever *asked* this person for what you want? Why or why not?
- Think of the personality traits that you find difficult in other people. Do you have any of those qualities? (Remember...sometimes we don't like in other people the same behavior we don't like in ourselves.) Can you think of some ways to be more patient with people at work?



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QUIZ ANSWER SHEET

1. **Which of the following might make a nice person irritable and mean?**
D. All of these. Difficult clients may be suffering from pain or illness, recovering from stress or tragedy, dealing with a disability, feeling lonely or depressed or even taking medications that make them act differently than normal.
 2. **This personality type has an especially hard time dealing with negative emotions.**
C. Passive/Aggressive. Instead of dealing with their negative emotions, this type of person will backstab, sabotage, use hostile jokes, or even become sullen or withdrawn—leaving everyone around them confused and irritated.
 3. **You may be dealing with a bully if the difficult behavior is uncivil and:**
C. Repeated over a period of time with an intent to harm.
 4. **Getting hit, pinched, pushed and yelled at by sick, elderly clients is:**
C. Not okay in any situation. There is a dangerous myth among healthcare workers. Many believe workplace violence is "just part of the job." But, getting hit, pinched, slapped, yelled at, or threatened is not okay in any situation and is especially not okay while you are at work.
 5. **False**
Corrected Statement: Delirium is an acute **short-term** mental problem that lasts for **hours or days**.
 6. **True**
If you know you are going to have to work with someone who has been difficult in the past, it's best to forget about it and start fresh with a positive attitude.
 7. **False**
Corrected Statement: The key to dealing with difficult and combative people is to **change the way you react to the situation**.
 8. **True**
Most people have been "difficult" at work at one time.
 9. **False**
Corrected Statement: If you feel you may be physically harmed by a combative client, the first thing you should do is **quickly, calmly end the interaction without making the situation worse**.
 10. **False**
Corrected Statement: Using a **"buddy system"** when caring for clients who have a history of being combative. This isn't so you can "gang up" on the client, but so that you can **remain safe** as you perform client care.
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IN THE KNOW

Developing Top-Notch CNAs, One Inservice at a Time

A Complete Civility Training Program: **The Real Healthcare Reform**

AND ALSO FROM IN THE KNOW...

CIVILITY TRAINING PROGRAM PACKAGES

How Many Learners?	Your Cost*
12	\$182.26
24	\$271.77
50	\$449.00
100	\$742.00
150	\$898.50
300	\$1,497.00

WHAT YOU'LL GET:

- A copy of The REAL Healthcare Reform for each of your learners
- The Companion Instructor's Manual
- Engaging classroom activities and discussion questions
- Convenient PowerPoint presentations
- Tips for improving participation and keeping yourself organized
- A CD with master PDF copies of all the handouts and presentations
- SIX HOURS of inservice credit for your CNAs

* Plus shipping

ARE YOU READY TO DELIVER A COMPREHENSIVE CIVILITY TRAINING PROGRAM WITHIN YOUR WORKPLACE?

Did you know the Joint Commission recommends that all accredited healthcare organizations be responsible for handling and preventing incivility in the workplace?

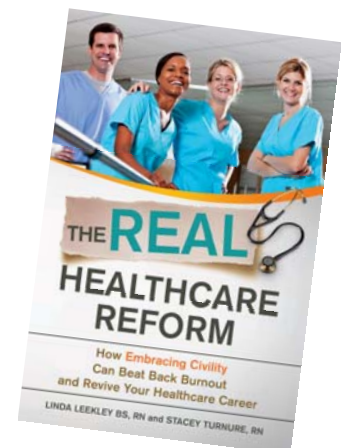
Civility training in the healthcare workplace is more than just a course in professional conduct—although professional conduct is the goal! Civility training teaches:

- Self-awareness
- Personal and professional integrity
- Communication skills
- A sense of ownership in the workplace
- Personal empowerment to solve problems with energy, creativity and enthusiasm

Based on the bestselling book "The Real Healthcare Reform," our Civility Training Program is unique because it immerses learners in the material in a fun and engaging way. **The program is written for all healthcare employees, clinical and non-clinical, and will benefit everyone in your organization.**

GET STARTED TODAY!

Choose the package that fits the number of learners you wish to reach, then call us toll free at **877-809-5515** to place your order!





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EVALUATION

Employee Name _____

Date _____ **Self-Study Inservice** **Group-Study Inservice**

1. Put a checkmark in the box that best describes how you feel about each learning objective.

LEARNING OBJECTIVE	I am able to do this.	I might be able to do this.	I can't do this.	I'm not sure.
<i>Discuss at least three reasons why coworkers and clients might be difficult to work with.</i>				
<i>Describe the difference between being aggressive, passive and passive/aggressive, and why each can be difficult.</i>				
<i>Discuss at least three ways to handle workplace violence.</i>				
<i>List at least three physical conditions that can lead to combative behavior.</i>				
<i>Demonstrate strategies for dealing with difficult and combative people in your daily work.</i>				

2. Did you learn anything new that will help you in your job? Yes No

If yes, please explain: _____

3. If you have questions about the inservice information that did not get answered, note them here:

4. Other comments? _____

