



The Art of Working with People

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Be honest...
Have you ever caught yourself saying something like this about a colleague, resident, or family member?

"I just can't work with that person!"

"He's just a grumpy old man!"

"That daughter is *DIFFICULT*!"

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Here's the reality...



No matter the relationship, when we're at work, we **MUST** find ways to engage those with whom we work and serve.

As professionals, refusing to engage is simply not an option.

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Consider the foot...

If you had a sore foot, you couldn't just say, "FORGET IT! That foot is giving me so much pain, I'm just NOT dealing with it!"

That attitude would leave you crippled. Nobody wins.

Rather, you need to FIGURE OUT what's causing the foot pain, and try to address it!

Now, it could be that after careful consideration, you find you've got GANGRENE!! Then it's time for amputation...



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So where do I begin?

- 1) Identify the danger of labeling people
- 2) Recognize that writing people off is *unproductive*
- 3) Make an effort to FIGURE THEM OUT
- 4) Explore Depersonalization and Tough Communication



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1 The Danger of Labeling People



No matter the personality, we cannot lose sight of the fact that everyone has a story. And often, that story plays a HUGE role in why they are the way they are.

"Researchers began to study the cognitive effects of labeling in the 1930s when linguist Benjamin Whorf proposed the Linguistic Relativity Hypothesis. According to his hypothesis, the words we use to describe what we see aren't just idle placeholders; they **determine what we see.**"

-Adam Alter, Psychology Today

Therefore, when we place negative labels on people, we are calling our impressions **REALITY**. And we run the risk of permanently blemishing them in the eyes of others.

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The Inhumanity of Writing People Off

"Research confirms that our desire to feel seen, heard, and recognized is fundamentally human. Not feeling valued for your contributions or sensing that your value isn't acknowledged by others activates the stress response and feels like a threat."

Being **rejected** by your clan would put you at risk of being ostracized, which, in the wild, was akin to death. And that's probably why rejection activates similar regions in the brain as physical pain. It hurts."

- Seppala and McNichols, Harvard Business Review



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Try to Figure Them Out

The single most effective way to figure a person out is through question-asking, listening, and sense-making.

- What's something that really "fills up your cup?"
- What's something you dread dealing with?
- Where did you grow up?
- Do you have siblings?
- What's your favorite way to relax?
- Have you traveled much?
- Can I ask, is something bothering you?
- Have I done something to offend you?

Some questions may seem irrelevant to the situation at hand, but they may serve to disarm the person, and give you a window into their world.



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Listening & Sense-Making

It may seem obvious to state, but when you ask questions, be sure to actually **LISTEN** to their responses. **OBSERVE** their non-verbals as they speak. Watch for things that may actually be even more painful than they are saying.

This kind of engagement often leaves you with "clues" to WHY they behave the way that they do. It may also give you "keys" to shifting that behavior in a more positive direction.

All of this leads to **Sense-Making**. Putting together all the pieces of the puzzle, to gain a better understanding of the human being in front of you. Putting this much effort into understanding a person can actually soften your heart toward them in the process.



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DE- PERSONALIZATION IN CAREGIVING

"Refers to a detached, emotionally distant attitude caregivers may develop towards the person they are caring for, often as a result of chronic stress and burnout."

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De-Personalization in caregiving

- Depersonalization is one of the core components of burnout, alongside emotional exhaustion and lack of personal accomplishment.
- It involves a sense of detachment or emotional distance from the person being cared for.
- This can manifest as a cynical or negative attitude towards the care recipient, or as a feeling of interacting with them in an impersonal way.
- In severe cases, it can lead to the caregiver viewing the care recipient as an object or a task [ORA CHECKLIST] rather than a person.

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Remembering the Humanity in our Work

You're not serving a To-Do List, you're serving HUMANES.
You're caring for someone's loved one.

YOU ARE DOING HOLY WORK.

One of our Cassia Chaplains wrote,
*Every time you offer a hand to steady someone's walk...
Every moment you pause to listen to a resident's story...
Every time you speak gently, even when you're tired...
You are reflecting something sacred.*

Matthew 5:16 says,
"Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in Heaven."

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Leave People Better Than You Found Them

Maya Angelou said, "I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."

So, ask yourself: "When I encounter a resident, do I..."

- **Show them kindness**
[regardless of how nice they are to me]
- **Show them consideration**
[make them feel important and cared for]
- **Show them RESPECT**
[treat each person with dignity, consideration, and care]



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TOUGH COMMUNICATION

- Do you find yourself periodically avoiding conversations with certain people because you "don't like confrontation"?
- Have you ever stopped to ask yourself, "Is this really a confrontation, or is it possibly just a CLARIFICATION?"
- We often build up anxiety within, dreading conversations, that don't need to be viewed as **confrontational**. If you can reframe it as a **clarification** in your own mind, you will go into the conversation with a completely different tone and attitude (which will, BTW, impact how it's received).



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Practical Language

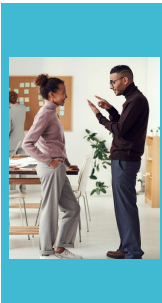
If you do find yourself needing to address a situation that may cause confrontation, try starting with language like this:

"Help me understand what I'm seeing here."
"Help me understand what you meant when you said..."

"Help me understand" is a non-threatening phrase that signals to the receiver that you are actually trying to meet them in the middle. You're ultimately seeking RESOLUTION, not DISSOLUTION.

State your goal in having this conversation.
"Timothy, I'd like to **get to the bottom** of what happened on the floor Friday night. I'm **hearing varying accounts**, so I'd like to **hear directly from you**."

NOTE: Be hyper-aware of your non-verbals and tone during these talks!!



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The Science of Body Language

Body language is the unspoken part of communication that we use to reveal our true feelings, and to give our message more impact.

➤ What percentage of a message is conveyed by words? **7%**

➤ 93% Conveyed by nonverbal communication **How's yours?**

➤ How self-aware are you of your control over the following:

Facial expressions — Eyes downcast, maintaining little contact

Head movement — Tilted to the side to show interest, or nodding

Position of arms — Folded in front of the body, or hands on hips, looking at watch/phone

Body movement — Body turned away from speaker, or tapping feet/fingers



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Practical Language

When speaking with someone, avoid Ad Hominem attacks.

"Arguments of this kind focus not on the *evidence* for a view, but on the *character of the person advancing it*; they seek to discredit positions by discrediting those who hold them."

It's an attack on the person.

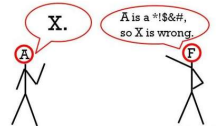
How this might look in your everyday work:

"Mr. Cobbs' daughter called yelling about his TED hose again. I'm sure they're fine. She's just crazy."

OR:

"The Nurse Manager asked me to pick up another shift this weekend because they're short-staffed. She's such a jerk. I'm sure they don't really need me."

Ad Hominem ("Against the man")



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You Can't Win 'Em All...

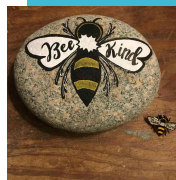
Sometimes it's impossible to win a person over. Impossible to get "honey out of a rock."

But as a professional, you cannot arrive at that conclusion in Step 1. You've got to at least TRY Steps 1-3.

If you've made efforts to no avail, then it may be time for a different conversation.

- If it's an employee relationship, it might be time for the help of Human Resources.
- If it's a resident or resident family situation, consult other members of your team.

You should even use COLLABORATION in your amputation...



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Let's Review...

In order to master the Art of Working with People, one must...

- 1) Identify the danger of labeling people
- 2) Recognize that writing people off is *unproductive*
- 3) Make an effort to FIGURE THEM OUT
- 4) Have the courage to approach tough conversations
- 5) Know when to amputate



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THANK YOU!

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