Your people problems CAN be solved.

You're a competent professional. You excel at the technical side of your work. But so far no-one has taught you how to handle 'difficult people' or toxic team dynamics. That's where this book comes in. *Difficult People Made Easy* explains how you need to THINK and SPEAK when faced with a difficult colleague. Then it reveals specific words and actions you can use.

- Set firm boundaries on what you will – and won't – take from aggressive or spiteful people.
- Avoid using words which trigger defensive reactions from others.
- Look and sound confident no matter who you're dealing with.

Eleanor Shakiba is a well-known communication skills trainer and coach and has taught over 50,000 professionals how to solve people problems at work. Eleanor wrote *Difficult People Made Easy* in response to requests from clients for step-by-step instructions on handling toxic behaviour at work. In this book she shares hundreds of tips for staying calm and speaking up in tough situations.

ELEANOR SHAKIBA

DIFFICULT PEOPLE MADE EASY

Practical advice for solving your people problems and getting the most out of your workplace.

DIFFICULT
PEOPLE MADE
EASY

- Stop pushy people dominating or controlling you.
- Keep your cool when problem people 'act up' at work.
- Prevent toxic relationships causing you stress.

ELEANOR SHAKIBA
People skills trainer to over 50,000 professionals

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DIFFICULT PEOPLE MADE EASY

Your Guide to Solving
People Problems at Work

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

▶ Writing this book involved collaborating with many talented, supportive people. I am grateful the following people for their feedback, creativity and guidance.

Humphrey Armstrong has coached me through many stages of my career. His wisdom and encouragement once again kept me on track during this 'book project'. Editor Susie Stevens also provided valuable coaching on the structure of the book. Thank you both for many wonderful conversations and suggestions.

I am deeply appreciative of the team at New Holland, who turned my manuscript into a book to be proud of. Special thanks to Alan Whitaker, Holly Willsher and Thomas Casey for your guidance and the professional skills you brought to this book.

For the vibrant illustrations in both the book and its supporting videos, I thank Josey Thomas Malayil from Krepesh Virtual Artistries. For author photographs, my thanks go to Fiora Sacco. Thanks are also due to the team who helped me put the Difficult People Made Easy website resources together: actors Kai Raisbeck and Shelley Booth; studio director Mike Tuelon; web content writer Kirsty Racher and web designer Casey Lightbody.

My personal support team kept me on track and healthy during the writing process. Emma Wilson deserves a special mention for her ability to keep me – and my dreaded diary - organised. Thanks also go to James Elliott, Simon Watson and Florence Biancardi for keeping my 'computer muscles' working despite long hours at my desk.

And finally, thanks to my husband Mark Shakiba for his tolerance, inspiration and love – even when the task of writing turned me into a 'difficult person'.

INTRODUCTION

▶ Are people problems causing you grief? This book will help you turn that situation around. It will give you tools for handling 'difficult people' confidently and resourcefully. Right now you might feel like some people in your life are controlling, exploiting or frustrating you. The good news is that YOU can decide the terms of your relationships from now on.

Yes. You can choose whether or not another person's behaviour brings you down, fires you up or has no impact on you at all. All you need are some new mental 'programs' for managing difficult conversations. This book contains the software for these programs. *Difficult People Made Easy* is your guide to repairing broken relationships and handling tough conversations.

How is this book different?

Most books on dealing with people problems focus on labelling or describing difficult behaviours. They tell you why people become 'difficult' but they don't tell you how to handle their behaviours. That's where this book is different. My aim in writing it is to give you step-by-step instructions for responding to the tactics 'difficult people' use.

Why read this book?

When you apply the tools covered in *Difficult People Made Easy*, you'll be able to stop 'difficult people' controlling conversations, situations and YOU. Imagine how in control of your life you'll feel then. You'll be able to maintain your personal power no matter what other people do. That sounds good, doesn't it? As you read, you'll see how easy it can be to prevent conflict eroding your relationships. You'll learn to build positive relationships and connect deeply with others. Imagine how satisfying that will feel. And, if you're someone who wants to be a truly masterful communicator, this book will build your skills and abilities. You'll learn how to avoid wishy-washy interactions and build a reputation as a great communicator.

That 'difficult person' could be anyone you come across at work. As you read this book, you'll discover how easy it is to create and keep your personal power – even when others resort to toxic behaviour. Do you want to feel confident and in control of tough situations? Would you like to hear yourself saying exactly the right thing when someone else shouts or whines? Do you wish you looked calm and assertive even when other people behave badly? This book will give you the skills you need for achieving results like these.

What's in this book?

Difficult People Made Easy is an introduction to dealing with challenging behaviour in practical ways. It is not a psychology text, but it will give you an understanding of the psychology that drives difficult behaviour. More importantly, it offers you tips and techniques for taking action when other people behave in challenging ways. Whether you're dealing with outright hostility, passive-aggression or psychological game-playing, reading this book will set you up to handle 'problem people' confidently and assertively.

The first chapter explains the mental programs that cause people to use difficult behaviour. You need to understand these so you don't get caught up in psychological game-playing. My argument is this: giving a 'difficult person' the reaction they expect reinforces their negative program. You need to respond from a resourceful 'alright' position. This puts you in control and prevents the other person pushing your buttons. It lets you build healthy relationships even when toxic dynamics exist. And it sets you up as a mature, emotionally intelligent communicator who can handle 'difficult people' with ease.

Chapter Two covers the topic of 'relationship dynamics'. It explains how difficult behaviour leads to 'boundary violations'. Then it outlines the six toxic communication patterns that 'difficult people' use to push your boundaries. Once you can detect these patterns you can counteract them. That's why Chapter Two is a must-read chapter.

In Chapter Three you'll learn how to turn toxic conversations around. You'll discover how to resist baiting and game-playing – so you can focus on sorting out the issue driving the other person's difficult behaviour.

Chapter Four builds on the skills covered in Chapter Three. It explains how you can maintain your boundaries even when 'difficult

people' try to violate them. The tool for doing this is called an ACE statement. This is a three-part statement which helps you speak assertively by acknowledging the other person's intent, challenging their behaviour and explaining what you want them to do in future. It's simple to remember and easy to use – no matter what tactics other people resort to.

Chapter Five covers six language patterns you can use to counteract the toxic communication patterns used by 'difficult people'. This is the 'toolkit' chapter of *Difficult People Made Easy*. If you're in a hurry to find solutions to a specific problem, you may want to dip into this chapter first. But remember this: in order to use language patterns artfully you need to understand the principles they're based on. So reading Chapters One through to Four will ensure you get the best possible results from your toolkit.

Once you've mastered your toolkit you're ready to apply it. This means learning to use each tool in a range of ways. Chapters Six through to Nine explain how to do this. In Chapter Six, you'll learn a core process for handling difficult behaviour. Then, in Chapter Seven, you'll hear how to use that process to handle aggressive people. In Chapter Eight, you'll see how to modify the core process when you're dealing with passive behaviour. And, in Chapter Nine, you'll come to grips with using the core process to counter passive-aggressive tactics.

Finally, in Chapter Ten, I answer the question, 'What should you do when the problem keeps occurring?' I explain that there is a big difference between dealing with reactive, one-off difficult behaviour and handling chronic, long-term patterns of problematic behaviour. This chapter will be of interest to you if you're dealing with a situation in which nothing seems to work. Sadly, you may never be able to change the other person. But reading this chapter will help you remain psychologically 'safe' around them. It will also help you make robust decisions about the long-term viability of maintaining the relationship.

▸ Throughout this book you'll find links to videos and tip sheets on my website: http://difficultpeoplemadeeasy.com.au. Some skills are easier to learn when you see them in practice. That's what the video links are for.

The techniques you'll read about in *Difficult People Made Easy* can be used in all walks of life. You can use them at home, at work and in social situations. Each technique is based on principles of applied psychology. This means that what you read here isn't just theory – it is tried and tested. Every technique is underpinned by a psychological model. This book teaches you step-by-step methods for using each technique in your real-life situations. That's what makes it different to other books on dealing with 'difficult people'.

Right now, you might think that some of the people you deal with are just too hard-to-handle. But once you've learned some basic skills, you will be able to prevent these people from impacting on you emotionally. Even if you've found it hard to be assertive in the past, you can take comfort in the fact that assertiveness can be learned. Today you're taking your first step towards becoming more assertive, flexible and resourceful. Other people have learned to manage 'difficult people' and so can you.

WHAT IS A 'DIFFICULT PERSON'? ▶