



Having dealt with over 9,500 participants from diverse industries and environments over the last eight years, Victoria Rose has gained valuable insights into the many problems plaguing workplaces in Australia and New Zealand and shares simple, step-by-step solutions in her engaging, educational and entertaining workshops.

**BONUS SECTION:**

**SARCASM** - The Lowdown on a Low Form of Communication

How sarcasm is affecting the bottom line of every single organisation today.

## **How easily the word ‘difficult’ is thrown around when referring to those people we struggle to get on with.**

When we label a person as ‘difficult’ what does that really mean?

To find out, I have posed this question to thousands of session participants and their responses have been fascinating. But before I share one of the most interesting responses, what would your response be?

What is it you would have to see or hear (ie. the evidence) a person do or say to define them as difficult?

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**Here is the most revealing response so far:** *“Difficult people are obstructive, negative and unwilling to change. They undermine other members of the team and actively work towards achieving evil.”*

All my business training sessions start with each participant identifying their ‘Why’ for attending;  
The thing they would like to improve as a result of attending this workshop.

**One revealing answer** highlights my ‘Why’ for writing this report:  
*“That I may be able to negotiate with difficult staff members without losing the will to live!”*

So, before too many people lose the will to live, let’s look at the ‘5 tough types and what to do about them’.

Actually, we should look at this first:

**It is essential to focus on the behaviour *not* the person.**

Be objective (facts not opinions), use a non-defensive tone and help individuals take responsibility for their behaviour.

If your focus is on the person (not the behaviour) are you having a personality clash?

Address that first.

**Perhaps you could start by asking yourself “Am I the difficult person?”**



## **Tough Type 1: Negaholics**

These people constantly find fault.

“That will never work!” is their catch cry and because they are often the most experienced staff members in the room, they are rarely challenged as to what, exactly, didn’t work.

### **Suggestions for what to do about them:**

- *Value their input: these people see the potholes in the road.*

Yes, these types are your risk assessment, but they can become a risk to the team environment of safety and belonging if they are not managed.

- *Explain the impact on morale when they always say ‘No!’*

If each bright sparkly idea keeps getting hit over the head, then it won’t be long before there are no risk-takers who would dare to venture a different way to do something. No organisation can afford that!

- *Make them responsible for focusing on solutions*

This will not be easy because they operate in the problem and not in the solution. Ask “What will work?” Then zip your lip; wait for their answer.

- *Challenge them: ask “What was it, specifically, that did not work?”*

Don’t be surprised if they cannot answer this one (they’ll be surprised to be asked). Ensure your tone is genuinely curious.

- *Make them aware in the last meeting they said “No!” eight times and they need to reduce that by 50%.*

This solution was supplied by a manager who actually had this issue and used this response ... and it worked.

- *Respond with “You might be right.” then continue exploring the new idea. This acknowledges their opinion and allows the discussion to continue.*

Do not say this just to shut them up, because they just might be right. Park it and keep exploring the new sparkly idea. All new ideas need work.

- *Get them to make a list of the good and the bad points.*

Another tough one for them; they’ll struggle, but they can do this.

- *Polarisers: if you say black they’ll say white. Beat them at their own game; start with “You won’t like this but ...”*

Yes, it’s a game, we all play them, even you. Try this one with Polarisers.



## **Tough Type 2: Whiners**

Closely related to Negaholics.

Whiners constantly mumble and grumble about how much work they have, how bad the weather is, how bad their aches and pains are and how that new person is a right pain. They are hard to ignore.

### **Suggestions for what to do about them:**

- *Challenge them.*

Ask “So what are you going to do about that?”

Of course they’ll say something about how they can’t do anything ‘cause no one listens to them! Persist: say “If you *could* do something, what would you do?” You’ll annoy them so much they will probably not annoy you so much in the future.

- *Ask an alternate question.*

“Do you think you will decide to do something about that or not?” This question prompts them to think through their motives for complaining and to take accountability. Asking this also implies you believe they have the resources to do something about it and it is their choice to do so or not.

- *Whiners often play the “Why Don’t You ... Yes But” game.*

They tell you about a problem; you suggest solutions (“Why don’t you ...”). No matter what you helpfully suggest, they respond with “Yes, but ...” and give a reason why your suggestion will not work, why none of them will work. If this sounds familiar, refuse to play that game by first asking: “Do you want me to help you think of solutions?”

- *Play ‘FLIP IT’.*

When they say “It’s raining again.” You instantly agree and say “Yes, it is raining and my garden will be so grateful.” Agree first, then come up with a positive. This game is good for helping you maintain a positive state.

- *Give feedback about the effect of their behaviour with an ‘I Statement’.*

“Mary, when you continue to talk about life in a negative way, I feel sad because it affects my mood as well and what I would like is for us to focus on the positive aspects of the situation and support each other in that way.

- *Have moral courage.*

Mary may not like what you said but she can now choose how to proceed in light of your genuine concerns.

You’ve had the courage to speak up (unlike all the others).

NOTE: Sadly, many will continue to gossip about the Whiner, yet will not talk to those who have the ability to do something about the problem.



### **Tough Type 3: Blameless Ones**

Much of what we consider to be dysfunctional behaviour is caused by fear.

The fear profile of the Blameless Ones prompts them to duck situations they can't control. "You can't win 'em all!" is not an option for them; they work hard to avoid the chance of losing any.

The three main characteristics of the Blameless Ones are insecurity, avoiding responsibility by making excuses and an inclination to be a perfectionist. If criticised they have to relieve their hurt, fear and worry so shift the blame onto someone else. This can involve telling lies.

#### **Suggestions for what to do about them:**

- *State the performance issue in clear, objective terms and then listen, really listen, to their feedback.*

Yes, really listening to all feedback is important, and especially so with these types as they can be master weavers of fiction into facts.

- *Confront the blaming tactics.*

Ask: "How did this happen?"

This excellent question points at the behaviour, not the person.

- *Tell them how to fix the mistake.*

Then set a time and date for a follow-up meeting to talk about *how* the problem was fixed.

- *Reinforce that making mistakes and learning from them is okay; what's not okay is blaming others.*

If you work in an environment where it is *not* okay to make mistakes then expect individuals to go to great lengths to hide their mistakes.

- *Use an 'I' Statement.*

"Jack, when you don't accept responsibility for your mistakes, I feel frustrated because it is causing division in the team, and what I would like is for you to ask for help when you don't know what to do."

- *Help them raise their self esteem.*

Is the team environment one of safety and belonging? Is sarcasm condoned? Is praise given for a job well done? How do the role models act?

NOTE: Are you a perfectionist? You probably go to great pains to create that perfect result and at the same time create a lot of pain for people who work with you. Consider this equation: Not a Perfectionist Be a Progressionist



## **Tough Type 4: Hand-holders**

These are the needy ones.

Very few managers turned them down in the past so they kept getting reinforced, by misguided bosses, for being needy. They need constant approval at every step.

So what type of boss would want that?

The most common answers are micro-managers and bosses with big egos.

### **Suggestions for what to do about them:**

- *Refuse to enable the neediness.*

Let them know you have confidence they will complete tasks satisfactorily.

- *Carefully and thoroughly go through the 'how to' part of tasks.*

Build them up step by step, it takes time but the result will be worth it.

- *Focus on their strengths.*

Too often we focus on people's weaknesses. When we choose to notice strengths, a more balanced view of each individual is gained.

- *Hold them accountable for their work.*

When necessary, set up meetings giving ample notice and advise of start and end times - the needy person wants a lot of your time.

- *Make sure you catch them doing something right ... then tell them.*

Give praise. There has never been even one participant in my sessions who did not like some form of praise, whether that be the equivalent of a small pat on the back or a big hug (don't actually hug them though).

- *Develop confidence and skills by giving appropriate feedback.*

As a manager/supervisor/team leader, giving feedback is your job.

People need to know they're on the right track.

Learn two or three feedback models and use them.

NOTE: Although not suitable for all types of feedback, I strongly recommend the 'I Statement' for addressing inappropriate behaviour.

Examples are given in Tough Types 2 and 3.



## **Tough Type 5: Antagonists**

Some view these types as the resident pit bull.

It seems like Antagonists walk around just waiting to be offended. They're also skilled at pushing your hot buttons, if you let them.

These types are most likely to refuse to follow your directions. This is insubordination: they know it, you know it and everyone watching knows it. You must act decisively.

### **Suggestions for how to deal with:**

- *Get the facts.*

If the issue is about safety or illegal activities then urgent action is required. If the insubordination is unjustifiable then urgent action of a different nature is required. If no action is taken, then a new standard has been set.

- *Is the issue about disrespect to your leadership or role.*

Set up a meeting and find out what the real issue is (the root cause).

- *Ensure your tone of voice and body language are neutral.*

Many people are totally unaware of the effect of their tone of voice and body language, especially during significant conversations. Become aware.

- *Decide if 'right now' is a good time to pursue the issue or whether both parties would benefit from some cooling off time.*

Taking some cooling off time affords both parties time to work through what just happened. However, the situation may require immediate action so, at the very least, pause, take a deep breath ... then continue, slowly.

- *Ask the antagonist how he or she sees the issue being resolved.*

In the heat of the moment, this is rarely done. You might like their answer.

- *Set boundaries by clearly stating the consequences of further insubordination or inappropriate behaviour.*

Consider using the 'If-Then' strategy:

If (unacceptable behaviour) Then (consequence), If (acceptable behaviour) Then (consequence).

Consequences can be seen as good or bad.

- **DWYSYWD**

Do What You Say You Will Do - every single time.

## **BONUS SECTION**

### **SARCASM - The Lowdown on a Low Form of Communication**

You would've heard it said that sarcasm is the lowest form of wit. Perhaps you haven't heard the rejoinder: "But it's the most effective!"

One has to ask, "**The most effective ... at what?**"

There is only one answer to that.

**Sarcasm is extremely effective at putting other people down.**

If the recipient objects to the sarcastic comment, they're often told something along the lines of "I was only joking, what's the matter with you today?"

If the recipient lacks confidence (and so many do) then this will further undermine their trust in their own abilities and sense of self and belonging.

Recently, at one of my workplace workshops, a participant confided this astonishing response many young female staff members are subjected to: "What's the matter, that time of the month is it?"

Sarcasm is inauthentic communication and is often used by those who operate from a position of superiority (their belief, not necessarily a role).

It is also difficult to report because a sarcastic comment is not about the words, it's about how those words are said.

How does one describe tone to HR? With great difficulty.

If the 'people at the top' are inclined to make sarcastic comments, then that is the set standard for the entire organisation and your good people will leave.

Also, good luck with any attempts to grow productivity because sarcasm creates distrust, disharmony and lack of loyalty, at the very least.

**So, instead of ignoring sarcasm address it:**

- From a leadership perspective - Don't do it and don't condone it.
- From an individual perspective - Ask this simple question: "That sounded like a put down, did you mean it that way?"

**Happiness in the workplace is paramount to productivity, which is paramount to profit and staying in business.**

Happiness means team members need to feel they belong and they're safe, which does not happen in a sarcastic environment ... EVER!

**Victoria Rose** is known as 'The Leadership Voice Woman' in the Australian and New Zealand business communities.

She is famous for energising and inspiring people to take concrete steps to grow their resilience and happiness.

Her story-telling speaking style delivers a powerful message without being tedious or lacking enthusiasm.

Victoria started her training career 28 years ago as a soldier in the ARES and was promoted to the rank of Warrant Officer.



*"Energetic, excellent and attention grabbing, especially for a topic that is not riveting. Thank you Victoria."*

Angela Anderson | Group Human Resources Manager | **Century Yuasa Batteries** | QLD

*"Strong, clear leadership and skillful communication are essential in our managers in order to achieve strong teams and successful outcomes. Victoria, with her dynamic approach and passion for her subject, has been instrumental in helping us build a strong and smart leadership group. Her professionalism and knowledge is unquestionable. Her ability to work alongside a wide variety of people from all walks of life with humour and enthusiasm is well received. Victoria always researches thoroughly, consults carefully and delivers strongly."*

Danny O'Neill | Director of Adolescent Programs | **Richmond Fellowship** | ACT

*"I've never seen a group of people so motivated and re-energised from a workshop. The flow on effect was also noticeable on the following day with the people they supervise asking me questions about the training and recommending other supervisors who would benefit from the training."*

*Victoria: Thank you for inspiring our supervisors. It was truly impressive. "*

Michael Furlan | HR Coordinator | **Sucrogen Products** | QLD

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