There are many circumstances in life where dealing with difficult people may be an unavoidable obstacle. Understanding how to navigate these situations with specific strategies can be helpful.

**Tips for Dealing with Difficult People and Challenging Situations**

**Understand the Characteristics.** Being familiar with the different traits of difficult people will be helpful when faced with them. You may be faced with the following types of characteristics: Low frustration tolerance, impulsivity, overly sensitive, blaming, complaining/whining, exploding and sense of entitlement. There may be other characteristics that are not listed that can also be frustrating. However, knowing the specific set of traits that is most upsetting to you is beneficial. Knowing your triggers is the first step in changing your reactions.

**Know Yourself.** After becoming familiar with the different types of characteristics you may encounter, it is important to identify which traits are most challenging for you to deal with. After knowing what triggers you, the next step is to evaluate how you typically respond when triggered. Noticing your actions when triggered will give you a chance to assess and change your behavior when triggered in the future.

**Listen to Understand.** Once you have an idea of what triggers you and how you typically respond, you can work towards changing that response. When you feel your typical triggered response start to build, it can be helpful to shift your focus to how you are listening to that person. Changing this focus will help to decrease the frustration you may feel when triggered. For example – when feeling triggered, one strategy is to focus on the following aspects of how you are listening to that person: Keep an open mind, maintain eye contact, pay attention, and be aware of your own body language.

**Assess the Situation.** In addition to focusing on listening to the person who you find difficult, it may also be helpful to evaluate the situation by asking the following questions: Does this person usually act this way in similar situations? Is my reaction out of proportion to what the situation warrants? Was there a particular incident that triggered the difficult behavior? Will direct and open discussion relieve the situation? Evaluating the situation may help in redirecting the frustration and ease tension.

**Always Have a Positive Attitude.** Remember that regardless of the magnitude of the situation, the attitude you have towards it is always a decision. Going into a potentially difficult situation with an attitude of openness and cooperation is much more likely to yield a positive outcome. You may not have control over difficult people or challenging situations but how you handle them is always up to you.