**Intro Slide:**

**Review – Effective Communication**

**Slide 2 – Effective communication principles**

**Effective Communication**

* **Always be professional**. Use tact and diplomacy to express your thoughts and feelings. Set boundaries and ground rules for interaction with your dancers.
* **Open Questions** - In discussion, ask questions beginning with “how” and “what” to help clarify problems and what the individual wants.
* **Paraphrase for confirmation** - Listen for clues about what the cause of the conflict is. You can confirm your understanding by paraphrasing what you have heard.
* **Active listening -** Use active listening techniques such as paraphrasing, labelling emotions, effective pauses, open-ended questions, and validation to advance the conversation.
* **Explore options**. Acknowledge the person’s reality then ask “what if?” problem-solving questions to introduce options.
* **Examine consequences as appropriate**. Ask the person to articulate the consequences of a specific action. Example: “Tell me what happened when this was called. or tell me why you think this caller is making it hard for you”
* **Agree on action steps and time frames**. Ask for confirmation then rephrase what the individual said by saying something like, “Is that right?”

**Slide 3 – dealing with difficult people**

**DEALING WITH THOSE DIFFICULT PEOPLE AS A CALLER**

It’s natural to gravitate toward those relationships that bring you the most happiness, growth, and fulfillment. That is why we square dance. However, in square dancing, just as in life, despite your best efforts and intentions to the contrary, you’re sometimes forced to deal with challenging relationships and difficult people. Navigating these interactions can often result in stress, tension, and anxiety that negatively impact your mood and expose you to unpleasant emotional toxicity and if poorly handled, leave not only you with a bad feeling, but could easily leave others with a bad impression of you.

When dealing with difficult people it’s important to remember that everyone you encounter is doing the best they can from their own level of consciousness. That is why it is so very important to try and avoid judging their behaviour. No matter how it may appear from your perspective, few, if any of the difficult people in your life are deliberately trying to be the bad guy or villain. They are simply making the choices that seem best from where they find themselves in the current moment, regardless of the amount of mayhem it might bring into the experience of others.

Every one of us, as a Dancer or as a Caller or as a Teacher or Coach has had to deal with a difficult situation that is instigated by an individual, or individuals that:

* Have a different opinion than you
* Are not impressed by something you have said or done
* Think they are better informed or more knowledgeable than you (and want to prove it to everyone)
* Are jealous or afraid of what you are or what you may become
* Hundreds of other reasons
* **Or sometimes just because they are an A@#$-ole !!**

**Slide 4 – what is the secret?**

The secret to dealing with difficult people is actually quite easy. The first and most important lesson to learn is to ask yourself four questions quickly before you respond:

1. **What just happened?** (Distinguishing observations from evaluations for awareness and clarity)
2. **What are the feelings arising in me?** (Taking responsibility for emotions and beliefs without slipping into victimization) – If you do not recognise your own feelings and deal with them, then you cannot diffuse a situation
3. **What do I need that I’m not receiving?** (Identifying your own needs rather than assuming others automatically know what you require) – this is very important when you are faced with a conflict situation
4. **What am I asking for?** (Specifically formulating a request for what you need and surrendering the outcome)

There is a simple process of achieving your own introspection to deal with difficult people

**Slide 5 – Step 1 of 7**

**1. Use the S.T.O.P. Model to Avoid Reactivity**

This acronym can be the most fundamental step in coping with a difficult personal relationship. S.T.O.P. stands for:

* **Stop** whatever you're doing – especially a knee jerk response
* **Take** 3 deep breaths. That pause allows you time to center yourself
* **Observe** how your body feels – are your ears burning, are you angry, embarrassed etc. If you do not recognise how you feel, you cannot control your response
* **Proceed** with kindness and compassion – this is usually the hardest thing to do because most of the time, the conflict needing resolution is embarrassing, hurtful, or belittling to you and you must be able to move past that.

No matter how challenging the difficult person or relationship is, this pause will help to derail the emotional reactions that are primed to take over in the heat of the moment. – You only have control of one thing, and that is your own reactions.

**Slide 6 – Step 2 of 7**

**2. See Through the Control Drama the Other Person Is Using**

Control dramas are manipulative behaviours that people often fall into when their needs aren’t being met. There are four primary control dramas:

* Being nice and manipulative
* Being nasty and manipulative
* Being aloof and withdrawn
* Playing the victim or “poor-me” role

If you can learn to recognise what is happening with the person causing the conflict, you will have an insight into dealing with how to best approach the situation. These four “Control Dramas” are learned behaviours, usually from childhood, that the person causing issue has learned to rely on because it has been successful to achieve their own needs. Most people never outgrow their primary control drama impulses and when under pressure generally revert back to their learned form.

As a caller, when you witness one of these control dramas playing out in a difficult person, you can automatically become more understanding. Imagine the person you’re dealing with using the same control drama as a child. From that perspective you realize that this individual never learned another way to get their needs met and, as such, is deserving of your compassion. This simple and profound shift in perspective can take the entire relationship dynamic in a positive new direction.

**Slide 7 – Step 3 of 7**

**3. Don’t Take it Personally – even if it is a personal attack If you do you lost before you started.**

When you’re involved with a difficult person, it can feel like their words are a deliberate personal attack. This is most often, not the case. **Their reaction and behaviour is not about you; it’s about them**. Everyone is experiencing reality through their own personalized filters, perceptions and experiences of the world and how they see you behave will be as a direct result of those interpretations. A difficult person’s point of view is something that’s personal to them. In their reality, they are the director, producer, and leading actor of their own movie. You, on the receiving end, play only a small part in their drama.

In a similar manner they are possibly only bit players in your drama, so you can choose not to give the bit players of your life control over your happiness. If you take the situation personally, you end up becoming offended and react by defending your beliefs and causing additional conflict. In refusing to take things personally you defuse the ego and help to de-escalate difficult conversations and potential conflict.

**Slide 8 – Step 4 of 7**

**4. Practice Defencelessness – This is the hardest thing to do especially if the person causing the drama is obviously wrong.**

This can be a powerful strategy when confronted with a difficult person. **Being defenceless doesn’t mean you’re passive—you still maintain your personal opinion and perspective in a difficult situation—**but rather than engaging with the intention of making the other person wrong, you consciously choose not to be an adversary of their negativity.

Being defenceless means you give up the need to be the smartest person in the room. Callers are all about Ego, and it is a necessary thing to have to be a successful caller. However, in this type of situation, it is important to tell both your ego and your intellect to “go and sit down” while you proceed by accepting that the other persons position is valid from their point of view. It is not right or wrong, just a valid opinion. You don’t have to agree with their perspective (or even like it).

It is imperative that your first action is NOT to defend your point of view without acknowledging the value of their point of view, right or wrong. An interaction with a difficult person should never turn into a heated debate or worse, an argument.

In most cases, that other person needs to be heard in full so that their perspective is validated. By allowing them to express themselves without resistance, they can fulfill that need and perhaps become more amicable. Establishing defencelessness creates space that allows for a more a compassionate and peaceful interaction and opens the door effective communication that may change that point of view.

**Slide 9 – Step 5 of 7**

**5. Walk Away if Necessary**

Difficult people can often draw you into a field of negativity. If you feel like you can’t maintain your awareness and objectivity, **there’s nothing wrong with removing yourself from the situation**. A toxic exchange can leave you feeling physically depleted and emotionally exhausted; if the above options aren't helping you deal with the difficult person, walk away. **You don't have anything to prove to anyone; there’s no need to martyr yourself.**  You may have the best intentions for the exchange, such as correcting an error in the persons perception to help them become a better dancer, but sometimes, the best course is to acknowledge their opinion, and just find a subtle way to withdraw from the interaction. This isn't about winning or losing, it's about stepping away from a toxic situation that could not only bring you down but the entire mood of an evening. Business cards are great for this. Make a reason to disengage, by offering your card and ask them to send you an e-mail. It is simple to say, if I did something wrong please let me know, so I can fix it. Sent me an e-mail and I can get back to but I have to get ready for the next tip right now. You have validated that their opinion matters (to them) without engaging it..

**Slide 10 – Step 6 of 7**

**6. See the Experience as an Evolutionary Opportunity**

Dealing with a difficult person is a learning experience each and every time. Recognise that what really irritates you about that person may be a reflection of yourself and you see in them upsetting things that you see in yourself. .

Life is a teacher, and that difficult person is only part of the class and another lesson to master. Try and ask yourself in each of these situations, "What am I meant to learn in this situation?". Write it down after and keep it in your notes.

**Slide 11 – Step 7 of 7**

**7. Resonate Compassion**

Try and be compassionate in understanding. With difficult people compassion allows you to see someone who is “suffering” and needs relief. If you can think, speak, and act from this perspective, you will resonate the compassion not necessarily for them but for their position, and perspective. That will allow you to respond reflectively, rather than reactively, and hopefully take your relationships to a more conscious level of communication and expression.

Try and remember it this way, “We do the best we can with what we know, and when we know better, we do better.” This applies to your perspective and theirs, whether they know it or not.

**Slide12 – 15 social skills for dealing with difficult people**

**Sociability of Square Dance**

As a caller we talk about the sociability of square dancing and the importance of that sociability in relationship building. Just remember the relationship is between two entities, you and the dancers. The relationship is extended to the relationship between you and the club and the dancers, and you and each individual dancer. Suffice it to say that you are at the centre of every communication action that happens on the floor where calling is part of the equation and as such you are the commonality that will make or break a successful outcome to conflict resolution.

The following are 15 social skill tools that can help you in life, but also help you with communication when dealing with difficult people.

**1. Kindness**

Look, I get it. When dealing with difficult people, the gut reaction is to be difficult right back. When it feels like someone is attacking you, your first thought is to defend yourself. I’ve been there and still get caught up in that when I don’t slow down and take a pause. Almost every difficult situation when confronted with kindness, goes a lot further than being difficult. Conflict requires at least two people being difficult with each other, the situation tends to escalate to a point where nothing will get accomplished. Kindness with a difficult person most of the time diffuses the situation and you get more of what you want. **This is one of the top techniques for dealing with difficult people.**

**2. Compassion**

Ever heard that saying about dealing with your own problems? That if you and a bunch of people shoved all your problems into a circle that you’d most likely take your own back once you saw everyone else’s? The point is none of us really know what someone else is dealing with, going through or what experience brough them to the perspective that is the issue of conflict.

Most often, if you show compassion to a person who is being difficult, you’ll find they cannot help but respond in a positive manner. We need to open our own eyes to when others could use some kindness.

**3. Find Common Ground**

Ever noticed how when you’re talking to someone for the first time, finding something in common creates a strong initial connection? We all love to feel like part of a group, like we belong. This is a great expert technique to deal with difficult people and one you should keep top of mind. It is especially important when you as a caller are challenged or in a situation dealing with a dancer or another caller. All the common ground is there already for you to build upon. When you are able to state an understanding of the person causing conflict and can express empathy from a point of knowledge, it makes it easier to have a smooth conversation rather than an argument.

**4. Stay Calm**

Many times, someone will say or do something to you at a dance that will alter your mood, cause your ears to burn or even have you seeing red? This has happened to me several times. It is frustrating and infuriating. It is even more so when that person only seems to be intentionally making it more difficult. Just remember responding kind will only make things worse – not better. If you can, find the patience to stay calm and wait a while before responding, the results are much better. **The ability to stay calm when dealing with a difficult person will help you greatly.**

**5. Share Your Side**

It is important to listen to their side but once you have acknowledged the value of their perception, they will be more inclined to listen. Sometimes, being able to articulate to a difficult person where you are coming from will make a big difference. Whatever you do however, do not “script” a standard response. When presenting your perspective of their “conflict situation” putting it into a context relative to the specific situation and the perception, sometimes that makes a huge difference. This is where empathy (never sympathy) goes a long way to communication.

**6. RESPECT**

No one likes to be treated like they are stupid or incompetent or just plain wrong. When dealing with even the most difficult person, treat them with respect. It will go a long way to diffusing the situation, but also, doing so, will raising your profile and the perception of you with that person and any others. If you start attacking someone and acting like they are stupid you might as well be slamming the door shut on the conflict, and likely slamming the door shut on ever being asked back to call.

Treating someone disrespectfully will almost always make things worse and at a bare minimum make the other person not want to do anything to assist you. It’s the same as remembering the golden rule “treat others as you would like to be treated”.

**7. Ignore Them**

Yep I said it. Rarely, but sometimes, there are people that are just looking to be negative and want someone else to feel the worse so they can feel better about themselves. I do not need that in my life, or at my dance, and neither does anyone else. Sometimes the best course of action with a difficult person is to ignore or avoid them. This of course depends on whether they will allow themselves to be ignored. In some cases it may even be worth the effort of letting them know kindly that their needs could be better served elsewhere, or with a different activity and let them know they could probably find someone else who could assist them in the way they are wanting.

**8. Control**

Many things in life we can control and many things we can’t. Focus only on that which you can control. This especially true with difficult people. You may not be able to control that person that comes to you with the technical “you are wrong” . You can however, control getting a group together with that person, and saying that maybe you do not know all that there is about the movement, and have them explain it to you in a way that they think they are helping and in control, when in reality, you are. It opens up communication, and allows you an avenue to correct perspective. Who knows, sometime that confronting person may be right and you might just learn something too.

**Slide13 – 15 social skills for dealing with difficult people continued**

**9. Look at Yourself**

Take a good hard look at yourself in conflict situation. Is there something that you are doing that is making it harder to deal with someone? What about your mood? If you are in a good mood, you interact with people all day and it goes pretty well. However, what about those times when you have your own problem that you are sorting out. If it is serious enough, you can be seen as short, abrupt, or even condescending. It is important to spend time in your own head when dealing with conflict with others. If you don’t, your mood or how you present it, even if you do all the right things, can just add fuel to the fire of conflict and make things worse.

**10. Do not be afraid of Conflict**

Most people are naturally afraid of conflict, and this leads to letting difficult people having their way, or worse, people walking all over you. It is hard to be a leader from under the sole of someone else’s shoe. It is important that when challenged, you stand up for yourself and establish boundaries. Everyone, including you, deserves to be treated with respect. Don’t allow yourself to be treated poorly by a difficult person.

Do not start conflict, but do not fear it either, especially if a difficult person is treating you poorly. Conflict is not necessarily a bad thing. In many instances, it’s good because it can allow a resolution to come to fruition:

What you do is as important as what you say

**11. Choose to make Eye contact or not to make Eye contact – do your homework.**

Making eye contact with the person you are speaking with face-to-face is an outward expression that you are confident and fully engaged with that person. However, if someone isn’t looking to make eye contact with you, before you jump to conclusions, be aware that it may be culturally unacceptable for them not to do so; they are intimidated by you; or it makes them uncomfortable.

**12. Use Positive Body Language**

You can project confidence, kindness, and leadership just by the way you carry yourself. Keep your head up, shoulders back, and chest out. Tilt your head and nod understanding when they are speaking to you. You are not agreeing with them only acknowledging with your body language that you are interested in what they are saying. Learn a little about facial expressions and body language. By looking for things that are sudden changes from the “normal” of a person’s body language you will quickly pick up on their feeling or reaction to what they are saying, or what you are saying.

**13. Praise People’s Strengths**

It is hard to really cause conflict when you are being praised by someone. Giving praise to someone else , especially in a conflict situation is a sign of confidence on your part, and a tremendous builder of confidence in the other person, that you know what you are talking about, or you see them better than they may see themselves.

**14. Like looking at body language, listen to the voice not just the words.**

People will communicate more with their tone than they will with the words themselves. Part of the keys to conflict resolution is knowing, that information is revealed differently.

People reveal a lot about themselves by not only what they say, but how they say it. Some people connect better when you speak loud and fast, while others prefer to be communicated to in a softer tone — know your audience

* **The words** we use only convey about 7 percent of what we are actually saying.
* **The voice**, tone and inflections communicate about 38%. Of what we want to express
* **Our body language**, stance, facial expression, eyes, actions etc, conveys 55% of the overall message.

Fr example two words, “It’s raining”

* It’s raining is just two words but what do they actually?
* It’s raining? Is a question indicating surprise or curiousit.
* Frustrated thump and depression slum…ITS RAINING!!! Shows frustration and being upset about the condition of the weather

**Smile and be polite**

People that smile more, generally are accepted as more confident. It shows you are in a good mood. Tell your face to smile. It triggers “mirror neurons” in others that forces them to smile. It’s also hard to argue with a smile on your face. People with great social skills are approachable, and nothing says, “Let’s be friends!”, more than a genuine smile. Similarly, please, thank you, and your welcome, are respectful and free. They go a long way in diffusing situations. Be genuine with them and use them often.

**15. Provide Value –**

In any conflict resolution situation, it is important that you provide value. If you cannot, get out of the situation until you can. This means you have fairly good social skills to be able to provide something of value to the person causing the situation (understanding or clarification) without getting anything in return. It is the joy of giving. If you cannot do that, then sometimes it is necessary just to listen and say nothing at all. In a number of conflict situations, people don’t need to hear your opinion, nor do they want it. Remember that the next time you want to chime in and give “empirical data supporting your side of an argument”. Stop and ask yourself the question, “**Do I want to be happy, or do I want to be right?**” More times than not, being happy means conceding the argument and enjoying the company of others. – Accept their opinion with a positive and go elsewhere. (I didn’t realise that calling that would cause trouble. I will have to look into that, thank you….and walk away. You have validated that their opinion was heard and you chose to move on)

Conflict situations will arise, and they can be very contagious and detrimental to an overall mood or atmosphere. It is even worse if it gets to you, because you will spread it quickly. Do not be that person who transmits someone else’s negativity, or your own, by extension through that microphone. If you are faced with it, and you will be, be the person who finds the “up-side” of a difficult situation and keep it all in perspective. Don’t be unrealistic and overly-positive, but be the person that looks at that conflict with a difficult person and focuses on what you can control to diffuse the situation.

**Slide14 – a note on introspection**

**A FINAL NOTE ON INTROSPECTION.**

When a situation arises, it is necessary to ask yourself, “Am I the cause of the situation?”. As a caller, if the problem is danceability, choreography, definitions, flow or any other aspect, the answer is **YES you are**. Before you all start to argue about blame, let’s set aside opinion for the moment and look at this from a different perspective. This is the hardest thing to accept because it is important to be introspective and look at yourself. Many of the times we deal with a difficult person it is because of something that we have done, knowingly or inadvertently that caused a reaction which has escalated into a conflict situation.

**Example**: you are at a dance and things are going well, and you are calling a good solid mainstream program with a lot of variety. The dancers are comfortable and happy and you finish your patter by calling “Heads face Grand Square”. A dancer stops in a huff, at the end of the music and before you can put the singing call on, he/she and goes up to the stage and yells at you, you called that wrong and it cannot be danced that way.

**Question:** Is that dancer correct in feeling the anxiety of you calling it wrong?

**The answer is probably Yes,** but that is not your fault. You were the cause of the reaction by calling something, right or wrong doesn’t matter. What matters is how you are going to deal with it. You were the only the one that delivered the message, and it was a message that this dancer has been trained to think is wrong.

* Is your choreography wrong - No
* Is the movement wrong – No
* Did you get the definition wrong - No
* Are you wrong to call it – No
* Are you the cause of this dancers anxiety – YES – but you didn’t create the circumstances for it.

Once you learn to accept ownership then you can get to the issue of diffusing the situation. In order to do that you must recognise that you only have control of one thing. – your own reactions.

You have no control of the simple facts

* This dancer thinks he / she is right.
* This dancer does not understand the definition
* This dancer has not / or may not have been taught right
* This dancer may have been specifically told it is always “Sides Face”
* This dancer doesn’t care about public perception of him/herself as long as the point can be pressed
* This dancer likes to be the focus of attention

You do however, have total control of how you react and deal with the situation

What is natural tendency:

(discuss this situation)

**Slide15 – 10 Conflict Resolution Criteria**

**Did the solution meet the following criteria for effective conflict resolution**

**1. Validate.**

You would be surprised what this simple action will do. One common reason people put up resistance is because they do not feel heard or understood. Validating and listening to them to make them feel significant is the fastest way to move forward. It is not agreement with their position, only acknowledgement of the value of their opinion

**2. Think like them.**

Just imagine you are in their shoes for one moment. What do they want? If you were in their situation, what would it feel like? Just this one tip will get you far because most people are seeing one point of view: theirs. Perception is reality for most people and great problem-solvers can change perspective.

**3. Don’t resist.**

What you resist, persists. People tend to resist you more when you resist them. If you tell them they are wrong and you are right, even if it is true, you have likely already lost the conflict. Spend a little extra time getting to know their point of view and ask them questions to understand their point of view (and nod your head, yes, as if you understand).

**4. When listening, slightly tilt your head.**

We communicate not only through words but with our body language. Remember those little things. When you tilt your head slightly, people feel heard. Also, this one trick will get you to actually listen more intently.

**5. Plan your outcome.**

Before communicating, stop and think about how you want to feel as a result of what you are going to discuss. Usually it is relief that you want, and that this problem child has gone away. However it is also important that you know how you want to make them feel (validated). Finally, you must be flexible (just like you want them to be, too).

**6. What is the lesson to learn from this conflict.**

Most of the time, there is a much bigger life lesson to be learned aside from the situation where someone is being difficult. It could be showing you how you relate to people in general, how you’re creating conflict, or what the conflict triggers in you. Be open to the lesson that is bigger than the situation itself.

**7. Use strategic influence.**

Find out who influences the difficult person and see if they can help you relate. Think outside the box and know you have many routes that lead to where you want to go.

**8. Create a bond.**

Sometimes you can change the subject and agree on something totally different than the matter at hand in order to create a bond with the person. Even a negative bond might do the trick, but be careful not to create a habit of negative bonding.

**9. Downplay the situation.**

Don’t feed negativity. Big responses followed by long email replies can escalate a difficult situation. Don’t call out the person’s behaviour with a grand reply even if they are being dramatic about it. Instead, calmly listen with care. The person won’t feel defensive but will feel understood.

**10. Interrupt the pattern.**

This is a very important skill. People often behave like robots. We get triggered all the time, and are often reacting to a story we loop in our heads with a behaviour pattern that we developed as a child and has worked for us. When dealing with someone difficult, interrupt the pattern by asking a question completely off-topic. This will offset their mental story, and you can approach the situation more proactively, rather than defensively.

**Slide16 – Any Questions**