

# **SU Elections.**

**STAND • VOTE • LEAD**

**Guide to dealing with  
difficult behaviour**



## OUR OWN BELIEFS AND VALUES WILL INFLUENCE OUR BEHAVIOUR:

- **Beliefs:** deeply held opinions about ourselves and our environment.
- **Values:** linked to beliefs, principles that guide our behaviour and decisions.

When those are challenged we might feel defensive and think the other person holds an unreasonable stance on topics.

Beliefs are generally a double edged sword, they have benefits for us but they can also hold us back. Some beliefs we might have might make us question our own skills and abilities, and might prevent us from looking at situations objectively. Checking where your beliefs are and how they evolve with you is crucial as you develop in your personal growth - and it's important to do so when talking to others and taking action.

## SOME REASONS WHY WE MIGHT FIND BEHAVIOURS DIFFICULT ARE:

- It's different than our own.
- It doesn't align with our beliefs and how we consider people should behave.
- Worry that they might escalate their behaviour and we will not be able to control it within our ability.
- Fear that not being able to deal with them will impact our image or message.
- Belief that we do not have the skills to deal with the situation appropriately.
- Worry that our own behaviour might escalate out of control and be unacceptable.
- Fear of the consequences of not being able to resolve the situation.
- Uncomfortableness.

## SOME THINGS WE CAN DO TO TACKLE THOSE REASONS ARE:

1. Rank them in order of how much they impact us currently or they might impact us in the future.
2. Finding small solutions that could help us deal with the reasons that affect us the most - such as having a friend with you to keep you grounded and feel more protected!
3. Have a clear end you want to achieve before you start talking to people that might respond in a difficult way for you. This helps keep the focus positive and avoid getting stuck in the problem - if your objective is to get a vote for your campaign but you are finding a difficult barrier to overcome it might be worth changing that objective to convincing them to vote in the first place!
  - a. Think SMART objectives! (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-bound)

We will all deal at some point with behaviour we find challenging, how and when this happens can depend on many things such as:

- Who we are, our knowledge, skills and experience.
- The time and place - factors like our energy levels and how many people we are working with.
- Our previous experience with this kind of behaviour - are we used to it or is it new to us.
- Our connection with the person - do we know them well?
- Our expectations and understanding of them.

Difficult behaviour can be categorised as aggressive, passive or passive-aggressive. You might see these behaviours in the people you encounter when campaigning, in your fellow candidates, or even your campaign team! Remember that these are common in stressful situations, but here as some descriptions and tips on how you can deal with those behaviours in a constructive way.

### **AGGRESSIVE:**

- Pushing their own rights while infringing on other people's, often in a confrontational or hurtful way.
- Staring, glaring or making confrontational eye contact.
- Speaking loudly and forcefully, using dramatic or aggressive language.
- Interrupting, talking over others or dominating the conversation.
- Violent and intimidating body language, such as standing too close or pointing at people.

### **PASSIVE:**

- Not asserting rights or opinions.
- Lack of eye contact with others.
- Quiet speech.
- Not speaking up when they disagree in conversation.
- Agreeing to forceful demands or giving in quickly in an argument.
- Not taking the opportunity to state their point of view.

### **PASSIVE-AGGRESSIVE:**

- Indirect expression of hostility or aggression through passive means.
- Sarcasm.
- Stubbornness.
- Deliberate failure to accomplish tasks.
- Indirect aggressive communication, such as notes, email or social media.

### **THE EFFECTS OF THESE BEHAVIOURS CAN BE SHORT OR LONG TERM:**

#### **Short-term effects:**

- Physical or emotional effect.
- Lack of progress on campaigns and projects.
- Disruption to events and meetings.
- Damage to relationships between team mates and candidates.

#### **Long term effects:**

- Decrease in confidence for the candidate affected.
- Low motivation to carry through the campaign.
- Damage to reputation.

It's crucial that you find your boundaries when talking to people, and make an effort to keep things as objective as possible! Some things you might consider when tackling behaviour that crosses those boundaries are:

**1. Firstly, pick your battles!** It might not be worth it to stay talking to a person that is making you uncomfortable, try ending the conversation quickly and having a breather for five minutes before talking to someone else - we are here to support you throughout your campaign and we know that students can be a hard sell sometimes!

**2. Be assertive!**

- a. Maintain eye contact, and speak clearly and calmly.
- b. Be firm on your goals.
- c. Listen to the other person's point of view.
- d. Accept criticism but maintain a firm standpoint.

**3. Think about what impact that behaviour has on yourself**

- your wellbeing is our top priority, we know campaigning can be stressful but it should still have a fun undertone.

**4. Be sure to keep calm and positive when dealing with these situations, but take some time by yourself to breathe afterwards!**

**5. Seek support if you need it! The SU is here to support you in your campaign**

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It's important to identify your own behaviour to be able to deal with difficult behaviour from others. One way you can do this is by putting yourself in their shoes, in other words, using Perceptual Positions (understanding the other's perspective) -

**The 3 perceptual positions are:**

1. Standing in your own shoes.
2. Standing in the other person's shoes.
3. Standing outside the situation as an independent observer.

**You can also ask yourself some questions to guide you in that perspective change.**

1. How do I see the situation? How do I feel?
2. How does the situation seem from their perspective?  
How does it feel to be there?  
How are you seeing yourself from their point of view?
3. What does this look like from an outsider perspective?

**Some techniques you might use when managing difficult behaviours could be:**

**ACTIVE LISTENING**

- This involves listening properly and using the Perceptual Positions, it can help you understand the reasons for their behaviour and how to support them.
- Give the other person time to form sentences about how they are feeling and to express themselves.
- Don't be afraid of silence! This might give people time to process their thoughts, especially if they are upset.
- Concentrate on what the other person is telling you without interrupting them, try to avoid immediately linking their story to your own experiences, feelings and opinions.
- Pay attention to the other person's non-verbal communication and use your own to encourage the other person (e.g. smiling, nodding, making positive eye contact).
- Open questions will encourage people to express themselves further.
- Reflect on what the other person has said by summarising what you have heard them say, this can assure them you have been listening and they can also correct you if you have misunderstood them.
- Be aware of people's different backgrounds and abilities, that might be useful in the time they need to think about what they want to say or the words they will use.

**"I" STATEMENTS**

This is particularly useful if you are mediating a conversation between people who disagree, it avoids making assumptions about the other person and keep expectations in line and realistic.

**The "I" statement should be delivered as such:**

- Description of how you are affected by a person's behaviour.
- Description of the other person's behaviour based on a fact (such as what they have said or done rather than how you interpreted it).
- A statement about what you would like to happen next.

**They should not be:**

- Used aggressively.
- Used passive-aggressively.
- Used as an excuse to highlight how you have been victimised by other people's behaviour.

Hopefully these tips will help you try to understand what causes someone's behaviour and what their intent is. Remember that we all have different comfort levels, some things may be challenging to us in some settings but not in others. It's as much about us as it is the other person's behaviour.