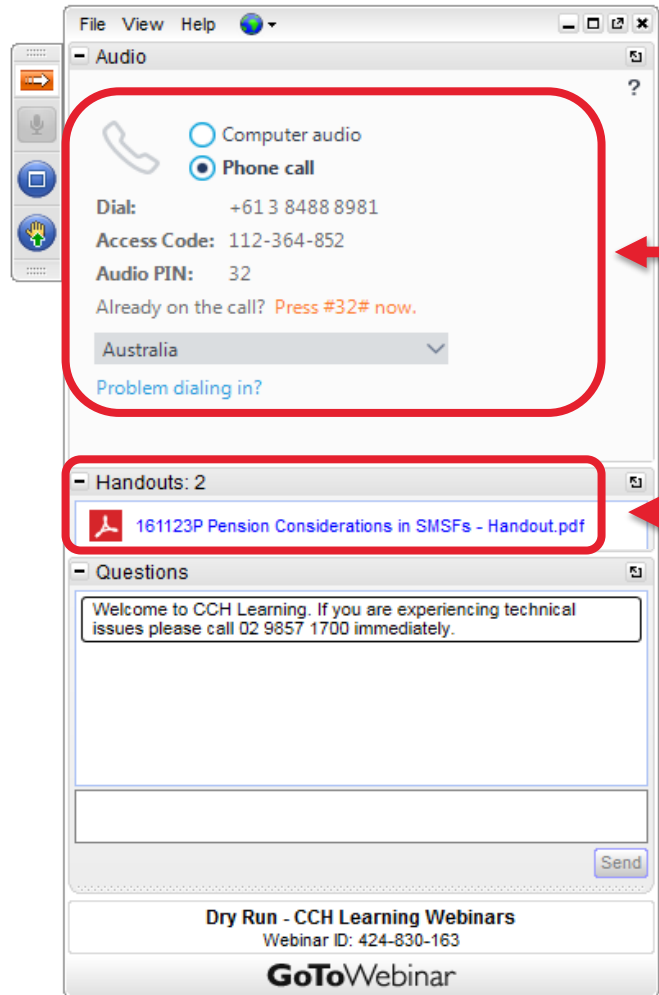

Working with Difficult People and Maintaining Professionalism

Deborah Assheton

Tuesday 9 April 2024



How to Participate Today



- Sound Problems? Toggle between Audio and Phone
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Questions?



Susannah Gynter
Moderator

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question and hit
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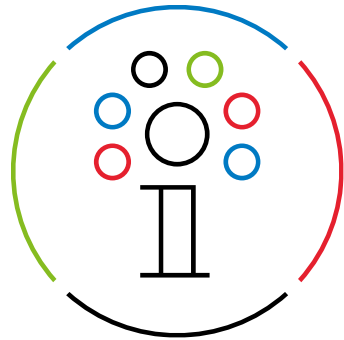
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Your Presenter



- Deb Assheton
- Director
- The Amplify Group

Today's session will cover



Working with difficult people and maintaining professionalism

- What makes a person difficult, and why is that so hard?
- Responding to difficult emotions
- Stay above the line
- Building your Emotional intelligence (EQ)
- Further Resources

What makes someone difficult?



2020 research by the [Center for Creative Leadership \(CCL\)](#), found there are 11 characteristics that difficult people often have, which include:

1. Poor job performance
2. Doesn't work well with others
3. Doesn't respond to coaching
4. Resistant to change
5. Not responsible for their actions
6. Has a negative attitude
7. Poor work ethic
8. Displays arrogance
9. Poor communication skills
10. Mismatched between skills and actual job
11. Relies on "Yes, but..." weaknesses

Source: Centre for Creative Leadership. Problem Employees: Problem Employees Identify and Manage Them Before They Impact Your Business and Career. 2020

What makes someone difficult?



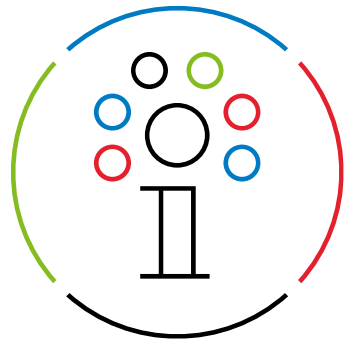
The character traits that underpin these characteristics are:

1. Callousness
2. Grandiosity
3. Aggressiveness
4. Suspiciousness
5. Manipulation
6. Domineering
7. Defensiveness
8. Risk-taking

Source: Sleep, C. E., Crowe, M. L., Carter, N. T., Lynam, D. R., & Miller, J. D. (2020, October 15). Uncovering the structure of antagonism. *Personality Disorders: Theory, Research, and Treatment*. Advance online publication. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/per0000416>

Poll Question

What's the impact on you of working with a difficult person?



List the words you use to describe how working with a difficult person or people has affected you. For example, exhausting, depleting, frustrating....

What's the impact?



Source: Centre for Creative Leadership. Problem Employees: Problem Employees Identify and Manage Them Before They Impact Your Business and Career. 2020



Truth 1: You cannot change a difficult person.

Truth 2: 'Wishing' them away is harmful to you.

Truth 3: You are not powerless. You have options and choices.

Truth 4: Getting better at responding to difficult people will positively influence your entire life.



Opportunity 1: Your behaviour and attitudes are tested and strengthened

Opportunity 2: You learn how to manage your boundaries

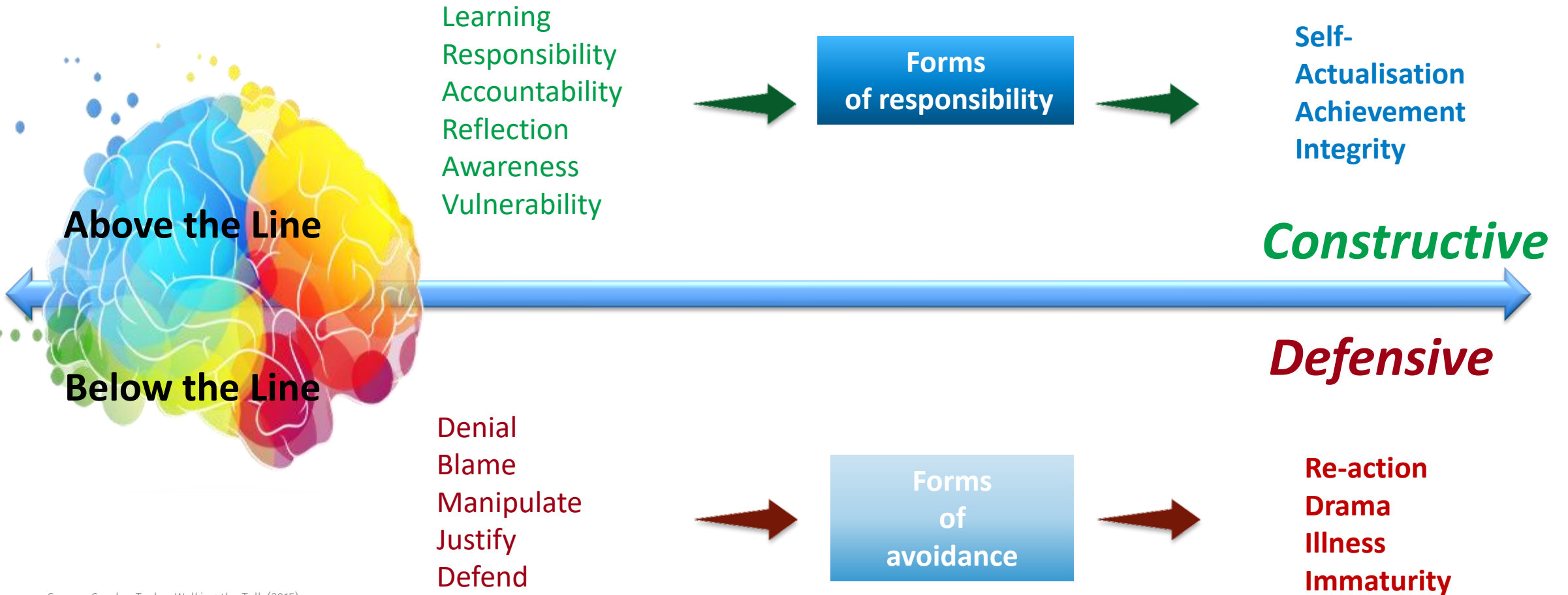
Opportunity 3: You exercise clear choice over your choice of environment and life

Opportunity 4: Difficult people have less or no impact on you, or they spark you to drive positive change

Self Awareness



Above or below the line



Source: Carolyn Taylor, Walking the Talk (2015)

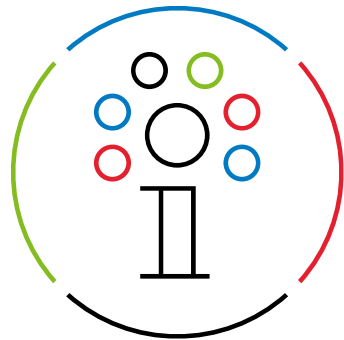
When I am below the line I tend to..

Defend my opinion	Stop collaborating	Triangulate or gossip	Avoid the issue or making a decision	Become controlling or micro-manage
Fall back on my expertise	Wait it out silently	Manipulate the politics	Keep arguing the point	Blame others or events
Publicly agree but privately do my own thing	Operate in my silo	Pretend to 'play the game'	Become emotive or aggressive	'Give up' in frustration
Use cynicism to challenge	Make it personal	Withdraw my respect and acceptance	Use my intellect to intimidate	I never behave below the line

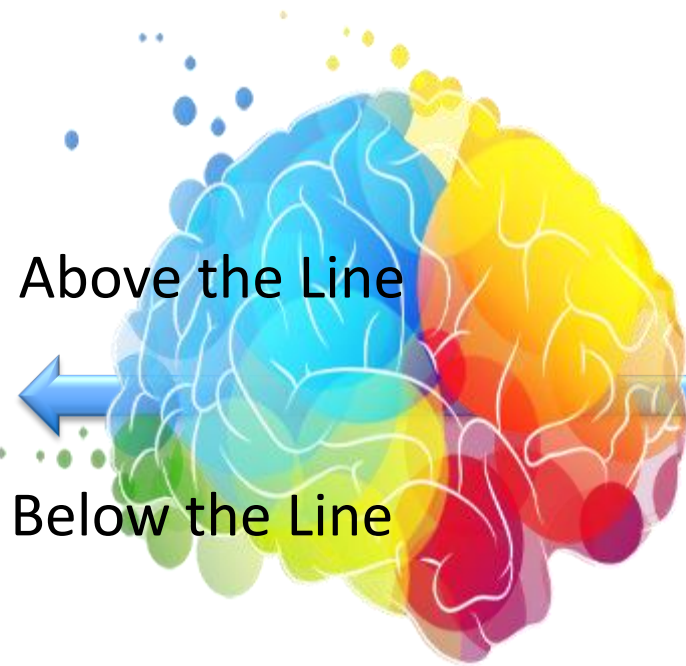
Poll Question

What are some of the ways you behave when you are below the line?

Free text response



Where are you?



- Confronting the unacceptable behaviour from ATL
- Setting explicit standards
- Exercising choice over your environment, time and conversations
- Giving yourself space – exercise, relaxation, energetic separation
- Bolstering your boundaries and recovery
- Demonstrating true Leadership

Power

- Getting progressively angrier, more frustrated and agitated
- Wishing the person away – and imagining those things
- Manipulating situations to make the person 'look bad'
- Avoiding the person completely – having a public rift
- Gossiping incessantly about the person
- Complaining at home – becoming obsessed with the person
- Blaming the person for everything that goes wrong

Powerless

Staying above the line...



Self – Regulation..is the combination of two abilities

Self Control = Our ability to resist impulse

Self Discipline = Our ability to repeat desired behaviour

Source: Daniel Goleman Emotional Intelligence 2006, Working with Emotional Intelligence 1998.

Processing difficult emotions



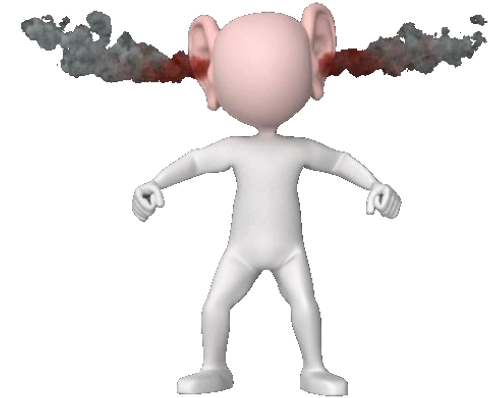
Repress



Experience



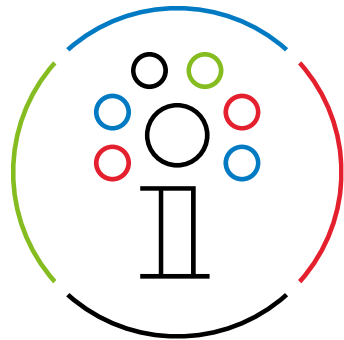
Express



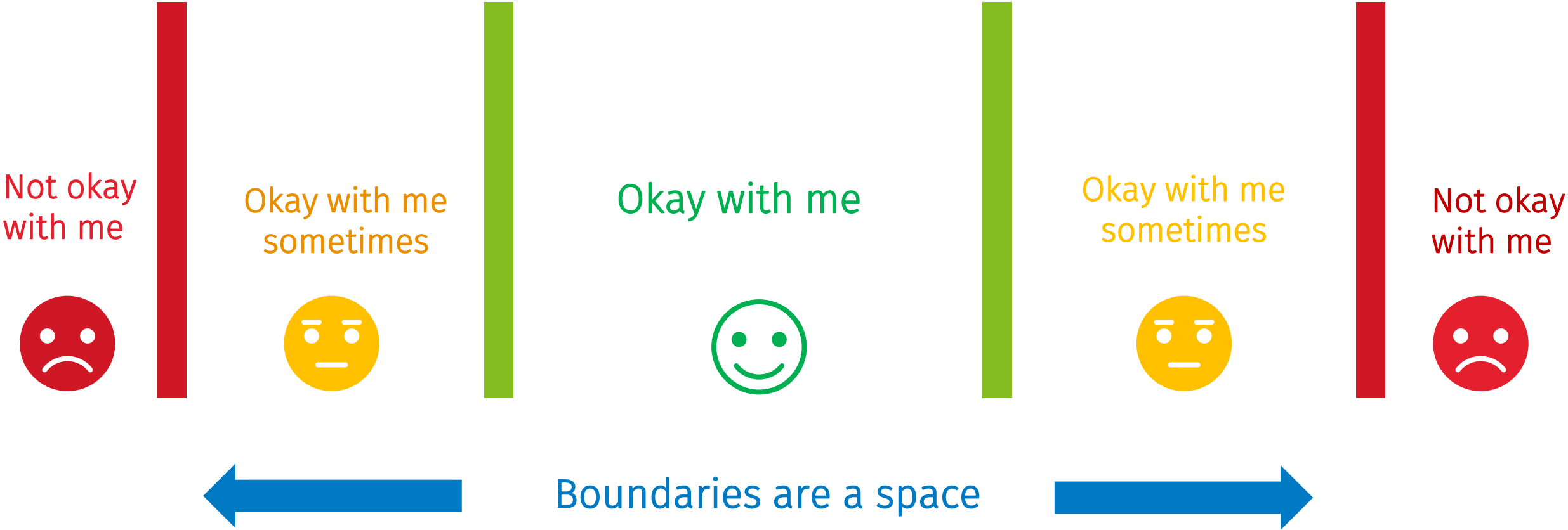
Explode

What is your go-to behaviour?

- a) Repress
- b) Experience
- c) Express
- d) Explode
- e) None of the above



How do boundaries work?



Who is responsible for our boundaries?

We are responsible for setting, maintaining and managing our Boundaries

Healthy Boundaries

Self-awareness – What works for us and why

Self-responsibility – Taking responsibility for setting, maintaining and managing our boundaries

Presence - Openness and Acceptance

Flexibility – Give and take

Poor Boundaries

Collapsed

Withdraw – no boundary

Pretend - denial

Placate - subservience

Flight – avoidance

Rigid

Power over – dominate/control

Arrogant – no integration

Judgmental – superiority

Absolve ourselves – no flex

Difficult
person 😞

Witness

Neocortex

Neocortex is the reasoning part of the brain. When engaged, it allows us to respond creatively

Amygdala

Amygdala triggers a fight, flight or freeze response before we have a chance to process whether the threat is real

The amygdala houses memories and response repertoires. Physiologically, because neural responses bypass our neocortex

Tactics for getting ourselves above the line

In the moment

- Breathe (3-7 breaths) & posture
- Consider your triggers ahead of time. Plan for them (Take responsibility)
- Imagine Thyself – imagine how *great it feels* after you have successfully managed regulation and impulse
- Revisit the conversation goal
- Re-phrase above the line
- ‘3 words’ practice – set intention
- Adopt a power pose
- Move from *I have to ...to... I get to*

Longer term

- Focus on meeting your needs from ABL
- Be clear on what you will do about this situation
- See life as for you or by you (not to you)
- Practice disciplining your behaviour
- Be determined to rise, to learn, to grow

Further Resources

- Anything from Daniel Goleman on Emotional Intelligence
- This white paper from the Centre for Creative Leadership [problem-employees-ccl-white-paper.pdf \(cclinnovation.org\)](https://www.cclinnovation.org/white-paper/problem-employees-ccl-white-paper.pdf)
- Michael A. Singer – The Untethered Soul and Living Untethered

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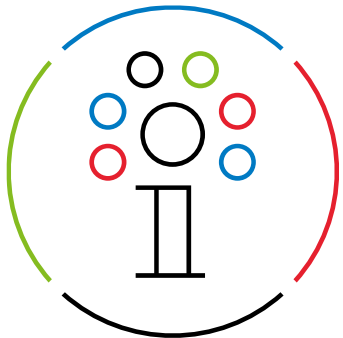


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- 23 April – Tax Technical Update – April 2024
- 30 April – Understanding the Downsizing Decisions your older clients need to make

Questions



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