



## Podcast 17

### How to recognise the impact of one's behaviour on others?

How to recognise the impact of one's behaviour on others? By Kriszta Zsiday

Working with other human beings is often a challenge. Even the most experienced professionals are faced with ethical and personal challenges throughout this difficult task their carriers. This is due to the diversity of individual experiences and the diversity of their combinations in interaction with you.

**Ethics and moral considerations** are very important factors, working with sensitive people requires a particular moral attitude. When working with sensitive people the situation may become more vulnerable and their reactions can differ greatly from those of others with different life experiences. For example things such as interpersonal distance, touch, dressing and more can rapidly and easily generate preventable tensions. The professionals have to be aware and conscious about these and plan, maintain a safe environment from different perspectives, including their own behaviours and actions.

**Critical self-reflection is key.** Working with sensitive people does not only require the professionals to be open towards their target group, but they need to reflect also on their own social, emotional position and privileges. Doing so you can come closer to your own preconceptions and stereotypes about sensitive, vulnerable people. Self-reflection can help to reduce patronising position. This is crucial as past power relations might be a trigger for sensitive people. The aim is to lead but also to be an ally to your group.

**You need to want to know it.** Observe, embrace, alter your actions and the results that they bring. Make sure that you witness yourself in social, professional interactions. Be curious about it and accept what you find. You might use different tools, such as journaling, video recording, asking for feedback and so on. You may focus both on your verbal and non-verbal interactions to see patterns.

**To receive feedback and correction** can be a challenge not only for sensitive people but also for the professionals working with them. Make sure you have the necessary support to remain open to corrective feedback as a way to learn directly from sensitive people. Learn to deal with your defensive responses to critical feedback and make yourself available to the correction. Ventilating or discussing the emotional effects of criticism should not happen in the group. Seeking out the support of a supervisor or an experienced colleague for a professional talk are ways to have your needs also met while not burdening your group.

**Be in touch with your own emotions** and their effects on your feelings and behaviour. Your behaviour and your actions are what people see of you. This is the process of your impact on others. What do I feel? Where is this feeling coming from? What do I want to do with this feeling? Am I passing it onto others? How, for what purpose?

**Discover and know your own trigger points.** A trainer or instructor is not immune to being triggered by certain things. Unaware or conscious, we might react to things which were hard in our past or are related to difficult emotions. In such cases we tend to go on an attack or act defensive. This is counterproductive when working with sensitive people, and can reanimate old and harmful power relations. Once you know the root of your stress, you can start to improve your responses.





**Know the people you are working with/for.** You need to change your perspective, moving from your point of view to theirs. To do so, you will need to ask questions from them, get to know them, and gradually move away from considering them as mere stereotypes to diverse human beings. This way you are more likely to learn what is triggering, stressing or supporting them in your behaviour. Connecting it with asking them repeatedly for feedback can support their empowerment. But only if you take what they say to your heart.

**Supervision.** We all have blind spots, areas that we simply don't see or have a distorted view on. Other professionals, supervisors can point it out. Even if supervision is not available, there are ways to get to the blind spots, if there is a will. When working with sensitive individuals it is strongly recommended that there is a work culture where professional debates, dialogue, a will to face conflicts openly and constructively, and mutual support are real part of their work. It is advised to have a professional support group where practising professionals can share, discuss, and further develop their work. Supervision is essential to this work.

