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COSTS:

A Method of Dealing with Difficult/Toxic People

C = Centered: To deal with difficult people you have to stay connected to the center of your being which is called your True Self. In your True Self you experience yourself as pure spirit, pure consciousness, total awareness. You experience yourself as okay just in being; your mind is quiet and still; your body is relaxed to the point of disappearing; your spirit is at peace. You realize that love just is and you love and accept yourself just as you are in the moment. Most people must meditate or do Centering or Contemplative Prayer once or twice each day for a long time (months!) to connect to the True Self, the center of your being.

Once you connect with your True Self you will be much more self-approving, self-validating and self-loving. You will stay centered throughout the day, providing you with a Teflon-like shield so you are much less emotionally reactive to difficult/toxic people.

O = Observational: Once you become more and more Centered, you will be more observational—which means to observe with dispassionate clarity what is happening inside of you and outside of you. Inside, you observe the thoughts that come into your mind, the feelings that come into your body, what you are inclined to say and do. Then evaluate them to determine whether they are negative or positive. If they are negative you replace them with the positive thought, feeling, word or action.

Outside, you stay observational by detaching yourself and imagining you are in the audience observing the movie rather than being on or in the screen. Also, practice observing without judging, keeping your mind in neutral. You have to stay centered to stay observational.

S = Separate: Staying Separate depends upon staying Centered and Observational. Separate means retaining a clear sense of separation between the difficult or *toxic* person and yourself. You say to yourself, “I am I and you are you.” It involves staying outside of the other person’s frame of reality. If you get sucked or suckered into their frame of reality, you are finished. How do you do that? Read further!

T = Think on Your Feet: This entails developing several, 10 or so, different responses that enable you to diffuse, manage, and de-escalate a potentially explosive encounter. The basic strategy is to stay Centered, Observational, and Separate so you can think on your feet by considering what is going on inside of you, the other person, and the context or situation. Then you can decide which response makes sense. Some options are (1) leave (2) silence (3) humor (4) assertiveness (5) active listening (6) aggressiveness (7) change the subject (8) agreeableness (9) truthfulness (10) mirroring. It is imperative to practice all of these skills with friendly people so they are fluid when dealing with difficult people.

S = Social Support: This is the other half of Centered. When we are Centered we are self-approving, self-validating, and self-loving. But that is only half of our self-image; we also need positive feedback from others. As social beings, we need people who love and affirm us. It is wise to have many sources or areas of Social Support such as our neighborhood, church or synagogue, work, hobbies, etc. Dealing with difficult/toxic people is very draining. We need friends/social support to reenergize ourselves.