

Why Difficult People Stick With You

The BUR Framework

A practical guide for leaders who want to respond rather than react.

Those behaviours can feel like a burr - prickly, frustrating and hard to shake off. They catch our attention, get under our skin and have a way of sticking with us long after the interaction has ended.

Great Leaders don't react to the burr. They use the BUR Framework.



Like a burr...



A burr sticks to you.

Just like difficult interactions that you can't stop thinking about.



A burr is a rough edge.

Difficult behaviours are often the visible sign that something deeper is going on.

A QUICK EXAMPLE

Imagine you're leading a project meeting. Every time you present an idea, James immediately points out problems.



BEHAVIOUR

- James Identifies risks.
- He asks challenging questions.
- He rarely comments on opportunities.



UNDERSTAND

Perhaps...

- He wants the project to succeed.
- He values thoroughness.
- He worries about things being overlooked.



RESPOND

You could say...

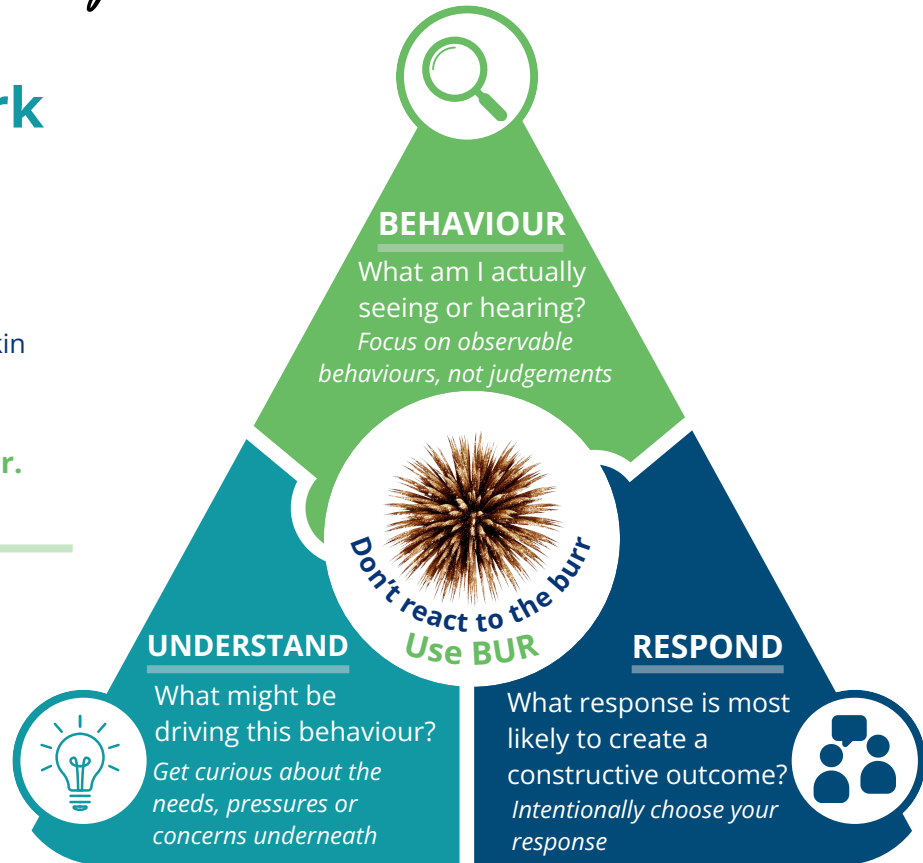
"James, you always raise useful risks. I'd also be interested in hearing what opportunities you see and what would need to happen for this idea to work."

Instead of creating conflict, you've **redirected** the conversation.

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Difficult people aren't always difficult people.

More often, they're displaying difficult behaviours.



TIP: Put BUR into Practice

Download our **BUR Reflection Sheet** to work through specific conversations and challenging relationships using the BUR approach.

Use it before difficult conversations, after frustrating interactions, or whenever someone's behaviour is sticking with you longer than you'd like.

Want to strengthen your leadership impact?

Great leadership isn't about changing difficult people. It's about understanding behaviour, leading with intention, and creating better conversations.

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The next time someone's behaviour feels prickly, don't react to the burr. **Get curious about it.** Because great leadership starts when we move from judgement to **understanding** and from reaction to **response**.