



**Self Centered  
vs  
Other-Centered  
Behaviours  
of Supervisors**



Negative/Self-Centred Behaviours



# 1. Judgemental

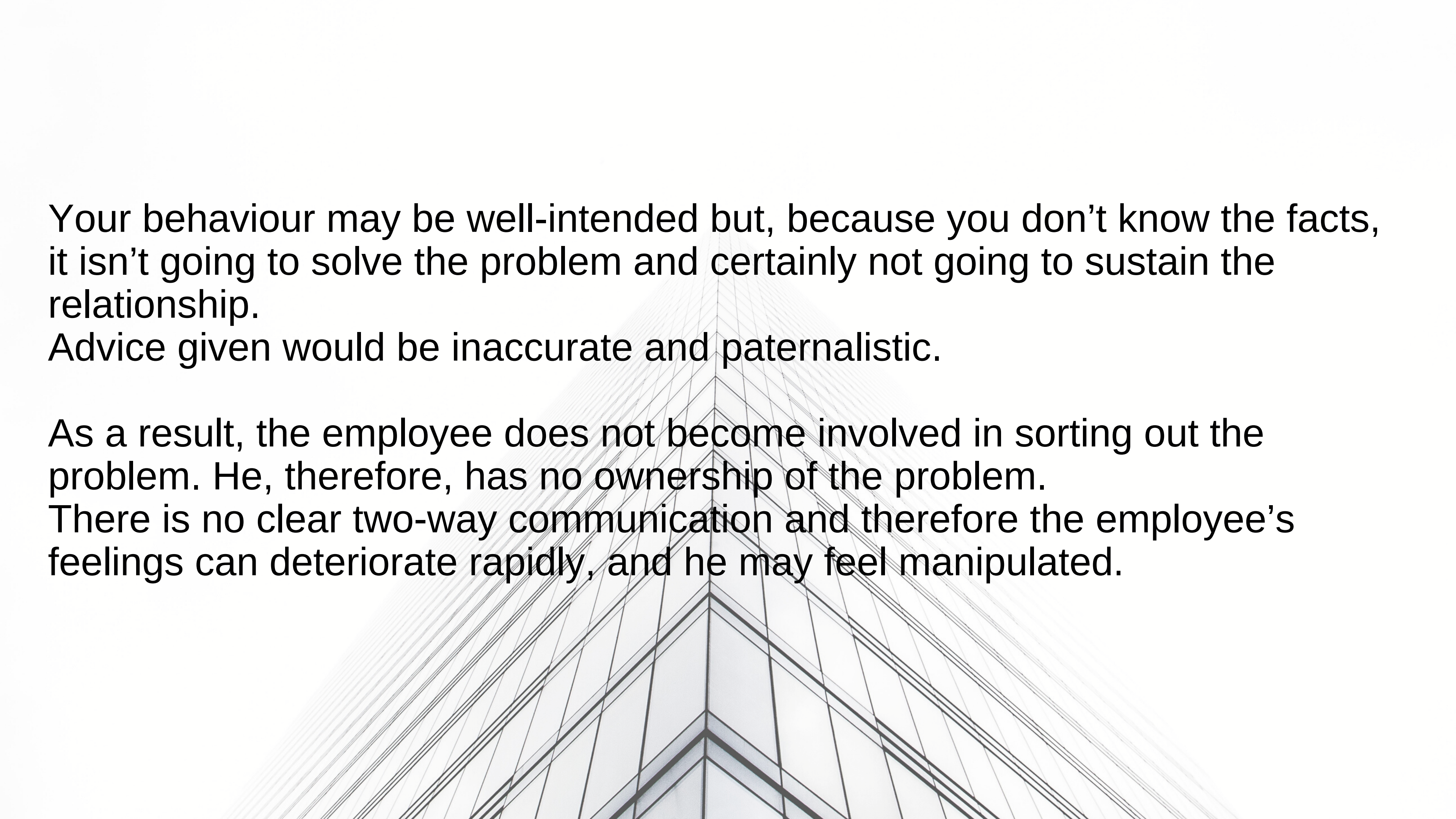
Judgemental behaviour shows a self-centred response to an employee's problem.

It is expressing an opinion or giving an answer without all the facts.

It shows that you are thinking of your position rather than your employee's position and it causes the employee to feel 'not listened to' and not involved.

**In short:**

- Giving an answer without knowing the problem.
- Imposing your values, beliefs and opinions on others.
- Doubting knowledge of employee.
- Leading statements.



Your behaviour may be well-intended but, because you don't know the facts, it isn't going to solve the problem and certainly not going to sustain the relationship.

Advice given would be inaccurate and paternalistic.

As a result, the employee does not become involved in sorting out the problem. He, therefore, has no ownership of the problem.

There is no clear two-way communication and therefore the employee's feelings can deteriorate rapidly, and he may feel manipulated.

## 2. Hostility



**Hostility is a behaviour that shows impatience, antagonism and is often seen as irritation, anger or criticism. Hostility can be felt not only in what is said but also in how it is said. A raised voice can have the same effect as a sarcastic answer.**

**In short:**

- Accusing
- Aggressive
- Criticism
- Sarcasm
- Threatening



## **Hostility threatens the employee and makes him defensive.**

- He would then be reluctant to continue communicating.
- Punitive probing is when someone asks questions without giving the employee time to answer the questions. It starts to inhibit trust because the employee begins to wonder why he isn't given a chance to answer. If a solution is found that doesn't have his input, he will be hesitant to use it.
- At other times, if an employee has been given the opportunity to answer, he/she will feel that he/she has shared a lot of information without getting any kind of response.
- Problems are caused in the relationship – it is particularly difficult to remain calm when an emotional employee enters your office.





### 3. Telling/“end-game” Behaviour

**“Finishes and klaar”**

**“that’s that”**

**“I don’t want to hear any more”**

**How do you feel when you’ve been told to do something, and you know the subject is now closed?**

**You know that you don’t have a chance to add anything or give your opinion.**

**You basically have two chances – take it or leave it. If you take it, very often one “takes” it begrudgingly, without really having any commitment of ensuring its success.**

**If you “leave” it, you know that the problem is still there.**



## In short:

- Effectively shuts out any further discussion
- Take it or leave it

## If accepted:

It is accepted begrudgingly,  
No real commitment

## If rejected:

Problem hasn't been solved  
Problem doesn't go away

**When applying this style, we are using behaviours that effectively shut out any further discussions. When that happens, we totally believe that we have the right to give orders and that they must be followed blindly. When they aren't, we sometimes feel as if this is a personal attack on our authority and problem escalate.**

**The negative aspect of this behaviour is such that, whatever is said, is said in such a manner that the listener feels attacked, worthless or alternatively frustrated, insubordinate and emotional.**





# Other-centred Behaviours



# 1. Listening

**When someone is confronted with a problem the first requirement is to listen. Just listening demonstrates interest, sensitivity and care.**

**When listening, try to relax; don't be critical or evaluating. Understanding, acceptance and warmth create the climate where an employee can express feelings.**

**The employee must be given enough time to express feelings without interruption.**

**A pause doesn't mean that he/she is finished talking. Listening requires concentration and focus. You must force yourself to focus on what is being said without thinking ahead to formulate a reply.**



## **In short, it is hard to listen because:**

- We become angry
- We already know the answer
- We may encourage complaints
- We share our own (better, bigger, worst) experience
- We may be fearful of employees expressing emotions

The employee who feels listened to, feels cared for, and just as importantly, will also be more likely to listen back when you start to frame your reply. Often, being listened to, is the only thing the employee really needs.





## 2. Acknowledging

Acknowledging is the next step in building relationships. Listening involves undivided attention to the employee's message. Acknowledging moves beyond listening to reply in supportive, summarising ways.

Listening shows interest and care, acknowledging shows understanding and concern.

**Acknowledging takes the form of a supportive statement, a restatement, or a positive gesture, such as a nod of the head or a facial expression. It's a way of reaching out and showing sensitivity to the other person by attempting to understand how the problem is affecting the employee.**

**When someone is confronted with a problem the first requirement is to listen. Just listening demonstrates interest, sensitivity and care.**

**In short:**

**Summarising**

- o Testing and understanding**
- o Shows empathy**

**Acknowledging feelings**

- o Be sincere**
- o Be natural**
- o Be caring**
- o Don't be paternalistic**
- o Don't be sarcastic**
- o Don't be simplistic**

Sometimes problems don't need responses. A gesture lets the employee know that there is a concern. It also gives the supervisor time to gather his thoughts before continuing building on the relationship.



## 3. Investigating

Once the supervisor has listened, and acknowledged feelings, the time has come to ensure that all the relevant information about the problem is considered.

Sometimes the initial problem isn't the real problem and it is hiding a bigger problem.

By investigating, we begin to get all the facts. It is also a sincere effort by a supervisor to understand exactly what the employee means when he/she is telling you about the problem. The key to investigating is to use the acknowledging behaviour first.



**In short:**

“I understand that it is necessary for you to talk this through with your family – after all, your leave affects them.”

**Then investigate:**

“But is there any reason, perhaps, why you can’t come back to me tomorrow?”

**Thus:**

- Ask diagnosing questions
- Why, what, where, when, how, why is, is not
- Don’t ask yes or no questions
- Establish the facts and the perceptions

**Be careful of manipulative probing. Do not interrogate; make sure there is a point to the questions.**

**Give the employee time to come up with an answer and then listen and acknowledge again.**

**By acknowledging feelings, and then investigating in detail, you are checking out the employee's needs, wants and motivations as well as understanding the problem.**



## 4. Discussing

**When we have a problem with our spouses or friends we usually discuss it.**

**Think of what that entails.**

**It means firstly understanding the different points of view, suggesting weaknesses in those arguments or even coming up with alternative suggestions. Once we have spoken the problem through the answers and options are usually staring you in the face. We must do the same with our employees.**

**All too often we feel that it is part of our managerial duties to tell or to order people around. What is even worse is that sometimes we feel that because we are a supervisor other people don't have points of view.**





**In short:**

**Understand both sides.**

**Make and ask for suggestions.**

*It creates commitment.*

*Worker may have the solution.*

**Persuade and be persuaded.**

*Present your position.*

*Reinforce acceptable solutions.*

*Explain the problems in unacceptable solutions.*

*Question for alternative solutions.*

**Keep doors open.**

**Agree on an action plan.**

*I will ..., you will ..., by when ...*

# **If you are truly going to be able to solve problems your role should be one of:**

- **Counselling**
- **Guiding**
- **Suggesting**
- **Keeping doors open**
- **Advising**
- **Assisting**
- **Encouraging open dialogue from both parties**

**Sometimes it needs persuasion, or you may be persuaded.  
It may even be that the case is passed on to another forum.**

