Dealing with Difficult People --- *Getting the Package to the Airport*
Instructor's Notes

Neophytes sometimes think that their workplaces will be devoid of truly Difficult People --- abrasive people, negativists, those who blame others for every mistake and so on. It can be difficult to address this topic in a classroom because there are so many varieties of people whom others find "difficult."

For this reason I first set the apparently odd task, "When is a Difficult Person not Difficult?" --- using the worksheet and often encouraging students to work together. Students will immediately come up with long lists which illuminate the fact that "difficult-ness" is not uniform, and that it can be managed.

I set the fanciful role play about getting a package to an airport in order to show that a person may sometimes be dependent on people who are difficult to supervise, and that there are helpful ways to manage in such a situation. The role-play itself, at least in North America, is also hilarious. The student who plays Ashley Nonnon will usually be creative and delightful (for the onlooker, not for the supervisor). The play will of course take only ten or fifteen minutes.   The debrief must be generalized --- to include "negativists" --- but also to embrace dealing with anyone who poses a problem in the workplace. I draw heavily on the work of Ury, Bramson and Solomon (see Resources).