

Zara's experience

Zara is a young woman in her early twenties. She used the Solihull Approach model to describe an incident on her bus journey.

Incident: A Caucasian woman (with one child, possibly in late 20s) behaved very rudely towards me on the bus, disrespectfully telling me to leave my seat so she can put her pushchair there. There was no need for her to do this, as there was enough space. She had not asked anyone to move, nor was rude to anyone else. She then remarked "what's with the dirty look" when I quietly got up and left the seat without any argument, despite the fact that I had not looked at her as I wanted to distance myself from her aggressive attitude. The Caucasian woman was friendly and chatty to other strangers on the bus, who were Caucasian like her, and only singled out me out despite me not having done anything to instigate this.

Solihull Approach model applied to the interaction with the woman:

- Reciprocity: the woman established contact with me by facing me and looking at me with a sharp mean look. She vocalised what she wanted in a disrespectful and hurtful manner and made me feel afraid of her. I responded by looking at her acknowledging her behaviour and then looking away to avoid contact and engagement. I got up and moved, avoiding any eye contact. She then vocalised a rude comment ("what's with the dirty look") that was out of context as I had avoided her gaze. I withdrew myself from the situation by moving away as further away as I could. I could hear her say negative things behind my back to others.
- Containment: nobody else present in the bus did anything, so my emotions were not contained (if anything they were exacerbated as I felt singled out and alone), and the woman continued saying something behind my back, so she was not entirely contained but she was able to express her feelings unlike I was. During the short journey the bus driver looked at me through the mirror a few times (as I was standing near the front, afraid to sit back down) and gave me a sympathetic look, acknowledging that he knew what happened was not okay. This somewhat helped contain my emotions.
- Behaviour management: operant conditioning – the woman wanted to be rude to me and treat me with no respect as I was not Caucasian. I responded by doing as she said (leaving my seat for her) and not engaging with her to cause further disruption. She got what she wanted and she didn't get anything negative in return. This was a positive response for her in this situation, so she will be more likely to repeat the behaviour. Classical conditioning - she would have learnt that if she behaves rudely like this next time, she will get a similar response and can treat people she doesn't like with disrespect. Her child in her pushchair will have also witnessed this behaviour and will have also learnt that behaving this way will give you the response you want, and also that people that are not Caucasian are to be treated with disrespect.