Dealing with Difficult Team Members

Bringing Out the Best of Those at Their Worst
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Learning Outcome

Develop strategies for coping effectively with people exhibiting difficult behaviors.
Who Are Our “Difficult”? 

- Patients
- Families
- Physicians
- Supervisors ... Co-workers
- Spouses/Partners
- Children ... Adolescents ... In-laws
- Others?
Identifying Your “Difficult”

• List 3 “difficult” people in your life
• What makes each person so difficult to you?
• What is your usual response to that person?
• What do you want from your interaction with that person?

• SOPs

Paper exercise
The 10 Most (Un)Wanted List

- Steamroller
- Grenade
- Sniper
- Wet Blanket
- Yes Person

- Maybe-person
- Clam
- Know-it-all
- Think-they-know-it all
- Whiner
Motivation of Difficult People

• Low self-esteem

• Need for control

• Attention-seeking
The Steamroller

Description

- Attacking
- Accusatory
- Condescending
- Contemptuous
- Always “right”
Steamroller: Dynamics

Insecurity $\rightarrow$ anger $\rightarrow$ others’ defensive $\rightarrow$ reinforces insecurity
Steamroller: Dynamics (cont.)

• False sense of superiority by demeaning others

• Knows what others should do - impatience
Responding to Steamrollers

• Stand up for self
• Give time to run down
• Don’t worry about being polite
• Get his attention
• Sit down
Steamroller: Responding To

- Use “I” language
- Maintain eye contact
- Avoid a head-on fight
- Focus on issue....not personality
The Grenade: Description

Verbally explosive

Rant & rave

Temper tantrums
Grenade: Dynamics

• Immediate need for gratification
• Feeling of unimportance
Grenade prevention

- Identify the trigger(s).
- Eliminate or reduce its intensity
Working with Grenades:  
GOAL

TAKE CONTROL OF THE SITUATION WHEN THE GRENADE STARTS TO LOSE IT
Grenade: Response Strategies

(1) Get their attention
(2) Aim for the heart
(3) Reduce the intensity
Responding to Grenades

• 1st tendency → Retaliating or withdraw
• Forgive temporary insanity
• Stop blaming
• Unsent letter
• Change perspective
WHAT TO DO WHEN SOMEONE STARTS YELLING

• Keep focused on solutions

• Ask them to leave

• Say their name
Sniper: Description

• Maintain protective cover
• Hide, take “pot shots”
• Weapons: innuendos, non-playful teasing, non-subtle digs
• Attack is covered by “nice” nonverbals
Sniper: Dynamics

• Passive form of aggression…indirect
• Strong belief of what others SHOULD do
• Need to control
• Hate to lose
• VERY adept
Responding to Snipers

• Surface the attack (poke holes in smokescreen)
• Confrontation
• Peer confirmation
• Provide an alternative
• Focus on problem-solving
Wet Blanket: Description

• Negativity...others’ ideas, suggestions
• State negativity with great conviction
• Devastating to work group’s efficacy
The Wet Blanket: Dynamics

- Build on natural tendency to negativity
- Believe things are out of their control
- Think they have no influence over lives
- Helplessness, powerlessness
Responding to a Wet Blanket

• Avoid getting drawn into negativity
• Realistic optimism
• Do not argue
• Avoid proposing solutions
Responding to a Wet Blanket (cont.)

- Identify worst-case scenario
- Be prepared to go solo
- Use anger constructively
Handling Complaints

• Use names and titles of other personnel.
• Give directions tactfully
• Don’t say this is a common complaint.
• Show that corrective action has begun.
Complaints (cont.)

• Research and report on progress.
• Express concern w/o automatically acknowledging fault/promising too much.
• End the interaction on a positive note
Working with Negativists

• Getting ready
• Open-ended ?s
• Reflecting
• Echoing
• Silence -- supportive, respectful
Working with Negativists

• Use empathy
• Paraphrase
• Take notes:
  (1) to get details
  (2) to convey interest
The Yes Person: Description

• Super-agreeable
• Makes promises that are rarely kept
• Eagerly volunteers for impossible workload...needs help to focus on realistic
• Gives appearance of progress
• Fail to deliver ... Blames others
Yes-Person: Dynamics

- Seeks approval
- Procrastination
  1) Perfectionism
  2) Fear of failure
  3) Fear of success
The Yes Person: Do

• Reject unrealistic promises
• Explicit delegation
• Have them id. potential obstacles
• Confront immediately
• Praise
Yes-Person: Don’ts

• Accept unrealistic commitments
• Give opportunity to volunteer
• Expect them to change without help
• Shunt work around
The Clam

Shy, quiet
Silent, non-responsive
Others never know clam’s thoughts
Extremely passive
“Fine, just fine!”

- Withdraw when threatened
- Feel no one cares
- Fears rejection
- Major needs
  (1) get along w/others
  (2) do things right
Responding to Clams

• Slow yourself down (not look aggressive)
• Maintain emotional control
• LOOK AS IF YOU HAVE ALL THE TIME IN THE WORLD
• Appear relaxed and calm
• Take time to compose self
• Demonstrate empathy
• Follow nonverbal leads
Goal

PERSUADE THE CLAM TO TALK
Action Plan: Clam

• Plan enough time (involves planning ahead)
• Ask open-ended questions expectantly
  Who -- What -- Where -- When -- How
• Use the silent, expectant stare. Guess.
• Lighten it up ---- Use caution
• Remind that you intend to have a dialogue, not a monologue.
• Show the future
• The Know-It-All
The Know-It-All

Description

• Seldom doubts self
• Low tolerance for correction or contradiction
• Knowledgeable & competent
• Highly outspoken
The Know-It-All: Dynamics

- Need for control
- Being wrong = humiliation
- Sense of entitlement
- Insecurity $\rightarrow$ based on need to:
  (1) be “right”
  (2) be accepted
GOAL: Know-It-All

OPEN HIS/HER MIND TO NEW INFORMATION AND IDEAS.
Responding to Know-It-All

- Resist becoming a “Know-It-All”
- Avoid resentment @ his non-listening
- Flexible approach
- Review your previous experiences with other Know-It-Alls
- Reframe the experience
Responding to Know-It-All (cont.)

• Be prepared and know your stuff.
• Present your views indirectly.--- avoid challenging
• Use “we” “us” “our”
• Turn them into mentors
• Demonstrate your competence in a non-threatening way
• Decide whether it’s worth the effort!
The Think-They-Know-It-All: Description

- Abrasive, pushy
- Learn just enough to sound educated
- Act as if they know what they’re talking re
- Addicted to exaggeration
- Attention-seeking behavior
The Think-They-Know-It-All: Dynamics

• Need to be appreciated
• Believe in themselves --- do NOT see self as untruthful
• More defensive = more repetitious
• Others eventually stop listening
• Increases isolation
• Their good ideas get dismissed w/ distortions
The Think-They-Know-It-All: Responses

- Avoid challenging
- Do not stretch the truth in other direction
- Restrain urge to show ‘em up
- Put the behavior in perspective
- Demonstrate compassion -- Offer a face-saving device
- Exhibit patience
The Think-They-Know-It-All: Action Plan

• Give some attention
• Acknowledge their + intent, not content
You need to decide whether you need (or are willing) to do what it takes to deal effectively with the person you can’t stand.
Action Plan for Coping

• Description of difficult behavior
• What has NOT worked before
• What will you do? When?
ACTIONS MOST PEOPLE SEE AS SUPPORTIVE

• Repeat what you’ve heard

• Put both facts and feelings into a statement about what has been said

• Use empathy

• Ask the other person what, if anything, they want from you
Managing Conflict:
Basic Approach

ACTIVE Listening
Active Listening

• Getting ready
• Open-ended ?s
• Reflecting
• Echoing
• Silence --- supportive, respectful

• Empathy
• Paraphrase
Responding to Anger

• STOP whatever you are doing
• LOOK directly at the angry person
• LISTEN for feelings & sources
• RESPOND
  
  Acknowledge & accept
  – Ask about SPECIFIC cause(s)
  – Admit errors - no excessive apologies
  – Focus on problem-solving
WHEN DEALING WITH AN ANGRY PERSON, AVOID

• Punishing the person
• Appealing to logic
• Denying the person’s logic
• Attacking or retaliating
TALKING BACK WITHOUT RAISING YOUR VOICE

• Verbalize the problem
• Stay calm
• Use “I” statements
• Stick to the facts
• Say it again ("Broken record")
STRATEGIES FOR DEALING WITH DIFFICULT BEHAVIOR

Strategy #1: ASSESS THE SITUATION:

• Chronic or situational?
• Is reaction out of proportion to situation?
• Triggering event
Strategy #2: Evaluate the Dynamics

• Determine defensive responses

• Self-blame  vs.  Give in
• Blame others  vs.  Fight
• Dig in  vs.  Withdraw
• Distract  vs.  Make noise
Strategy #3: LET GO OF MAGICAL THINKING

• Stop wishing the “difficult” person were different

• Circle of influence

• Give it up!
#4: THINK FROM AN OBJECTIVE PERSPECTIVE

• Get some distance between you and the difficult behavior
• Label the behavior
• Empathy
• Humorous imagery
Strategy #5

Identify source(s) of YOUR feelings
#6: Develop action plan

- Change your dance step
- Choice is power
#7: Implement the plan

- Timing
- Preparation
- Rehearsal
- Practice
#8: MONITOR EFFECTIVENESS OF YOUR APPROACH

• Know when to abandon the coping effort
• Enough already!!
#9: UNCOVER THE TREASURE

“In every problem there is a gift.” (R Bach)

Identify the lesson(s)
References/Recommended Readings

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