

BASIC FACILITATION



**Missouri Department of
Health and Senior Services**

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DEALING WITH CHALLENGING PEOPLE

Each of us has done things that have caused undue difficulty for others. But most of us do not make a habit of being difficult. Everyone is different in personality, wants, expectations, knowledge and a tremendous number of other differences. These differences can be advantageous and bring different viewpoints on any topic or situation being discussed. There are times when certain behaviors are disruptive and can prevent the team from completing critical tasks. It is important to know how to deal with these behaviors. The following information deals with patterns of difficult behavior that must be dealt with in the work setting and how to cope with these disruptive behaviors.

Objectives: After completing this module you will be able to:

- Identify types of difficult behavior
- Understand the needs of individuals with difficult behavior
- Cope with difficult behaviors

Recognize How Humans Differ

It is never beyond the realm of possibility for human beings to challenge each other—even when they are not trying to do so. Among every group, there are individuals who seem to challenge others. These individuals can be problematic as they challenge the status quo and disrupt, either inadvertently or on purpose, the flow of things.

Patterns of Difficult Behavior

- Hostile Aggressive – Try to bully and bombard others.
- Silent Unresponsive – Clam up
- Complainer – Gripe incessantly
- Clown – Personable, funny, outgoing, but does not seem to take work seriously
- Negative – Object to everything with “It won’t work” or “It’s impossible
- Indecisive – Stalls or will not make a timely decision

Types of Behavior and Coping Techniques

The hostile aggressive behavior has three types:

1. Sherman Tank
2. Sniper
3. Exploder

Sherman Tank

They are loud and forceful and will roll over you. They can be insubordinate.

- Comes out charging
- Whole demeanor expresses “attack”

- Overwhelming
- Arbitrary and arrogant in tone
- Seem to attack not just behavior but you personally

Understanding Sherman Tanks

Their “power” comes typically from the responses that their behavior arouses such as:

- Confusion/fear
- Mental or physical flight
- Sense of helpless frustration
- Rage
- Tears

The result is that they rob the victim of the ability to deal calmly and competently with the situation. The Sherman Tanks have a strong need to prove themselves right. To them the tasks seem to be clear and concrete – simple and straightforward. Resistance to their plans turns to irritation, righteous indignation or outright anger. They have a strong sense of what others should do and seem to lack caring or trust. Their short-run objectives are usually achieved and can be aggressive and confident. They demean others as a way to create a sense of self-importance and superiority.

Coping with Sherman Tanks

- Stand up to them without fighting
- Give them time to run down
- Don't worry about being polite, get in any way you can
- Get their attention by calling them by name
- Sit or stand deliberately
- Maintain eye contact
- State your own opinions and perceptions forcefully
- Don't argue with what they say or cut them down
- Be ready to be friendly after the confrontation

Sniper

They control by rude comments and sarcastic humor.

- Have a cover behind which they take potshots at you
- Weapons - innuendoes, not too subtle digs, non-playful digs
- Well placed verbal missiles, high powered enough to hurt
- Non-verbal signals that say: “Pretend you don't hear me or what I am saying”

Understanding Snipers

The sniper behavior is often a response to an unresolved/unheeded problem that causes much distress but hardly ever results in positive action. They also have a strong sense of how others ought to think and act and have a strong view of how to solve problems that interfere with their personal goals. The “I'm superior” attitude interferes with seeing

things from others perspective. They like to win and feel that the expectations of the boss and colleagues are unrealistic.

Coping with Snipers

1. Surface the attack – “That sounded like a dig... Did you mean it that way.” or “What did you mean when you turned thumbs down when I was telling my story.” or “ Do I understand that you don’t like what I am saying?” Resist the impulse to ignore or laugh off the barb.
2. Provide the sniper an alternative for direct contest. Phrase responses as questions rather than assertions gives the sniper an alternative to fighting. Sometimes the sniper will tell you what it is that you’re doing wrong...cue to assess their claim.
3. Seek group confirmation or denial of snipers criticism. Sniper: “ This is the worst planned meeting I have ever attended.” Don’t reply: “Well, what can we do to improve it?” A better reply would be: “Does anyone else see it that way?” Always broaden your to include everyone. If the snipers criticism is supported, you can immediately begin to ferret out the problem.
4. Deal with the problems. Provide a time and place to bring up problems & issues for discussion like a time slot at regular team meetings.

Exploder

Looses emotional control and rants and raves. Very disruptive to the meeting and cause many other team members to feel uncomfortable.

- Adult tantrums
- Fearsome attacks filled with rage barely under control.
- Resistance or provocation can cause escalation to the point where things are thrown, blows are struck or unforgivable or unforgettable things are said.
- Often erupt during a discussion that appeared to be friendly/reasonable.

Understanding Exploders

The exploder’s adult tantrums are a response to a situation where a person feels both thwarted and psychologically threatened. In the absence of frustration exploders may elicit only feelings of distrust and suspicion. Without a threat the blockage may be handled with whatever positive psychological strengths the person has developed. Words or actions that represent threat may be subtle, unintended or partially unintended. Often the fact that something is seen as a threat is outside the awareness of both parties. Exploders are often effective in reducing otherwise well functioning adults to silence, passivity or tantrums of their own.

Coping with Exploders

- Give them time to run down and regain self-control on their own.

- If they don't regain control- break into their tantrum by saying or shouting something neutral like "Stop."
- Show them you take them seriously.
- If needed and possible-get a breather and get some privacy with them.

When dealing with hostile aggressive behavior try to determine the type and level of the behavior by asking these questions:

- Is this aggressive behavior appropriate to the situation?
- Am I seeing a useful venting of pent-up feelings or is this a bona-fide tantrum?
- Am I hearing active and unvarnished disagreement to get at the facts or a hostile and derogatory attack?

Silent Unresponsive

Is very comfortable saying nothing and will not offer any information even if they feel it may improve the discussion or decision-making.

- Answers Yep, Nope, Grunts, or does nothing
- Reacts to any disagreeable situation by closing down
- Likely to acknowledge, if asked, that they don't have anything to contribute at meetings.

Understanding Silent-Unresponsive

They have a non-committal way of handling potentially painful situations. For these individuals the charm of silence is calculated aggression and a way of evading themselves.

Coping with Silent-Unresponsive

- The major task is getting them to talk.
- Rather than trying to interpret what the silence means get them to open up.
- Ask them open ended questions
- Wait as calmly as you can for a response
- Do not fill the silence with your conversation
- Plan enough time to allow you to wait with composure
- If you get no response-comment on what's happening, end your comment with an open ended question
- When they open up:
 - Avoid your impulse to gush
 - Make general comments-they made lead to something relevant
- When they don't open up:
 - Avoid a polite ending
 - Terminate the meeting yourself and set up another appointment
 - At length inform the clam what you must and will do

Complainer

Frequently complains and does not offer solutions or gear complaints toward any constructive change.

- Points out real problems
- Frustrated at the lack of constructive problem solving
- Feel powerless to control their fate
- Strong sense of how others ought to perform/ behave-anger when others do not conform
- Self-validate since that provides a basis to confirm their own lack of responsibility for anything not well-done

Coping with complainers

- The key is to break the cycle of passivity, blaming others, powerlessness and insist that a problem solving perspective be taken toward their complaints.
- Listen attentively even if you are guilty or impatient
- Acknowledge what they say (paraphrase and check out perception of how they feel about it)
- Don't agree with or apologize for their accusations even if you accept them as true.
- Avoid the accusation-defense-re-accusation pattern
- State and acknowledge facts without comment
- Try to move to a problem solving mode
- Never deliver as promised
 - Ask specific, informational questions
 - Assign limited fact finding tasks
 - Ask for complaints in writing (but be serious and supportive)
- If all else fails ask the complainer "how do you want this to end?"

Clown

Does not appear to take work or relationships seriously. Makes jokes and put-downs inappropriately. Has similarities to the sniper but is not a controller.

- Need to be liked and accepted
- To gain acceptance make others feel liked and approved
- Difficult only when their needs conflict with negative aspects of reality
- Rather than lose friendship, will commit to actions they cannot or will not follow through on

Coping with Clowns

- Move from inappropriate jokes to problem solving
- Stop what is going on and focus on the clown
- Repeat what they have said "I heard you say..."

- Question the clown in two ways
 - Intent – “What did you mean by...” or, “ I feel you are not concerned about the problem we have.”
 - Relevancy – “ How does that relate to our discussion.”
- Give positive feedback when they answer your question and start contributing
- Talk to them in private and explaining your feelings

Negative

Sees all the possible shortcomings, weaknesses and possible failure of any proposal or situation. Appear to be waiting to make their negative comments whenever the situation presents itself. Object to most everything with, “That won’t work.” Or, “ We tried that before.”

Coping with the Negativist

- Listen to the main points. Allow them to be as negative as they want to be.
- Don’t argue with them.
- Use them as a resource. State an idea or position and ask them to help you see any flaws in it.
- Shift the focus to solutions. You can agree with their statement but ask, “Is there any way that it could be done.” Sometimes if you suggest just the opposite of what you want, they will suggest your idea.
- Acknowledge their good intent. You can say that you appreciate their cautions that may help in reducing the problems.

Indecisive

They will not make a timely decision and sometimes will not decide to support the team. They appear to be afraid to make a decision for which they will be held accountable.

Coping with Indecisives

- Establish one-on-one comfort and trust.
- Take time to have personal visits and conversation to become friendly and help establish trust.
- Reaffirm the decision when it is finally made and follow-up to ensure completion.

General Coping Steps

So what does a facilitative leader do with difficult people? First, the facilitative leader embraces them, for who they are, not who they are not. Then, the skilled facilitative leader set about curtailing their troublesome ways by employing strategies that use otherwise negative behavior constructively. A good strategy would be to develop a coping plan using the following steps:

1. Assess the situation
2. Stop wishing the difficult person were different
3. If necessary get some distance between you and the difficult person
4. Formulate a coping plan
5. Implement your plan
6. Monitor and follow-up on your plan

In the end, everyone wins when challenging people are empowered to contribute to the team process, rather than hindered so that they stifle the process. Moving the behavior, however, requires courage, tact, empathy, and skill.

There are three basic times to address troublesome behavior:

- During the meeting: Be direct, but tactful. If an individual is dominating the discussion, try “ Fred, you have made several great contributions. I am sensing, however, that other group members may want to share their feelings about this issue, so we are going to need to move on, or I may be guilty of not making it possible for everyone to be heard.
- In private: Confide in the participant during a private moment as a strategy to modify the negative behavior. Avoid embarrassing participants at all costs. Respect the dignity of all human beings.
- As part of the agenda: Ask the team to self-analyze their development and to bring negative team behaviors to the surface for discussion

FACILITATION QUIZ

You are the facilitator: What would you say? What would you do?
In the following situations:

1. A team member is frequently late to meetings.
2. Two team members frequently engage in sidebar discussions.
3. A team member seems to believe that their role is more important than another member's and sometimes dominates or belittles the other member.
4. A team member is very shy and is reluctant to give opinions.
5. A team member has a nasty temper and sometimes speaks and acts inappropriately.

**CHALLENGING PEOPLE
OBJECTIVES**

***Objectives: After completing this
module you will be able to:**

***Identify Types of Difficult Behavior**

***Understand the Needs of Individuals
with Difficult Behavior**

***Cope with Difficult Behaviors**

**PATTERNS OF DIFFICULT
BEHAVIOR**

***Hostile Aggressive**

***Silent Unresponsive**

***Complainer**

***Clown**

***Negative**

***Indecisive**

**HOSTILE AGGRESSIVE
TYPES**

***Sherman Tank**

***Sniper**

***Exploder**

 **SHERMAN TANK**

- * Comes out charging**
- * Demeanor Expresses Attack**
- * Overwhelming**
- * Arrogant in Tone**
- * Attack Behavior and You Personally**

 **SHERMAN TANK POWER**

- * Comes From:**
- * Confusion/Fear**
- * Mental /Physical Flight**
- * Sense of Helpless Frustration**
- * Rage**
- * Tears**

 **SHERMAN TANK COPING**

- * Stand Up to Them Without Fighting**
- * Give Them Time to Run Down**
- * Don't worry About Being Polite**
- * Get Attention by Calling Them by Name**
- * Deliberately Sit or Stand**

SHERMAN TANK COPING

- * Maintain Eye Contact**
- * State Your Opinions Forcefully**
- * Don't Argue With What They Say or Cut Them Down**
- * Be Friendly After the Confrontation**

SNIPER

- * Control by Rude Comments & Sarcastic Humor**
- * Weapons-Innuendoes, Not Too Subtle**
- * Digs, Non-Playful Digs**
- * Well Placed Verbal Missiles**
- * Non-Verbal Signals Say: "Pretend You Don't Hear Me or What I Am Saying"**

SNIPER COPING

- * Surface the Attack – "That Sounds Like a dig... Did You Mean It That Way"**
- * Phrase Responses as Questions Rather Than Assertions – Alternative to Fighting**
- * Seek Group Conformation or Denial of Criticism**
- * Provide a Time & Place to Deal with Problems**

EXPLODER

- *Adult Tantrums**
- *Fearsome Attacks Filled With Rage**
- *Resistance or Provocation Can Cause Escalation to Unforgivable Things Said**
- *Can Erupt During a Reasonable Discussion**

EXPLODER COPING

- *Give Them Time to Run Down & Regain Self Control**
- *Control Not Regained – Break Into Tantrum With “Stop”**
- *Show You Take Them Seriously**
- *If Needed Take a Break & Discuss Privately**

DEALING WITH AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR - ASK

- *Is This Aggressive Behavior Appropriate to the Situation?**
- *Is This Useful Venting or a Tantrum?**
- *Is This Disagreement to Get to the Facts or a Hostile Attack?**

SILENT UNRESPONSIVE

- *Very Comfortable Saying Nothing
- *Answers Yep, Nope, Grunts or Does Nothing
- *Reacts to Disagreeable Situation by Closing Down
- *Likely to Say If Asked They have Nothing to Contribute to the Meeting

SILENT UNRESPONSIVE COPING

- *Major Task Getting Them to Talk
- *Get Them to Open Up
- *Ask Them Open Ended Questions
- *Wait Calmly for a Response
- *Don't Fill Silence With Your Talk
- *No Response Comment on What's Happening

COMPLAINER

- *Frequently Complains – Doesn't Offer Solutions
- *Can Point Out Real Problems
- *Frustrated at the Lack of Problem Solving
- *Feel Powerless to Control Their Fate
- *Strong Sense of How Others Should Act
- *Self-Validate to Confirm Their Own Lack of Responsibility for Things not Done

COMPLAINER COPING

- * Insist that Problem Solving be Used On Their Complaint
- * Listen Attentively Even if Impatient
- * Acknowledge what they Say (Paraphrase)
- * Don't Agree or Apologize With What They Say
- * Move to a Problem Solving Mode
- * Last Straw Ask "How do you want this to end"

CLOWN

- * Makes Jokes & Put-Downs
- * Does Not Appear to Take Work Seriously
- * Needs to be Liked and Accepted
- * Gains Acceptance by Making Others Feel Liked
- * Will Commit to Actions They won't Do Rather Than Lose Friendship

CLOWN COPING

- * Move From Jokes to Problem Solving
- * Stop What's Going on & Focus on Clown
- * Repeat What they Said " I Heard You Say"
- * Question Clown Intent & Relevancy
- * Talk to Them in Private
- * Positive Feedback When They Contribute
- * Talk to Them in Private About Your Feelings

NEGATIVE

- *Sees All Weaknesses & Possible Failures of Any Proposal or Situation
- *Objects to Most Anything With - "That won't work" or "We tried that Before"

NEGATIVE COPING

- *Listen to the Main Points
- *Don't Argue With Them
- *Use Them as a Resource to see Flaws
- *Shift Focus to Solutions
- *Acknowledge Their Good Intent

INDECISIVE

- *Will Not Make a Timely Decision
- *Sometimes Will Not Support the Team
- *Appear to be Afraid to make a Decision They Will be Accountable for

INDECISIVE COPING

- *Establish One-On-One Comfort & Trust
- *Have Personal Visits to Establish Trust
- *Reaffirm the Decision Finally Made & Follow-Up to Ensure Completion

COPING PLAN STEPS

- *Assess the Situation
- *Stop Wishing the Person Was Different
- *If Needed Get Distance From the Person
- *Formulate Coping Plan Using the Information Above
- *Implement Your Plan
- *Monitor Plan & Follow-Up

TIME TO ADDRESS NEGATIVE BEHAVIOR

- *During the Meeting - Be Direct & Tactful
- *In Private – Tell Person About Your Feelings and Concerns
- *As Part of the Agenda – Ask team to Self-Analyze & and Bring Up Negative Behaviors for Discussion

FACILITATION QUIZ

- * See page 46
- * What would you do or say?
- * 1. A team member is frequently late to meetings.
- *
- *
