WORKING WITH DIFFICULT PEOPLE
San Antonio Chapter, IIA
GOALS

✓ Have fun!

✓ Explain how we may come to label others as difficult.

✓ Demonstrate different people types, their characteristics and coping strategies
WORKING WITH DIFFICULT PEOPLE

Disclosure
WE HAVE ALL BEEN THERE …

- Worked with at least one difficult person in our career
- Difficult people come in every conceivable variety
  - Employee
  - Co-worker
  - Client
  - Boss
  - Spouse?
  - Children?
WHY YOU MUST DEAL WITH DIFFICULT PEOPLE

- Your situation won’t get better

- Must address the difficult person while you maintain some objectivity and emotional control
WORSE CASE SCENARIO ...

You may be:

- Labeled as
  - “difficult” person
  - “high maintenance”
- Lose your job
DIFFICULT PERSON?
DEALING WITH DIFFICULTIES – OUR BIASES

- Our perceptions of others are based on their verbal and nonverbal behaviors
  - past interactions, with them and with others that remind us of them
  - our own biases and beliefs

- Unconscious biases skew our perceptions of others – may make us think of them as “difficult”
DIFFICULT PERSON OR PERSON IN DIFFICULT SITUATION?
CLASSIFICATIONS OF DIFFICULT PEOPLE

- Hostile Aggressive
- Passive Aggressive
- Negative
- Procrastinators
- Arrogant Deceitful
HOSTILE - AGGRESSIVE

Vern the Verbal Assailant
• derisive, patronizing, and judgmental

Derek the Dirty Digger
• offensive jokester who is disrespectful and insensitive

Hillary the Hothead
• condescending, domineering, and easily enraged
HOSTILE - AGGRESSIVE
**HOSTILE - AGGRESSIVE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Response</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verbal Assailants</td>
<td>respond to their unstated assumptions, confront them, and rise above their no-win games.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dirty Diggers</td>
<td>confront their sarcasm, respond only to the positive parts of their comments, and refuse to play their negative games.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotheads</td>
<td>clearly indicate your disapproval. Allow them venting time and then respond calmly.</td>
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PASSIVE - AGGRESSIVE

Nancy the Knowledge Warden
• refuses to part with information in her control

Igor the Unresponsive Aggressor
• appears uninterested in communicating and fails to respond to questions

Wally the Waffler
• hates making decisions, always wants to be on the winning side, and desperately wants the approval of others
PASSIVE-AGGRESSIVE
# Passive-Aggressive

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<tr>
<td>Knowledge Wardens</td>
<td>Plan ahead, document your request, and provide positive reinforcement.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unresponsive Aggressors</td>
<td>Ask open-ended questions to facilitate a response and achieve an outcome.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wafflers</td>
<td>Help them avoid unrealistic commitments, offer them win-win situations, and help them realize that mistakes are OK.</td>
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NEGATIVE

Billy the Bleater
• Complains incessantly that nothing is ever good enough, and exaggerates the size of the problem

Phil the Finger-pointer
• Consistently places blame on others, refuses to admit mistakes, and loathes apologizing

Simon the Naysayer
• Pessimistic, feel discouraged, helpless, and powerless, and are often indifferent and embittered
PASSIVE-AGGRESSIVE
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<tr>
<td>Bleater</td>
<td>Confront their behavior, then establish and reinforce your boundaries.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Finger-pointer</td>
<td>Meet privately to tell them how you feel about their actions, let them know that you know the truth, and give them options to &quot;save face.&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Naysayer</td>
<td>Utilize their strengths, be the first to bring up the negatives, and use reverse psychology.</td>
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PROCRASTINATORS

Oliver the Ostrich
• Doesn’t want to hurt anyone's feelings, and hope that if he delays making a decision long enough, the need for the decision will disappear

Sam the Storyteller
• Wants to be liked and will speak in half-lies and bent truths to tell you what he think you want to hear. He does not consider the consequences of not following through or his over commitments

Peter the Perfectionist
• extremely detail-oriented, very highly organized, have exceedingly high standards, and is very tightly focused
PROCRASTINATORS
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<tr>
<td>Ostrich</td>
<td>Discover the &quot;real&quot; reason why they don't want to make a particular decision and help them solve the problem.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Storyteller</td>
<td>Meet with them privately, state the facts, tell them how you feel, state your expectations, then ask them what they would do differently if they could do it over again.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perfectionist</td>
<td>Break down the project into achievable tasks, explaining project requirements and deadlines. Then be sure to follow up on each deadline.</td>
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ARROGANT

Eric the Egghead
- extremely intelligent, usually right, and can back up their opinions with facts, but are condescending and refuse to consider options other than their own

Bob the Braggart
- wants to be appreciated, are condescending, are usually wrong, but truly believes they know what they're talking about and refuse to consider other options

Gloria the Glory Hog
- Arrogant types who are risk takers, are extremely competitive, take credit for your work, and schmooze with senior management

Lori the Life of the Party
- Arrogant types who make a great first impression and are fun to be around and must be the center of attention. They act knowledgeable and confident, might seem conceited, but rarely follow through
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<td>Egghead</td>
<td>Research and suggest your idea in an offhand way, listen to their idea and incorporate any applicable suggestions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Braggart</td>
<td>Respond to the braggart's need to be recognized, not to the words he speaks, and segue to the discussion at hand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glory Hog</td>
<td>Keep the proper documentation and/or assert yourself.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life of the Party</td>
<td>Keep documentation for everything, let the life-of-the-party see that you're keeping notes, be professional, but not personal, and if you're the life-of-the-party's boss, require regular status reports.</td>
</tr>
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DECEITFUL

Busybody
• Gossip incessantly, are incapable of keeping secrets, don't mean any harm, and want to feel important

Agitator
• Enjoy causing trouble, manipulate or exaggerate the truth, sometimes lies for the fun of it, don't try to become directly involved in the trouble their instigating

Saboteur
• Want other people to be miserable, consciously manipulate others, often has a boring personal life, become directly involved in getting other people into trouble
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<td>Busybody</td>
<td>Confront them: Tell them you don't want to hear it and you want the gossip to stop.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Agitator</td>
<td>Confront them: Tell them you're on to their game and you refuse to participate any longer.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Saboteur</td>
<td>If you're the co-worker or employee, document everything and tell them you're taking their behavior up with management. If you're the boss, follow your company's rules for how many and what types of warnings, written or verbal, you're required to give, and fire them as soon as possible.</td>
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OTHER APPROACHES

• Start out by examining yourself
• Explore what you are experiencing with a trusted friend or colleague
• Approach the person with whom you having the problem for a private discussion
• Rally the other employees who might have an issue with the difficult person, too - carefully.
• If these approaches fail to work, try to limit the difficult person's access to you.
Exercise
FOR MANAGERS OF EMPLOYEES

• Don’t ignore the problem
• Intervene as soon as possible
• Research the problem personally
• Help the problematic employee to get back on track
• If all else fails, termination may be necessary.
**KEY POINTS – CHANGE**

- Conflict is normal.
- Try not to take the different personality types personally—it’s about the message, not you as the messenger.
- Be aware of your default conflict management style under stress.
- Use a collaborative approach if time allows.
- With experience, you can learn to master effective conflict management skills.
QUESTIONS? ...