

Difficult Conversations: Managing Difficult Relationships in the Workplace

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Why do people manipulate?



"Although no single definition is acceptable to all personality theorists, we can say that personality is a pattern of relatively permanent traits and unique characteristics that give both consistency and individuality to a person's behaviour."

(Feist and Feist, 2009)



Personality Disorders

- Personality disorders are a class of mental disorders characterized by enduring maladaptive patterns of behaviour, cognition and inner experience, exhibited across many contexts and *deviating markedly from those accepted by the individual's culture.*

“Personality Clashes”

- It is important to note that each of the five personality factors represents a range between two extremes.
- In the real world, most people lie somewhere in between the two polar ends of each dimension.
- The “Graphic Equaliser” Effect

The Big Five



“Normal” Personality – “The Big 5”

- The five broad personality traits described by the theory are:
 - Extraversion,
 - Agreeableness,
 - Openness,
 - Conscientiousness,
 - and Neuroticism.

Extraversion - Facets

1. Warmth:
2. Gregariousness:
3. Assertiveness:
4. Activity:
5. Excitement-seeking:
6. Positive emotions:

Agreeableness Facets

1. Trust:
2. Straightforwardness:
3. Altruism:
4. Compliance:
5. Modesty:
6. Tender-mindedness:

Conscientiousness Facets

1. Competence:
2. Order:
3. Dutifulness:
4. Achievement striving:
5. Self-discipline:
6. Deliberation:

Openness facets

1. Fantasy:
2. Aesthetics:
3. Feelings:
4. Actions:
5. Ideas:
6. Values:

Neuroticism Facets

1. Anxiety:
2. Angry Hostility:
3. Depression:
4. Self-consciousness:
5. Impulsiveness:
6. Vulnerability to stress;

Intentions vs Behaviours

- Many negative behaviours come from
 - Need for Acceptance/Affection
 - Need for Appreciation/ Respect
 - Need for Control
 - Fear of Rejection

Passive-Aggressive

- Resentful, contrary, sceptical, discontented.
- Resists fulfilling others' expectations.
- Deliberately inefficient. Vents anger indirectly by undermining others' goals.
- Alternately moody and irritable, then sullen and withdrawn.
- Withholds emotions. Will not communicate when there is something wrong



Narcissists at Work

- Narcissistic individuals can have strongly detrimental effects on the workplace.
- Through charm, intelligence and very real contributions, they can advance a highly personal agenda that precludes actual concern for others or for organizational goals.

The danger of managers who avoid self-reflection

- Decisions made without consulting others,
- Autocratic leadership, The result is a culture of poor morale, limited creative thinking, and risk taking.
- All of the above can bring down an organization and impact the bottom line.

Someone needs to be the adult....

1. Have you misread the situation?
2. Are they just different?
3. Are they under pressure at home or work
 - (not a justification – understand basis)
4. Are you contributing?
5. Try to judge by intentions rather than behaviour

Dealing with Difference

1. Understand how other people (and you) work
2. Respect and value difference
3. Adjust yourself to individuals
4. Accept difference and search for compromise

The Difficult Conversation!

1. Know your rights
2. Plan & Get into mindset
3. Focus on interests, not positions
4. Define problem in a face saving way
5. Don't take it personally
6. Listen effectively
7. Recognise emotions
8. Conflict as a natural resource
9. Watch body language
10. Attack the problem, not the person

The Difficult Conversation

11. Focus on the future
12. Set clear expectations
13. Keep a record
14. Repeat regularly (acknowledge improvements)
15. Have a backup plan



Passive & Aggressive Types

- Sherman Tank
- The Exploder
- The Complainer
- The Clam
- The Know-it-all
- The Staller
- The Dark Triad

Sherman Tank



- Stand up to them but don't get into a fight or argue
- Give them time to run down
- Get your point across any reasonable way you can
- Get them to sit down and discuss the problem
- Maintain eye contact
- State your opinions assertively and without apology
- Don't try to cut them down

The Exploder



- Get them to wind down then
- switch to problem solving
- Give them time to run down and gain self-control
- Firmly state “stop” or “please lower your voice”
- Show that you take and their concerns seriously
- Use their name
- Move to a private setting if necessary

The Complainer



- Insist that issues be handled in a problem solving manner
- Listen to their complaints even if you feel guilty or impatient
- Acknowledge and paraphrase to check understanding
- Don't agree with or apologise for their complaints
- Avoid the accusation – defence – re-accusation pattern
- State the facts without comment
- “How do you want the discussion to end?”

The Clam



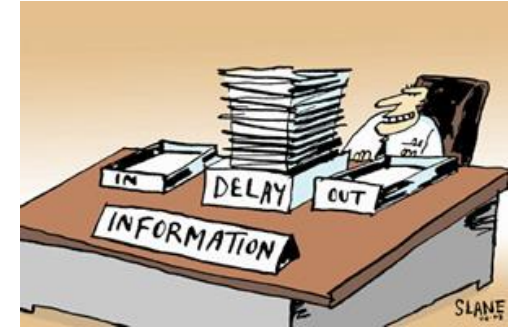
- Get them to open up and begin to discuss what is bothering them or what they want
- Ask open-ended questions
- Wait for a response
- Do not fill the silence
- Plan for extra time
- Comment on what is happening in the interaction

The Know-it-all



- Get them to consider alternative without challenging their apparent expertise
- Do your homework – they want details
- Listen and paraphrase
- Don't be dogmatic or over-generalise
- Be tentative in disagreement and raise questions
- Consider “giving in” on points
 - to build relationship and
 - avoid conflict

The Staller



- Recognise this is their preferred method of problem solving
- Don't take on their problems yourself
- Listen for issues and create problem solving solutions
- If reservations involve you, acknowledge past issues
- Focus on the facts
- Give support for any decision they offer
- Delineate who is responsible for what in solving the problem

The “Dark Triad”



Summary

- Self-awareness
- Leadership skills
- Document, Plan & Support
- Call them out (feedback, insight, issue)
- Interests vs Positions
 - Is there another way to have their need met?
- Resolution (& revisit)

For further information & support

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