

## WORKING WITH DIFFICULT PEOPLE

MOVING FROM NEGATIVE CONFLICT TO  
POSITIVE COLLABORATION

## TARGET GOAL

TO BETTER UNDERSTAND HOW TO COMMUNICATE AND  
COLLABORATE WITH DIFFICULT PEOPLE



**BY DEFINITION A DP IS ONE THAT DISPLAYS CONSISTENT  
BEHAVIOR ACROSS MANY ENVIRONMENTS, SITUATIONS  
AND INDIVIDUALS AND WHO IS UNABLE TO BE FLEXIBLE.**

THERE IS A CONTINUUM OF DEGREES ENDING WITH  
CLINICAL DIAGNOSES



**EASY TO RECOGNIZE**

**HARD TO WORK WITH...HARD TO UNDERSTAND**

## HAVE YOU EVER FANTASIZED?

- Negative Conflict
- Positive Collaboration



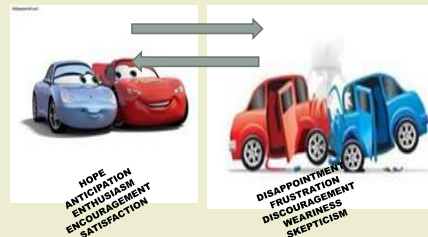
## REALITY

- **DP are everywhere.**
- **Murphy's Law: One DP leaves another one comes.**
- **DP seem to thrive on disequilibrium.**
- **DP can make our lives and our work unnecessarily hard.**
- **DP behavior patterns are consistent—not occasional or isolated.**
- **We try to avoid DP.**
- **Wishing them away doesn't work.**
- **We cannot directly control or change a DP.**
- **It is highly likely we can move from conflict to collaboration—non-productivity to productivity.**
- **We can benefit from having DP in our lives.**



### THERE IS NO SILVER BULLET

MOVING FROM CONFLICT TO COLLABORATION IS A PROCESS



### IT IS A PROCESS THAT HAS ITS UPS AND ITS DOWNS

IT IS A PROCESS REQUIRING HARD WORK.

## THERE'S REASON TO BE GRATEFUL FOR DP!

BELIEVE IT OR NOT



### SMOOTH WATERS

DO NOT MAKE GOOD SAILORS



YOU CAN'T CHANGE THE DIRECTION OF THE WIND

BUT...YOU CAN ADJUST YOUR SAILS

## DIFFERENT TYPES SAME RESULTS

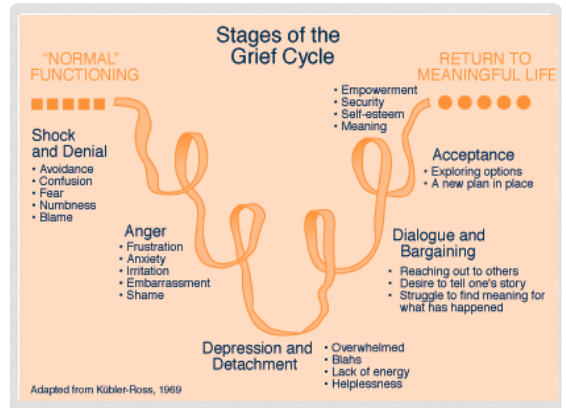
- It's all about me: ***The Self-Absorbed***
- My way or the highway: ***The Controllers***
- How can I make it rain on your parade?: ***The Obstructionists***
- Watch out, here I come. ***The Truly Toxic***

**"Coping with Difficult People"**  
By Arlene Matthews Uhl

## UNDERLYING CAUSES OF DIFFICULT PERSONALITIES VARY

A MAJOR CAUSE:

Anxiety



WHATEVER THE CAUSE

WE ARE STILL LEFT TO FACE THE UNPRODUCTIVE BEHAVIOR

## REMEMBER

- Some things we can control.
- Some things we can influence.
- Some things are out of our control.

RECOGNIZING THE DIFFERENCE WILL HELP US KEEP PERSPECTIVE

IF WE BELIEVE WE CAN DIRECTLY CONTROL OR CHANGE A DP, WE WILL BE FOREVER FRUSTRATED AND DISAPPOINTED

SPEND YOUR TIME ON THE THINGS YOU CAN CONTROL

## GENERAL STRATEGIES FOR ANY DP

Strategies you can control



- Work towards building and sustaining positive relationships—be willing to invest time/energy up front.
- Display respectful behavior—at all times—monitor body language.
- Keep your word—be trustworthy.
- Reframe how you think of DP
- Remain rationaly detached—don't take things personally.
- Stay outwardly calm—even though you are rattled on the inside.
- Be open to new ideas and willing to compromise—never "My way or the highway."

## STRATEGIES YOU CAN CONTROL

- If possible strategize in advance—if you are working with a team always know their minds.
- Try to predict the DP's behavior based on past performance and present issues—be prepared.
- Identify what you can agree upon—try to close the gap by not focusing on the differences
- Have a second pair of ears—alone is not good, ask for honest feedback.
- Pick your battles—you can win the battle and lose the war.
- Try to understand the DP's perspective—you don't have to agree just attempt to understand.
- Persist in genuine active listening—genuine is key.

## THE SELF-ABSORBED

"Its all about me."

*Fences make good  
Neighbors*  
Robert Frost

**Boundaries are an issue  
e.g. talking, attention  
seeking, habitually late**

- Establish meeting norms
- Come with an agenda
- Establish start and end times—schedule another meeting if agenda not covered
- Schedule meetings up against another commitment
- Keep meeting numbers at a minimal—small audience
- Identify ideas you can legitimately validate

## THE CONTROLLER

"My way or the highway."

**AS ANXIETY INCREASES  
SO DOES THE NEED FOR  
CONTROL**

- Identify ways you can provide them with control.
  - Meet on a regular basis—keep them in the know
  - Invite their input—have them write their ideas down on paper
  - Implement their ideas when appropriate
  - Don't take them "by surprise"—this makes them feel out of control
  - Provide data—opinions hold little value
  - Always remain calm

## THE OBSTRUCTIONIST

"How can I rain on your parade?"

**WHEN OPPORTUNITY  
KNOCKS, THE  
OBSTRUCTIONIST  
COMPLAINS ABOUT THE  
NOISE.**

- "Woe is me."
- "Not on your life."
- "Yes but."
- "That's not fair."
- "Poor me."
- "I've already tried that. It didn't work."
- "Can't you do anything right?"
- "But what if?"
- Negativity is contagious—surround yourself with positive people.

## THE OBSTRUCTIONIST

- Trying to convince an Obstructionist to look at the positive side is generally futile.
- Sometimes agreeing with the obstructionist that there is a problem may help them agree with you that a solution can exist.
- Empower them to solve their own problems—problems will always exist because they often feel like victims i.e., things continually happen to them which are out of their control.
- Assure them, you will take responsibility if things fall through.

## FOUR MAGIC PHRASES

THEY WORK EVERYTHING

## A QUOTE FROM TOM BODETT

*"The difference between school and life? In school, you're taught a lesson and then given a test. In life, you're given a test that teaches you a lesson."*

