

LEADERSHIP STRATEGIES for REDUCING CONFLICT

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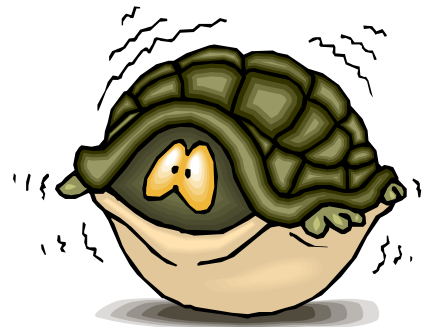
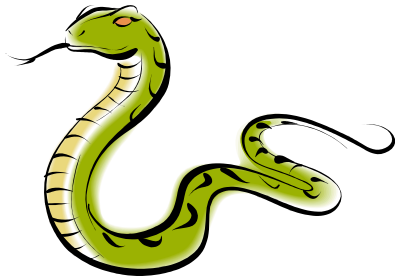
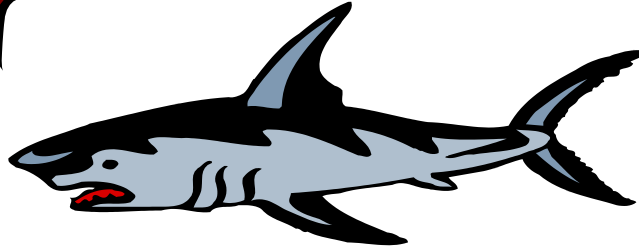
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What's Your Style?

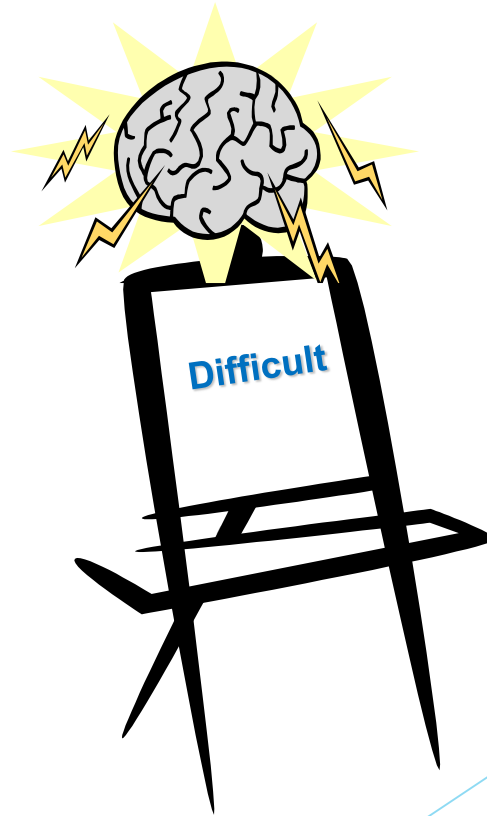
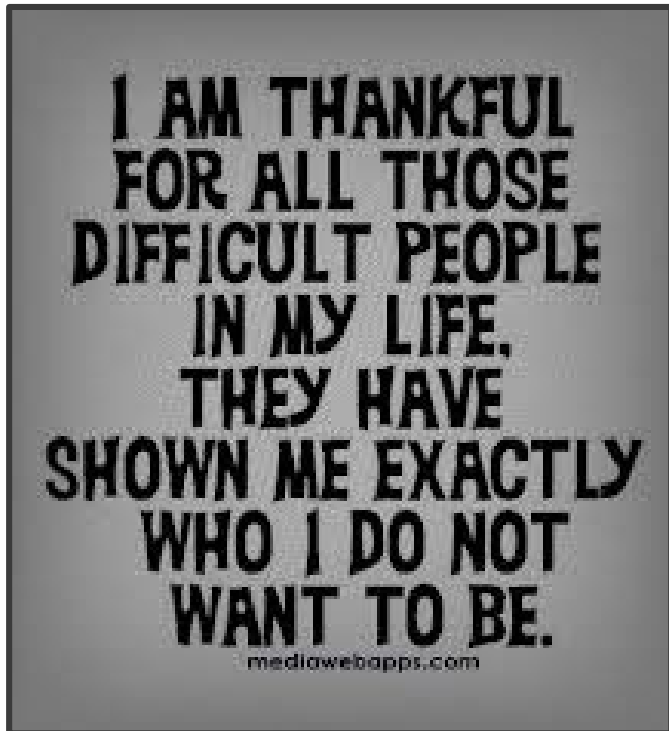
- Lion
- Owl
- Shark
- Dove
- Turtle
- Snake
- None of the above



What it means to be “difficult”

Brainstorm: What is “difficult”?

Paired Sharing: Who in your life is “difficult”?



Considerations - Look inward

- ▶ Do people know they are difficult?
- ▶ Think about those in your day-to-day operations that you would consider difficult
- ▶ Would others consider you to be difficult - if so, in what type of situation?



POV Glasses

Our perceptions are framed through our own **Point of View (POV) glasses**.

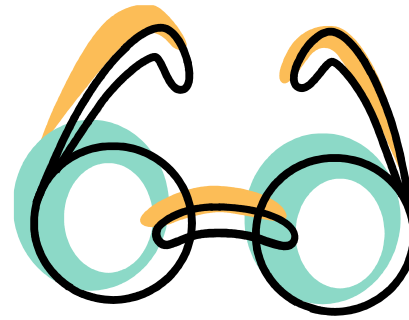
- ▶ Past experiences
- ▶ Education
- ▶ Culture
- ▶ Faith

What colors your point of view?

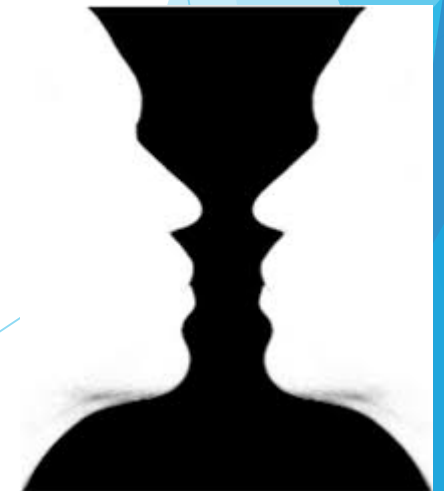
How do perceptions and biases affect how we see others as being difficult?

Who are the most difficult people in your organization?

- Co-workers (peers)
- Subordinates
- Supervisors
- Faculty - Researchers - Medical Personnel
- Postdocs - Students
- Other departments



*What
do you
see?*



Why are people difficult?

- Personality or environmental impact
- Some difficult people are aware that they are perceived as being difficult ... and they like it
- Difficult behavior is often rewarded by the end result, so difficult behavior is repeated because it works
- What do you do that might contribute to stress or conflict for those you supervise?

Difficult people may not be difficult all the time or with everyone they meet; at one time or another most of us have been considered difficult...

Imagine a time...



Close your eyes and try and relax
your mind and body

Stretch, roll your neck, shoulders
- find a comfortable position

Breathe deeply - inhale for a
count of 3, hold for 2 and
exhale for 5

Are you feeling relaxed?

- ▶ Now imagine a recent conflict you had in the lab or a work setting.

How are you feeling now?

How do you disagree...

... when you “know” you are right!

Especially if its with your boss - imagine how your staff members might feel when they disagree with you.

- ▶ We tend to avoid conflict like the plague
- ▶ We don't know how to disagree
- ▶ We don't show the connection between our approach and the associated benefits of adopting it

How do you get over it and move on?

If the other person still does not agree that just may be the way it goes. Instead of getting upset, get curious about why they feel the way they do. Try to see the refusal to adopt your idea as a development opportunity. Try to find the answer to the following questions, and learn from them:

- ▶ Where is the other person coming from?
- ▶ Do I understand what is informing his/her point of view?
- ▶ Am I seeing the big picture that is informing their position?
- ▶ Am I too myopic in my analysis of the situation?

Ask him/her to explain her point of view and educate you as a development opportunity. You can grow from learning from those more experienced than you, and if its your boss, he/she will most likely be able to shed light on more complex issues that perhaps you don't encounter in your day to day work that impacts his/her choices.

**See challenges like this as an opportunity
to practice changing perspectives.**

Conflict: Myths & Concepts

4 Myths

1. Conflict is always negative
2. There is only one way to resolve a conflict
3. Conflict is always a competition
4. In a conflict someone has to lose!



5 Concepts

1. Conflict is a *Natural* part of life.
2. We can learn skills to help us deal more effectively with conflict. Even when we learn those skills, conflict will continue to exist.
3. There are many alternatives - never just one way to deal with a conflict.
4. Sometimes we all can win! *Win-Win**
5. Creative conflict resolution is rooted in a deep sense of respect for yourself and for others.

****Winning isn't getting what you think you want...
It's getting what you actually NEED***

Win-Win: Position vs. Need

Position:

What you have decided should happen!

Only one way to satisfy a position

Need:

What caused you to adopt the position
in the first place!

There may be several ways to satisfy a need



As a leader do you generally start
by having a “position”?

How much time and effort
do you take to explore needs...
your own, staff, the institution?

Personalities - Who are you?

- Hostile Aggressive Trio (Sherman Tanks, Snipers, Exploders), Complainer, Clam, Super-Agreeables, Wet Blanket, Bulldozer and Balloons, Indecisive Stallers
- Sally Spiritual, Sam Sermon, Marvin Music, Joyce Judging, Bob Bossy, Donna Depressed, Harriet Hurry, Martha Martyr, Larry Lazy, Winnie Witness, Joe Jock, Gloria Gossip, Gilda Guilt, and Gertrude Grudge
- The Tank, Sniper, Know-It-All, Think They Know-It-All, Grenade, Yes Person, Maybe Person, Nothing Person, No Person, and Whiner

***Do you recognize yourself
or
others you know in the list above?***

Glad, Mad, Sad?

Teams Catch a Leader's Mood

Emotional Contagion happens whenever people interact. Our brains and bodies react to the feelings of the people around us because we all have a social brain.

In a group of peers, the person who is most emotionally expressive is the sender. When there are power differences in a group, the most powerful person sends emotions, setting the emotional tone for everyone in the group. When the team leader is in a positive mood, the group picks up on that feeling and their performance is enhanced. If the leader is in a negative mood, the group catches it and their performance suffers.

So choose wisely!

Self-awareness and self-regulation are key

Daniel Goleman (Feb. 2, 2016):

<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/glad-mad-sad-teams-catch-leaders-mood-daniel-goleman>

Change is Hard

What can be done to change
difficult workplace behavior or a cycle of continuing
conflict within your organization?

Unfortunately, you cannot change or
fix the difficult people
Why? **They don't think they are broken!**

You can only change the way **YOU**
react to their behavior...
and sometimes that positively impacts
the way they treat you!

8 Tips for Dealing with Difficult People

1. Don't get dragged down Misery loves company. Keep your guard up!
2. Listen It's tempting to tune these people out - use active listening
3. Use a time limit for venting Use the "5-minute rule
4. Don't agree It's tempting to try to appease to make people stop
5. Don't stay silent silence can be interpreted as agreement
6. Do switch extremes into facts Negative people talk about "never" and "always." Switch them to fact-based statements.
7. Move to problem solving Your only chance of ending their negativity is to acknowledge their feelings and help them to move into a problem solving mode.
8. Cut them off If, after all your efforts, you deem these people to be hopelessly negative, you need to cut them off.

(Source: Kruse, 2013)

Tips Continued

Creating a great and supportive workplace culture should be everyone's job
- **not just the leader!**



Don't let the downers harm your institution or your own level of engagement at work.

Leadership Strategies for Managing Team Conflict

- ▶ **Be sensitive** to the needs, wants and conflicts your team is experiencing.
- ▶ **Take seriously** what people are saying and give people your **full respect**, even if the issue seems trivial
- ▶ **Know your limitations** and try not to take sides. Consider using an outside mediator, coach, consultant or facilitator to resolve particularly thorny issues.
- ▶ **Tackle and achieve victory** in at least one, simpler issue to gain traction and a sense of accomplishment and agreement.
- ▶ **Maximize people's strengths and minimize their weaknesses** in a strategic manner to optimize team functioning.
- ▶ Realize **you will not change** personalities or styles people bring to the team, but you can work with them creatively.

Leadership Strategies for Managing Team Conflict

- ▶ Set an example: high-performing, crisp communicator
- ▶ Shift gears and wear the many hats of team-leading success, including leader, catalyst, orchestrator, cheerleader, counselor, coach, consultant and organizer.
- ▶ Ask what your role might be, if any, in potentially contributing to the conflict.
- ▶ Make sure you set a high-minded tone, do not allow scapegoating, negativity, self-pity or lack of vision within the team.
- ▶ Encourage active discussion and respectful disagreement so creativity is fostered.
- ▶ Change and vary team job assignments to increase energy and interest.
- ▶ Use your best judgment when resolving team conflict, maintaining respect for the individual and keeping the best interests of the team in mind at all times

(Source: Adapted from Cole, 2014)

9 Ways to Reduce Emotional Reactions

- ▶ **Express relief.** Sharing positive feelings feels good, builds rapport, trust and sets the right tone in communication. But what if you are not feeling positive?
- ▶ **Prepare the person.** Setting the stage helps people get emotionally prepared.
- ▶ **Delay.** As helpful as it is to face problems head on, putting things off is sometimes a smart strategy.
- ▶ **Same Side Strategy.** Conflict is in fact opposition - there is the feeling of an emotional distance. Simply sitting on the same side of the table reduces the psychological barrier and opens up communication. Talking about what you have in common and what you do in fact agree on will bring you emotionally closer and quicken resolution.
- ▶ **Appreciation, then Correction.** Often, not everything about the person or situation is bad. To create a less emotional situation, start with the positive aspects before going into the negative. **POV Power.** Showing that you see things from the other person's point of view is a powerful way to defuse emotions.
- ▶ **Take Responsibility for Problem.** There are two sides of every problem. Taking responsibility for your part will build the relationship.
- ▶ **Take Responsibility for the Solution.** Promising to take action will bring the emotions and the conversation to an end.
- ▶ **Sincere Apology** (If appropriate). Apologizing is the ultimate acknowledgment of any wrong doing and the ultimate emotional defuser.

Emotional Intelligence

Be 100% genuine

Words that are not backed with corresponding feelings (and subsequent change or action) will come across as manipulative and do more harm than good in the end.

The next time you are in conflict, remember so is the person you are talking to!

Emotional intelligence in the workplace is an invaluable soft skill.

(Source: Polsky, 2013)

Helpful Hints Summary

- Avoid the guilt trip
- Become a “Teflon” person - develop a thicker skin
- Train the other person how to treat you
- Don’t reward difficult behavior
- Do the unexpected
- Breathe, think, respond calmly – recognize your triggers
- Don’t become part of the problem
 - **Listen – actively!**
- Use “I-messages”
- If you don’t understand, ask questions
- Model the desired behavior



- **Tone of voice:** neutral, non-threatening
- **Facial expression:** friendly and open
- **Body language:** calm, still, relaxed - open and receptive power poses
- **Emotions and energy:** positive and upbeat, demonstrating care
- **Spatial relationships:** appropriate comfort zones
- **Eye contact:** direct - do not let your eyes wander

More Hints

- Focus on solutions - problem solving approach
- Pay attention to non-verbal and body language
- Pay attention to tone (even in email)
- Point to the process, not the individual
- Be specific
- Avoid always and never
- Respect vs. like
- Remember tomorrow
- Be careful setting precedents
- Clarify and document exceptions
- Don't be difficult yourself
- Don't avoid the inevitable
- **Blend to common ground**



Blending to Common Ground

Blending is any behavior by which you can reduce the differences between you and another in order to meet them where they are and move to **common ground**.
(Kirshner)

You blend with people in many ways — facial expression, degree of animation, body posture, voice volume and speed, finding things in common such as food likes/dislikes, hobbies, etc.

It is natural to blend with people we like and not to blend with people we don't like.

The result of blending is an increase in rapport.

Case Study - Role Play

Professor I.B. Perfect has been at Hometown University (HU) for over 30 years. He/she is well known both internally and externally for his high quality teaching and well-funded research. He is also known for his unwillingness to follow policies and procedures and believes that he should not have to abide by most policies because he is such a “star.” Professor Perfect also has a temper and does not hesitate to scream and yell at people if they do not give him the answer he wants to hear. While civil to you, he has been terrorizing your staff and as a result no one wants to deal with him.

He is coming to your office to speak to you about your “uncooperative and incompetent” staff.

Find someone you have not paired with yet.
One person play Prof. Perfect and the other the
VP of Research Administration.

Role Play Results

VP - What communication/conflict strategies did you use when speaking to the professor?

Prof. - How did you feel during this exchange. What did the VP do or not do to impact your feelings and/or behavior?

VP - What strategies will you use to get your staff back on track?

Resources

- ▶ Brinkman, R. and Kirshner, R. (2012). *Dealing with People You Can't Stand-How to bring out the best in people at their worst*. McGraw-Hill (ISBN: 0-07-007838-6)
- ▶ Bramson, R.M. (1981). *Coping with Difficult People*. Dell.
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- ▶ Dealing with Difficult People. (2005). Harvard Business School Press (ISBN: 1-59139-634-4)
- ▶ Educators for Social Responsibility (1998 - Conflict Styles, POV Glasses, Active Listening) - now known as Morningside Center for Teaching Social Responsibility
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- ▶ Keating, C.A. (1984). *Dealing with Difficult People-How you can come out on top in personality conflicts*. Paulist Press (ISBN: 0-8091-2596-X).
- ▶ Kruse, K. (2013). *Employee Engagement for Everyone: 4 Keys to Happiness and Fulfillment at Work. 8 Tips for Dealing with Difficult People (excerpt from the book)*
<http://www.forbes.com/sites/kevinkruse/2013/06/25/dealing-with-difficult-people/>
- ▶ Leader Development Institute www.ldiworld.com
- ▶ Meier, P. (1993). *Don't Let Jerks Get the Best of You-advice for dealing with difficult people*. Thomas Nelson Publishers (ISBN: 0-7852-8019-7)
- ▶ Polsky, L. (2013). *9 Ways to Reduce Emotional Reactions During Conflict*.
<http://peoplenrg.com/blog/leadership/10-ways-to-manage-emotions-during-conflict-in-the-workplace/>
- ▶ Rosen, M.I. (1998). *Thank You for Being Such a Pain: Spiritual Guidance for Dealing with Difficult People*. Three Rivers Press (ISBN: 0-609-80414-6).

Questions?

Acknowledgments:

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