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| <h2>Dealing with Difficult People: Working with You is Killing Me!</h2> <p>Presenter: Shari Robertson, Ph.D., CCC-SLP</p> <p>Moderated by: Amy Hansen, M.A., CCC-SLP, Managing Editor, SpeechPathology.com</p> | |

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Dealing with Difficult People

Working with **YOU** is
Killing **ME!**

Shari Robertson, CCC-SLP

Disclosures

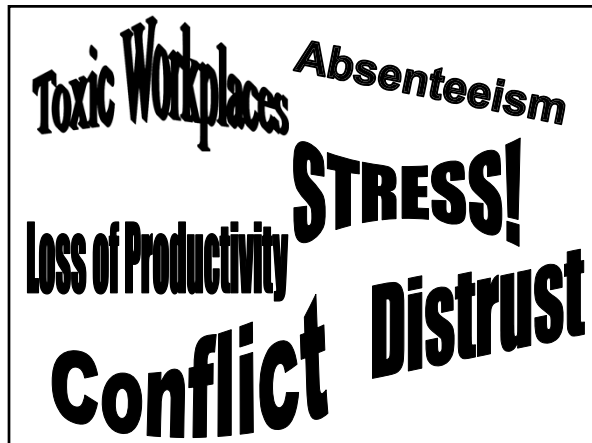
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- *Nonfinancial* — Member of ASHA BOD for which I receive no compensation for volunteer service as Vice President of Academic Affairs in Speech-Language Pathology.

Is this YOU???

Is this YOU???

Most of us
have had to
deal with a
DIFFICULT
PERSON at
some time in
our lives.

DIFFICULT PEOPLE CREATE:



Dealing with Difficult People is a
MUST!

- Your situation will almost always get WORSE – not better – if left unaddressed.
- It may simmer for a while, but it will eventually erupt.

WORST CASE SCENARIO

You may find YOURSELF being painted with the same brush as your difficult person.

Facts about Dealing with Difficult People



There is no magic
wand....

It's not about you – it's about
THEM!

- The behaviors difficult people exhibit are a reflection of their inner state.
- People who are bored, unhappy, insecure, unmotivated, immature and/or incompetent try to take others down with them – to wallow in THEIR misery.

Difficult
People have
a CHOICE in
how they
behave

NO ONE IS FORCING
THEM TO BE DIFFICULT

Difficult People are Reinforced for Being Difficult!

- Difficult people don't become difficult overnight
- They are difficult because they have years of "success" in getting their way
- Our job is to break the cycle of reinforcement for bad behavior.

Difficult People
treat
EVERYONE
badly.

So, we need to
STOP taking
their behavior
personally!

We all have FOUR choices in
how we deal with difficult people

1. Stay and Do Nothing

The definition of insanity is doing
the same thing over and over
and expecting different results.

- Suffering in silence
 - This does NOT solve the problem and your frustration will almost always build up and get worse over time.
- Complaining to someone who can do nothing about your problem person
 - This is an equally bad solution. YOU begin to behave as a difficult person and it does nothing to solve the situation.

2. Vote with your feet

MS clip art/original art

- Not all situations are resolvable.
- Some are not WORTH resolving.
- Voting with your feet MAKES SENSE when it no longer makes sense to continue to deal with the difficult person.
- If you are at risk of losing control or you are truly miserable at your job and see no alternative, walk away.

3. Change your attitude about the difficult person

You can't always
change your
situation, but you
can change your
attitude.

~Larry Hargraves

- Changing your own attitude is a critical step in helping you deal effectively with difficult people.
- Taking time to understand your difficult person can literally set you free from your reactions to their behavior.
- You MUST change your own attitude to find the courage and flexibility to move on to the fourth way to deal with difficult people.

4. Change your behavior.

You cannot control the
behavior of others.

You can only control your
OWN behavior.

There are effective strategies that
you can learn to help you bring out
the best in even the worst of people

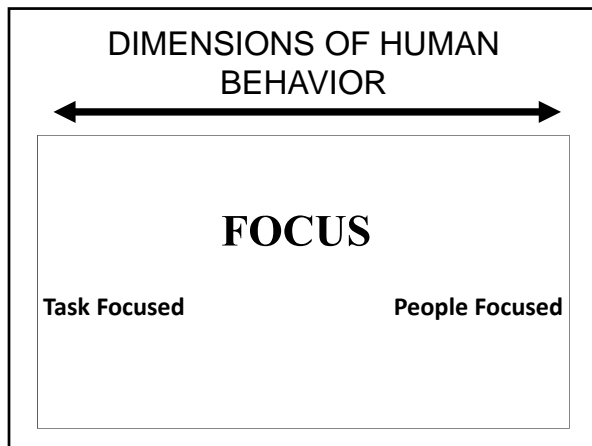
- ❖ Choice 3 – Change your Attitude
- ❖ Choice 4 – Change your Behavior

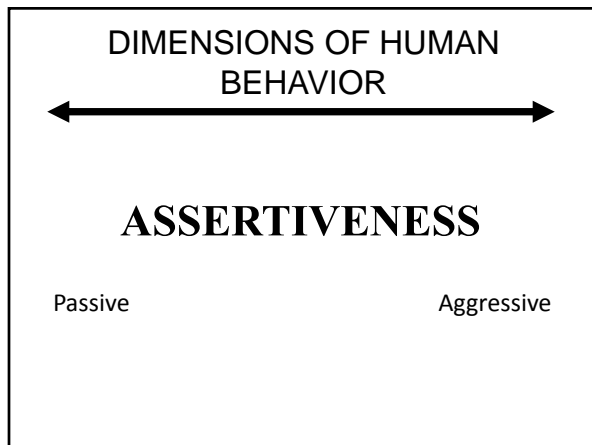
CHANGE YOUR ATTITUDE
by Understanding YOUR Problem
People

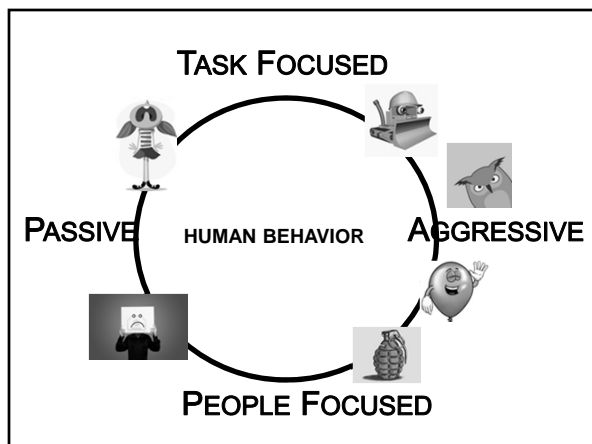
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HUMAN BEHAVIOR

Brinkman & Kirschner, 2002







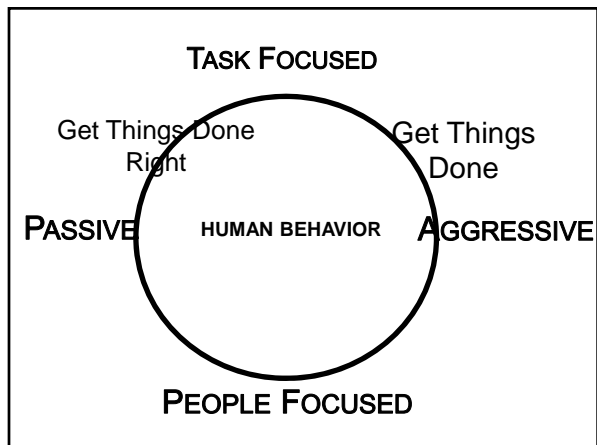
TASK FOCUSED

INTENT:

- To get things done
- To get things done right

NEED:

- Control
- Perfection



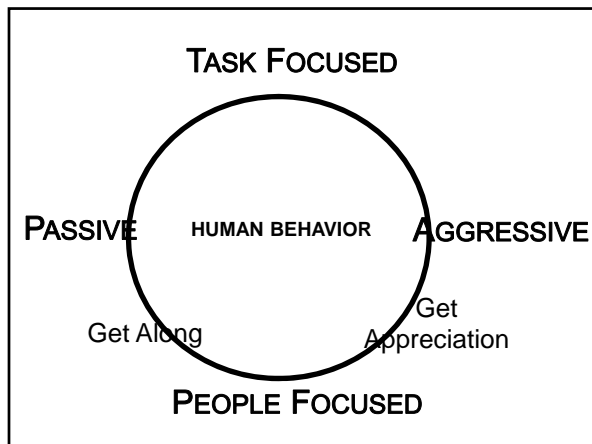
PEOPLE FOCUSED:

• INTENT:

- To get along
- To get appreciated

• NEED:

- Approval
- Attention



What Happens when Intent is Not Met?

- Get it Done People become more Controlling
 - Try to take over and push ahead
- Get it Right People become more Perfectionistic
 - Finding every flaw and potential error

When Intent is Not Met...

- Get Along People become Approval Seeking
 - Sacrificing personal goals to please others
- Get Appreciated People become Attention Getting
 - Trying to force others to notice them

Change Your Behavior

YOUR BEHAVIOR- CHANGING TOOLBOX

Dump the Victim Mentality

- Whining is not a substitute for action!
- Feeling sorry for yourself or bemoaning your situation will NOT change it.
- It's your job to change your environment if you don't like it.
- "You're nobody's victim without your permission." Eleanor Roosevelt

Does it REALLY matter if I'm right?

-
- Are you arguing merely for the sake of being right?
 - Does it truly matter if you are right?
 - Why do you need to be right?
 - What will you gain from being right?

Learn to Appreciate Criticism

"the subtlety of simplicity"

- Let go of your knee-jerk reaction to criticism.
- When you verbally appreciate someone who is criticizing you, you let go of the need to defend, explain, or justify your behavior.
- It also takes away the power of the difficult person and shuts down the interaction.
- You do NOT lose face, but you do GAIN peace!

A simple "thanks" is all it takes.

- "Thanks for being honest"
- "I appreciate your feedback."
- "Thanks for caring so much."
- "I appreciate your input."

- **THIS TAKES SOME PRACTICE - BUT IT IS WORTH IT IN THE LONG RUN....**

Conserve Your Energy

"Where
Attention Goes,
Energy Flows"

Energy spent dwelling on
negative people

- How badly they have treated you
- How unfair it all is
- How miserable they make you

is energy that could have
been spent on YOUR
personal well-being.

Observe and Listen

- You need to study your difficult person in order to manage their behavior.
- What sets them off?
- Is this long-term behavior?
- Identify their focus and level of assertiveness
 - Is this person task focused/aggressive?
 - Person focused/passive?
 - Or something else?

Blending

“No one cooperates with someone they perceive is against them”

UNITED WE STAND

•

**DIVIDED WE CAN'T STAND
EACH OTHER**

Blending

- The first step in managing difficult people is to minimize the perceived differences between you.
- Blend your behavior and communication to match the intent, body language, and communication style with your difficult person.

If you are dealing with someone who wants to:

- **Get it Done** You acknowledge the importance of getting tasks done and your conversations are brief and to the point.
- **Get Along** You take time to engage in chit-chat and considerate communications (lots of “please” and “thank yous”.)
- **Get Appreciation** You acknowledge their contributions with words of enthusiastic appreciation.

Consider the Worst Case Scenario

ASK YOURSELF:

- If I DO NOT respond to this difficult person, what is the worst thing that could happen?
- If I DO respond to this difficult person, what is the worst thing that could happen?

Putting it into Action

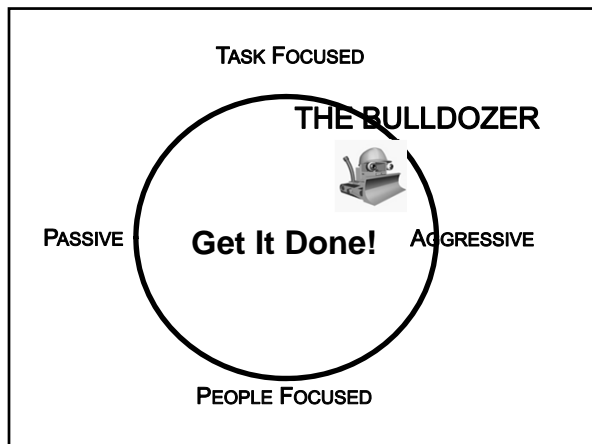
The BULLDOZER



The WHINER



The GRENADE



The Bulldozer

Intent: Get Things Done




- Aggressive
- Controlling
- Overbearing
- Pushy
- Angry
- Obnoxious

Do Command Respect

- Stand your ground
 - ~Make eye contact
 - ~Visualize
 - ~Breathe
- Interrupt (Use Name)
- Identify Intent
- Provide a “Bottom Line”
- Peace with Honor

BLEND:

Aggressive
people
require
assertive
responses



"I asked you to set up a new records system a week ago. Why isn't it in place yet? We need to get organized and we are way behind!"

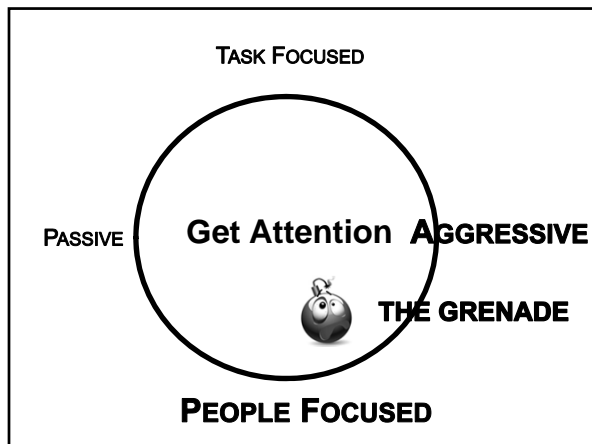


- Let the bulldozer wind down (stand your ground/listen)
- "Lori, Lori, Lori, Lori..." (Interrupt the attack)
- "I understand that you are concerned about getting this new system up and running to increase efficiency." (Identify intent)
- "From my point of view, the time I am investing in researching this will insure that we invest in a quality system that will save us time and money." (Bottom Line)
- "I need to get back to work. I would be more than happy to discuss this later, calmly. I'll be in my office." (Peace with honor)

DON'T


- Push back/Counterattack
- Become defensive
- Attempt to explain, defend, or justify
- Allow yourself to get run over or withdraw from the interaction





The Grenade

Intent: Get Appreciated



“NOBODY CARES:
.....HOW HARD I
WORK!
..... HOW I FEEL!
.....ABOUT ME”

- Feels Unimportant or Unappreciated
- Demands Immediate Attention
- May Blow Up or Lose Emotional Control
- “Temper Tantrums”
- Typically occurs in cycles

Do

Take Control of the Situation

- Get Their Attention
- Show Genuine Concern
 - Grenades are hurting – say what they need to hear
- Reduce Intensity of the Interaction
 - Reduce volume and intensity of your voice
- Take a Break
 - No sense in continuing a conversation until the Grenade calms down
- Prevent Future Explosions
 - Identify the triggers and work to avoid them

KABLAM!!



NOBODY CARES THAT I WORK SO HARD AND I ALWAYS GET THE WORST CLIENTS. PEOPLE ARE GETTING WORSE AND WORSE AND THE WORLD IS FALLING APART. NO ONE CARES HOW I FEEL AND NO ONE APPRECIATES WHAT I DO!!

(Get attention and show concern).

"Cindy, Cindy. We really do care and we appreciate how hard you work."

"Greg, Greg. We don't want you to feel like that! There is a misunderstanding here."



- Look for signs that indicate the bomb has been defused:
 - Eyes blinking
 - Head shaking
 - Taking a deep breath

Now, it's time to lower the intensity of the interaction to further help the grenade take back control of him/herself and the situation

Do

Take Control of the Situation

- ✓ Get Their Attention
- ✓ Show Genuine Concern
- ✓ Reduce Intensity of the Interaction
- Take a Break
 - No sense in continuing a conversation until the Grenade calms down
- Prevent Future Explosions
 - Identify the triggers and work to avoid them

Don't

- Blow Up at the Grenade
- Withdraw
- Take the Grenade's behavior personally
- Hate the Grenade from a distance
- "What you can't forgive, you live."



TASK FOCUSED

THE WHINER



PASSIVE

Get It Right

AGGRESSIVE

PEOPLE FOCUSED

The Whiner

Intent: Get It Right

- Wallows in worries and woe
- Only offers complaints – never solutions
- Complaints are not geared to change
- Complains to EVERYONE but the offending party
- Wants things to be right, but can only see what's wrong



Do

- Listen with compassion – briefly
- Interrupt if necessary
- Ask them if there is something specific that they need you to do
- Direct them to the proper person
- Draw the line





Blah...blah...blah...

“What is it that you want?”
(interrupt)



I am doing the work of three people.
I want three more people hired.

“Yes, I know that you are working
hard, but I don’t make hiring
decisions. So what, exactly, can I
do for you?”
(ask for a specific solution)



Blah, Blah, Blah....

“Kristy, our friendship is important to me,
but there’s no point in complaining if
nothing can be done. If you want to talk to
me about solutions or anything other than
problems, my door is always open.”

(Draw the line)

Don't

- Agree with whiners – it just encourages them to keep whining
- Disagree – they will feel compelled to repeat their problems
- Try to solve their problems – you can't

DIFFICULT PEOPLE “BIG IDEAS”

DO Expect Respect!

We train other people how to treat us.

Don't allow
yourself (or
others) to make
excuses for the
person who is
being difficult.

NO Talking
No Laughing
No Smiling

In Fact
No Nothing that
Induces any kind of
pleasure Whatsoever!

Don't take their
behavior
personally –
they most likely
treat everyone
badly.

Don't reward
difficult people for
their negative
behavior.

You can't control the behavior of others-
only your OWN behavior in response to
them.

Don't Allow Difficult People to Control Your Life

- "What you fail to forgive, you live."
- Don't allow difficult people to rent space in your head. Raise the rent and evict them!
- Holding a grudge against someone is like drinking poison and expecting the other person to die.

ACTION PLAN!!

- Think of a difficult person in your life.
- Create a plan of action to change your behavior in response to your difficult person
- PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE
- Reward yourself for small victories
- PERSIST!! PERSIST!! PERSIST!!

I WANNA BE A SCHWA

◦ ◦ ◦



Thanks for listening!

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- *Difficult People: A Practical Guide.* Kimberly Mathews
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