


Difficult People:

Keeping Conflict at a Minimum

**MASC/MASS JOINT CONFERENCE
2015**

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Workshop Outcomes

Participants will:

- Learn useful strategies for dealing with difficult behaviors
- Understand impact of attitude on interpersonal dynamics

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Coping With Difficult People

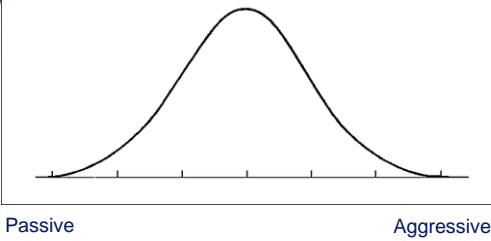
Dr. Robert Bramson

Dealing With People You Can't Stand

Dr. Rick Brinkman & Dr. Rick Kirschner

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Charting Difficult Types



Sherman Tank

"You're an idiot, a moron, a complete incompetent."

Confrontational, pushy and aggressive behavior.



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Coping Strategies

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Indecisive/Maybe

“Well... I’m still thinking about it. I know, but...
I guess I’ll decide when...”

Procrastinates waiting for better choice



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Whiner/Complainer

"But I couldn't ask anyone to help! And I cut my finger on a staple... Besides, I didn't know how long the sale would last, and ..."

- **Feel helpless and overwhelmed**
- **Standard is perfection**
- **Misery loves company**



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Coping Strategies

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Sniper

"Hey, that idea of yours reminds me of a dream I had last week. What a nightmare – just like what will happen here if we go along with your idea!"

Rude comments – biting sarcasm



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Coping Strategies

Clam/Nothing

“I told you 17 years ago I love you. If something changes, I’ll let you know!”

No verbal feedback or body language



Coping Strategies

Grenade/Exploder

Watch where you put that !!!! stuff! If you had any !!!!
smarts, you would... !"

**Unfocused ranting and raving about things that
have nothing to do with present circumstances.**



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Bulldozer/Know-It-All

"Aren't you listening?! It's not a software conflict –
the problem is with your product!"

Seldom in doubt – always blame everyone else.



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Coping Strategies

Hot-Air Balloon

“You got a question, just ask – I know exactly what we need!”

- **Fool some of the people enough of the time**
- **All to gain attention**



Coping Strategies

Super-Agreeable

"Can you finish this up before you leave today?
My pleasure! Yes, I'd be happy to make those
copies. Sure, plenty of time to run that errand."

- **Strive to please people and avoid confrontation.**
- **Often say "yes" without thinking about implications.**



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Coping Strategies

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No Person

"That will never happen! What's the point of
trying if it won't work?"

- **Is disagreeable and belligerent**
- **Very much a pessimist**



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Coping Strategies

Four Choices

These are the difficult people that most people cannot stand working with, talking to, or dealing with.

You have four options:

1st Choice

1. Stay and do nothing



- Leads to suffering and complaining to someone who can do nothing about it
- Can be dangerous because frustration builds and gets worse over time
- Tends to lower morale

2nd Choice

2. Vote with your feet



- Not all situations are resolvable
- If everything you say makes it worse, remember, discretion is sometimes a better choice
- Eleanor Roosevelt said, "You're nobody's victim without your permission."

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3rd Choice

3. Change your attitude



- Learn to see them differently, listen to them differently, and feel differently around them
- Change your attitude to set you free from your reaction to their behavior

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4th Choice

4. Change your behavior



- Change the way you deal with people and they will need to learn new ways to interact with you
- Take charge of an unpleasant situation and redirect its result

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Change Your Attitude

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Lens of Understanding

Everybody responds to different situations with different levels of assertiveness.

During times of challenge, difficulty or stress, people tend to move outside their comfort zone and become either more passive or more aggressive than normal.

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Attitude

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Table Work

- Complete Communications Style choices
- Locate communication quadrant
- Separate into groups
- Pose questions to groups

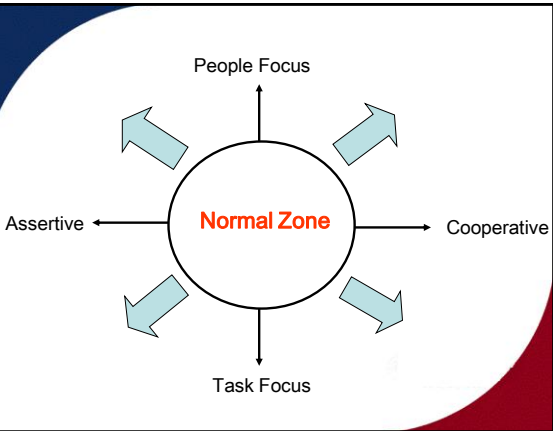
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Patterns

For a better understanding of a person's predictable behavior during times of duress, look for patterns of behavior to determine what people usually focus their attention on in a given situation.

- People vs. Task
- Assertive vs. Cooperative

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Dangerous Assumptions



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Behavior Has a Purpose

- Every behavior has an intent or purpose and that intent is to fulfill.
- People do what they do based on what seems to be most important for any given moment.
- Four “general intents” determine how people will behave in any given situation.



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Four General Intents

1. Get the job done.
2. Get the job done right.
3. Get along with people.
4. Get appreciation from people.



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Styles

Style

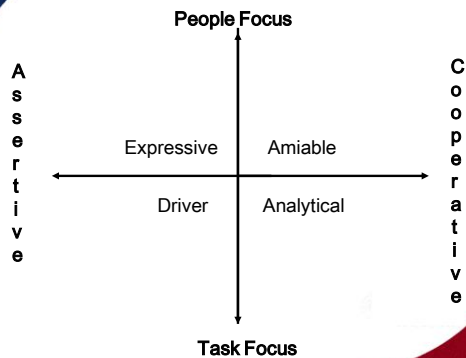
Driver
Analytical
Amiable
Expressive

Intent

Observation

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THE FOUR COMMUNICATION STYLES



Which Style?

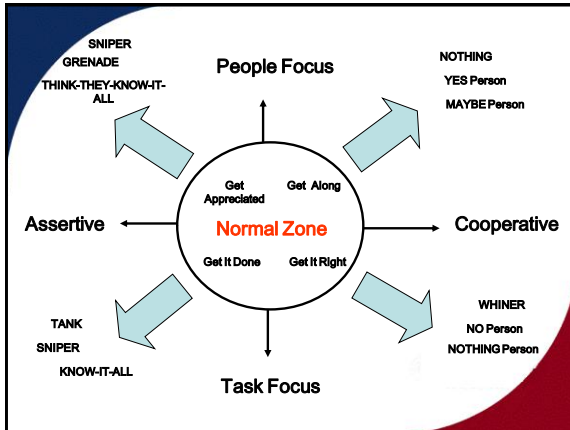
"Just do it. What's next on the agenda?"

"I think I'll double check your figures."

"Come see the award I won today."

"Let me help you with your project."

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Notes

1. All of these intents have a time and place in our lives.
2. One quick indicator of a person's intent is their communication style.
3. When people have shared intent or priorities, conflict is unlikely.
4. As intent changes so does behavior.

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Know Your Teammates

- Not understanding the intent and communication style of team members amplifies the inherent conflicts already complicating board decision-making.
- Not understanding why groups are dysfunctional in part or whole further complicates effective decision-making.

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Cowboy Words of Wisdom



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For More Information

Mike Gilbert	Jim Hardy
Field Director	Field Director
mgilbert@masc.org	jhardy@masc.org
508-277-6011	508-930-4524
Massachusetts Association of School Committees	
800-392-6023	

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