


Dealing with Difficult People - Leadership in the Sandbox

 The Massachusetts Association of School Committees

- **Leadership Services**
- Enhancing the effectiveness of your district through:
 - Consulting
 - Convenient Learning
 - Conferences
 - Continuing Education


masc.org
800-392-6023



 The Massachusetts Association of School Committees

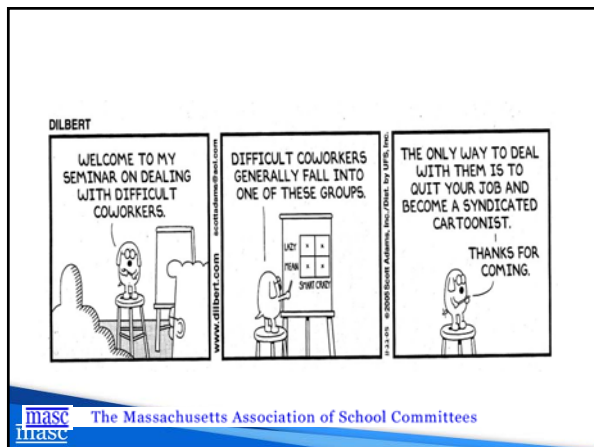
Workshop Outcomes

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

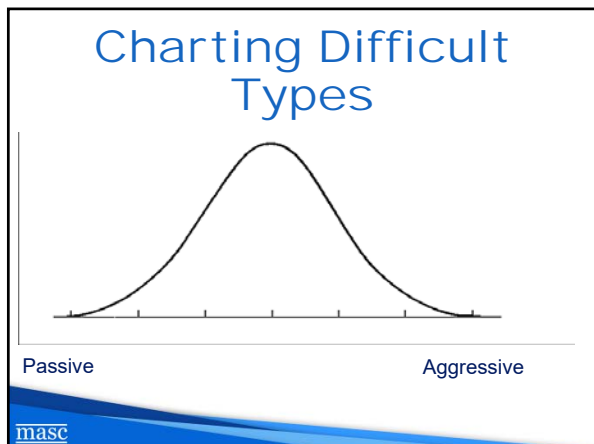
 The Massachusetts Association of School Committees

- Coping With Difficult People
- Dr. Robert Bramson

- Dealing With People You Can't Stand
- Dr. Rick Brinkman & Dr. Rick Kirschner



Difficult Types and Coping Strategies



Sherman Tank

- "You're an idiot, a moron, a complete incompetent."
- **Confrontational, pushy and aggressive behavior.**

A cartoon illustration of a man in a green military-style uniform and cap, sitting on a tank. He is pointing his right hand towards the right. The tank is grey and has a small red flag on top.

masc The Massachusetts Association of School Committees

Coping Strategies

- Stand up for self
- Let Tank get hostility out
- Get into conversation immediately
- Call Tank by name
- Maintain eye contact
- Ask them to sit down

masc The Massachusetts Association of School Committees

Indecisive/Maybe

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

- **Procrastinates waiting for better choice**



Coping Strategies

- Ask about conflict hindering decision
- Listen for clues
- Propose possible solutions
- Support after decision is made
- Keep action steps in your hands
- Watch for anger or withdrawal

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**



Coping Strategies

- Listen to complaints
- Acknowledge what said without comment
- Don't agree or apologize
- Move to problem-solving
- Ask, "How do you want the discussion to end?"

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**



Coping Strategies

- Smoke them out
- Don't let them hide behind group
- Seek other's opinions
- Conduct regular problem solving meetings
- Nip sniping in the bud

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

- Encourage dialogue with open-ended questions
- Wait patiently for response
- Don't fill silence with conversation
- Plan enough time to wait them out
- Set up another meeting if needed

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.**



Coping Strategies

- Allow time to vent
- Break tantrum by stating, "Stop!"
- Take them seriously
- Give private time-out period

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.**



Coping Strategies

- Thoroughly check accuracy of materials
- Listen carefully and paraphrase
- Use questions to raise issues
- Convey appreciation of knowledge
- Prevent conflict
- Don't project Bulldozer attitude

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**



The Massachusetts Association of School Committees

Coping Strategies

- State correct facts or alternative opinions
- Help them bow out gracefully
- Fill conversation gap yourself
- Cope with them in private



The Massachusetts Association of School Committees

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.**



The Massachusetts Association of School Committees

Coping Strategies

- Investigate why they don't take action
- Assure them they're valued
- Ask what interferes with productivity
- Negotiate to prevent conflict
- Listen to their humor for hidden clues

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**



Coping Strategies

- Don't be dragged down
- Make optimistic but realistic statements
- Don't argue
- Be ready to move into action
- Thoroughly discuss before solving
- Don't force decision before ready

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."

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

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

Change Your Attitude

- Understand the difficult person's behavior before it gets out of hand
- Place the difficult person's behavior under a magnifying glass
- See the motive behind it

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.

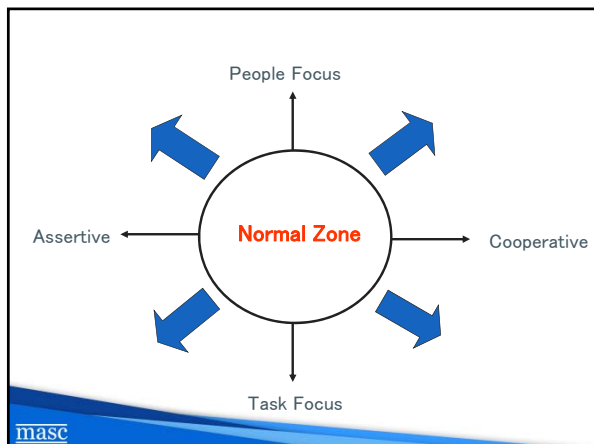
Attitude

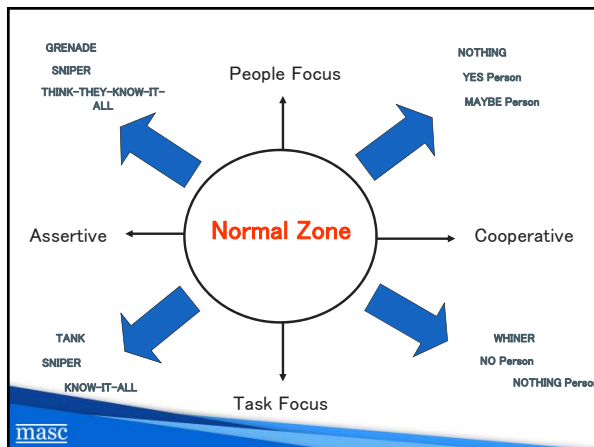
- Life is 10% what happens to me and
- 90% how I react to it!

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





Dangerous Assumptions

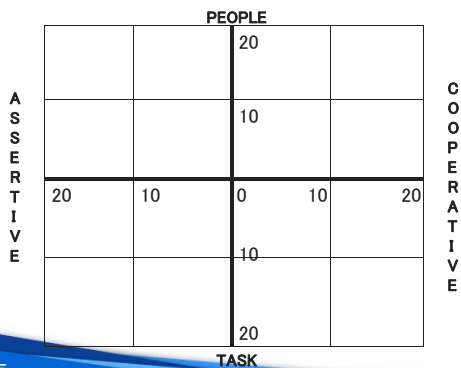
- "They are just like me."
- "They should act the way I expect them to act."
- "I am right. They are wrong."
- "My view is the only valid view."
- "I know what they meant by that . . ."
- "Their intention is obvious."

MASC The Massachusetts Association of School Committees

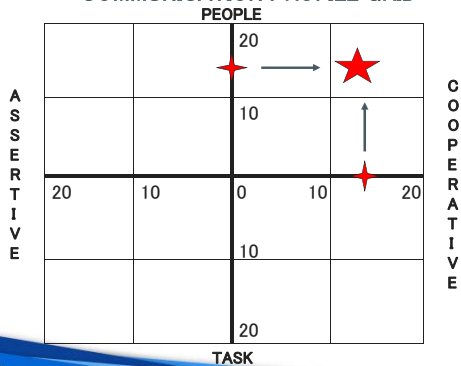
Table Work

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

COMMUNICATION PROFILE GRID



COMMUNICATION PROFILE GRID



Question #1

List 5-8 words that describe your behavior style.

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.

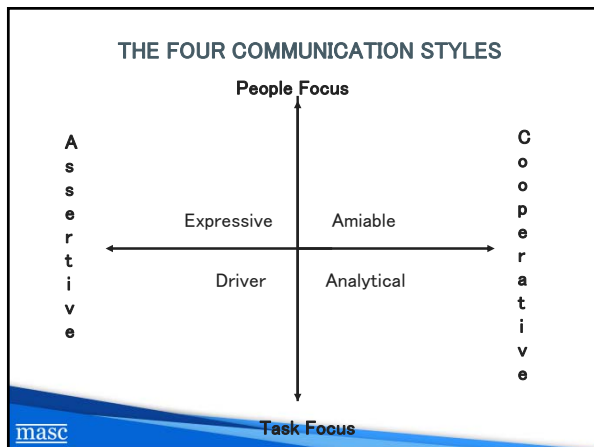
Four General Intents

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

Styles

<u>Style</u>	<u>Intent</u>	<u>Observation</u>
Driver	Get it done	Controlling
Analytical	Get it right	Perfectionist
Amiable	Get along	Seeks Approval
Expressive	Appreciation	Seeks Attention

masc The Massachusetts Association of School Committees



Which Style?

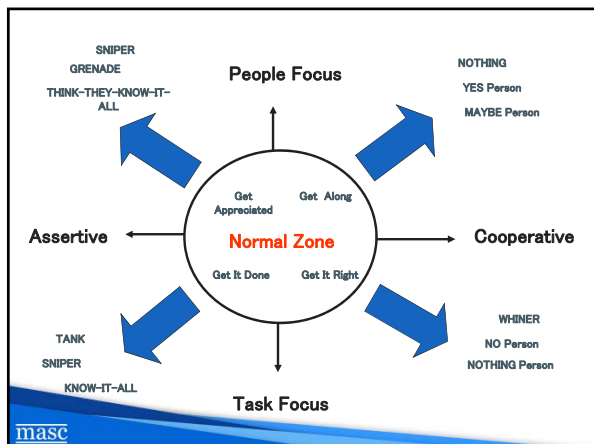
“Just do it. What’s next on the agenda?”
(Task/Aggressive - Driver)

“I think I’ll double check your figures.”
(Task/Passive - Analytical)

“Come see the award I won today.”
(People/Aggressive - Expressive)

“Let me help you with your project.”
(People/Passive - Amiable)

masc The Massachusetts Association of School Committees



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.

masc The Massachusetts Association of School Committees

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.

masc The Massachusetts Association of School Committees

Attitude

by Charles Swindoll

The longer I live, the more I realize the impact of attitude on life. Attitude, to me, is more important than education, than money, than circumstances, than failures, than successes, than what other people think, say or do. It is more important than appearance, giftedness, or skill. It will make or break a company...a church...a home. The remarkable thing is we have a choice every day regarding the attitude we will embrace for that day. We cannot change our past... we cannot change the fact that people will act in a certain way. We cannot change the inevitable. The only thing we can do is play on the one thing we can control, and that is our attitude... I am convinced that life is 10% what happens to me, and 90% how I react to it. And so it is with you...we are in charge of our attitudes.



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



The Massachusetts Association of School Committees
