


## DEALING WITH DIFFICULT EMPLOYEES



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## TODAY'S OBJECTIVES

- ▶ Difficult employees in the workplace
- ▶ Issues and reality
- ▶ Types of difficult personalities
- ▶ Tactical tips




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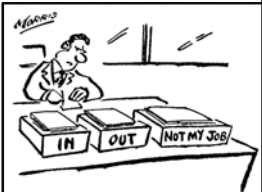
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## DEFINING DIFFICULT

▶ Question: What **difficult employee behaviors** am I experiencing in my organization?

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- ▶
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## DEFINING IMPACT

▶ Question: What is the **impact** of these difficult employee behaviors on my organization?

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## MANAGING DIFFICULT EMPLOYEES

▶ Question: How do my employees' difficult behaviors impact my **ability to manage**?

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## DO I REALLY HAVE A DIFFICULT EMPLOYEE?

- ▶ Self-Assessment
- ▶ Complete the 12 Questions
- ▶ Total the number of Yes and No answers
- ▶ Discuss



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## THE DIFFICULT PERSON DILEMMA



- ▶ **Difficult Employees:**
  - Often perform the technical aspects of their job at an acceptable or even above average level
  - Their unhelpful behaviors ultimately result in far more damage to the organization

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## DEALING WITH DIFFICULT EMPLOYEES

- ▶ In order to create positive employee relations for all
  - We need to effectively manage employees who are creating "difficulty" in the workplace
- ▶ By effectively managing the BEHAVIORS
  - It's not WHO THEY ARE
  - It's WHAT THEY DO
- ▶ You can't change who they are  
you can change what they do



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## DIFFICULT BEHAVIORAL STYLES

- ▶ Can'ts vs. Won'ts
- ▶ Yes
- ▶ No
- ▶ Complainers
- ▶ Aggressors
- ▶ Passive / Victims
- ▶ Untruthful



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## EMPLOYEES WHO CAN'T VS. EMPLOYEES WHO WON'T



**▶ Can'ts are missing how-to**

- Issue: inadequate performance, defensive...
- Solution: coaching, training, hands-on experience...



**▶ Won'ts are missing want-to**

- Issue: unacceptable performance or behavior
- Solution: motivation

Explore what resources are needed for each individual to succeed

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## “YES” BEHAVIOR

**▶ How they behave**

- Agree with anything (commitment, conversation, etc.)
- Cannot be trusted to do what they say they will do
- Overcommit
- Will promise to meet any deadline
- Rarely deliver on promises
- Always sorry and often charming about not delivering

**▶ How to handle them**

- Don't let them over-commit
- Help them plan realistically
- Set false deadlines
- Communicate clear rewards and consequences
- Ask them to restate the personal and important facts
- Get it in writing, even for informal agreements




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## “NO” BEHAVIOR

**▶ How they behave**

- Negative
- Pessimistic
- Quick to point out why something won't work
- Regularly criticize decisions
- Argumentative
- Inflexible
- Resist change
- Destroy morale

**▶ How to handle them**

- Reduce their responsibility
- Be assertive about your opinion
- Don't argue
- Invite them to suggest alternatives
- Anticipate and voice problems before they do; describe worst case scenarios
- Make them responsible to solve problems




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## COMPLAINING BEHAVIOR

<p>▶ <b>How they behave</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➢ Would rather complain than change things</li> <li>➢ Whine and speak in generalizations about problems</li> <li>➢ Chronic complaining without a desire to find a solution</li> <li>➢ Often right, but their negativity and nit-picking turn people off</li> <li>➢ Believe someone else should fix the problem</li> </ul>	<p>▶ <b>How to handle them</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➢ Don't agree with them, but paraphrase what they say</li> <li>➢ Switch to problem resolution mode</li> <li>➢ Listen to their main points</li> <li>➢ Don't agree or apologize</li> <li>➢ Set them straight on what actually happened</li> <li>➢ Take focus off of who's right and wrong</li> <li>➢ Draw the line; determine when it's going to end</li> </ul>
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## AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR

<p>▶ <b>How they behave</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➢ Overtly abusive behavior</li> <li>➢ Tantrums, rage, bullying</li> <li>➢ Non-playful teasing, innuendoes, digs</li> <li>➢ Pushy, abrupt</li> <li>➢ Attack until others move out of the way</li> </ul>	<p>▶ <b>How to handle them</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➢ Listen without returning anger</li> <li>➢ State your own opinion assertively without dismissing theirs</li> <li>➢ Restate the problem</li> <li>➢ Take opposite actions: nicer as they escalate, quieter as they get louder</li> <li>➢ Don't argue; find a point to agree on</li> <li>➢ Give them time to run down</li> <li>➢ Maintain assertive posture and body language</li> </ul>
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## PASSIVE & VICTIM BEHAVIOR

<p>▶ <b>How they behave</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➢ Expression-less</li> <li>➢ Weak handshake</li> <li>➢ Blank stare</li> <li>➢ Never have any opinions or offer any ideas</li> <li>➢ Never let you know where you stand</li> <li>➢ Withdraw from others when frustrated</li> <li>➢ Blame others</li> </ul>	<p>▶ <b>How to handle them</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➢ Ask open-ended questions</li> <li>➢ Wait calmly for a response without filling the silence</li> <li>➢ Be attentive when they speak or participate</li> <li>➢ Allow them to share opinions privately or in writing</li> <li>➢ Assign them tasks, rather than wait for them to volunteer</li> </ul>
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## UNTRUTHFUL BEHAVIOR

<p>▶ <b>How they behave</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➢ Sabotaging</li> <li>➢ Talks negatively about others</li> <li>➢ Says one thing and does another</li> <li>➢ Not trustworthy</li> </ul>	<p>▶ <b>How to handle them</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➢ Be direct with them</li> <li>➢ Use a calm voice</li> <li>➢ Describe the factual behavior that is unacceptable to you and ask that it stops</li> <li>➢ Mirror and repeat back what they say; ask: "Is that right?"</li> <li>➢ If you disagree with what they are saying, say "That has not been my experience."</li> </ul>
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## MANAGEMENT TIPS

- ▶ See for yourself
- ▶ Trust that the other person also wants harmony
- ▶ Don't take sides; remain objective and open to others' ideas
- ▶ Be aware of your own "buttons"
  - The difficult person will push them
- ▶ Talk face to face
- ▶ Keep your temper
- ▶ Give sufficient time for a complete discussion, while being brief as possible



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## MANAGEMENT TIPS

- ▶ Curtail any sort of unacceptable behavior as soon as possible
- ▶ Don't ignore difficult behaviors
- ▶ Communicate assertively
- ▶ Don't let the negative behavior become the team norm
- ▶ Don't condone unacceptable behavior because someone is good at their job
- ▶ Apply your rules to everyone



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## MANAGEMENT TIPS



- ▶ Listen and understand
- ▶ Repeat without agreeing so they know you understand their concerns
- ▶ Be clear about what constitutes unacceptable behavior
- ▶ Let the person know the result of their action
- ▶ Be sure they completely understand the issue before moving onto a solution

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## MORE TIPS

- ▶ Get their input on how to improve the situation
- ▶ Strive for a win-win middle ground situation
- ▶ Create clear SMART goals tied to the expected change in behavior
- ▶ Focus on future behavior



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## IF NOTHING WORKS...

- ▶ Don't let them continue to undermine morale
- ▶ Accept when people are just unreachable and/or unteachable
- ▶ Offer to help them find another job



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**YOUR PERSONAL ACTION STEP**

▶ What can you start doing differently TODAY based on our discussion?

**TAKE ONE SMALL**



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