Dealing with Difficult Behavior

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Road Map

- Types of Difficult Behavior
- Introduction to Passive Aggressive Behavior
- What causes Passive Aggressive Behavior?
- Tips and tricks for dealing with Passive Aggressive Behavior
- Reframing conflict
- Are you an enabler?
- Discussion
Various studies have found that of employees who have faced incivility at work:

- 48 percent intentionally decreased work effort.
- 47 percent intentionally decreased time at work.
- 38 percent intentionally decreased work quality.
- 80 percent lost work time worrying about the incident.
- 63 percent lost work time avoiding the offender.
- 66 percent said their performance declined.
- 78 percent said their commitment to the organization declined.
- 94 percent of leaders had worked with a toxic individual in the last five years.

In some organizations, incivility, toxicity and other problem behaviors are caused by those at the top. About 60 percent of the time the offender has a higher job status than the target does.

*From the Society of Human Resource Management*
Types of Difficult Behaviors

- Passives
- Aggressive/Bullying
- Passive-Aggression
- Manipulative/Narcissism
Communication styles

- AGGRESSIVE - blustering and bullying, insults, reactive and threatening, they snap easily, overbearing domineering, winning is everything to these individuals

- PASSIVE - are not good at expressing their needs or opinions, apologetic, retiring, concerned with pleasing people

- PASSIVE-AGGRESSIVE - passive communicators may be unaware of their statements and the effect they have, mutterers, their words say one thing and expression says another, frequently sarcastic

- ASSERTIVE - direct and clear, constructive and collaborative, nonreactive and respectful, good listeners
“Passive aggressive behavior is a means for us to show our anger in a subversive, seemingly consequence-free way.”

-Andrea Brandt
Has this ever happened to you?
What is passive aggressive behavior?

- Passive Aggressive behavior does not make you a bad person
- A coping mechanism and/or (mal)adaptive response
- Way to express feelings in a way that SEEMS non-hostile
- A survival mechanism
Passive Aggressive Behavior is an adaptive response to a maladaptive situation.
Examples of passive aggressive behavior

- Inaction or stalling
- Acts of revenge
- Speaking negatively behind someone’s back
- Withholding praise or affection
- Never say no; or always say yes
- Use sarcasm heavily
- Negative outlook on life
- Frequently frustrated or irritable
- Chronic feelings of victimhood
Levels of passive aggressiveness

1. Temporary compliance
2. Intentional inefficiency
3. Letting problems escalate
4. Hidden but conscious revenge- sabotage, lying or other deliberate acts
5. Self-deprecation- hurting yourself to get back at others
What causes passive aggressive behavior?

From childhood to the workplace
Influences in childhood

- One parent dominates
- Influences of older siblings, friends & others
- Unrealistic standards from parents and others
- Childhood abuse
- High conflict or conflict avoidant household
- Authoritarian upbringing, through family or societal structure
Other influencers

- **CULTURE**: Studies show that cultures from Chinese and East Asian cultures are more likely to feel mixed emotions during a positive event.

- **SEX**: When women express anger they are viewed negatively compared to when men express anger.

- **RELIGION**: Growing up in an authoritarian or rigid religion can increase passive aggressive behavior.

- **CULTURE/ETHNICITY**: Children who are taught to be submissive to elders and not express anger can develop passive aggressive behavior.
Tips and Tricks

For dealing with Passive aggressive behavior
And a step backward, after making a wrong turn, is a step in the right direction.

Kurt Vonnegut
Reframing Conflict

It’s OK to be angry
"The more we run from conflict, the more it masters us; the more we try to avoid it, the more it controls us; the less we fear conflict, the less it confuses us; the less we deny our differences, the less they divide us."

-David Augsburger
Compassionate Assertiveness

- Passive aggressive behavior is rooted in a feeling of victimhood & selfishness
- Speaking with compassionate assertiveness says: “I believe my thoughts are important, and I also respect your thoughts.”
- You can be assertive and direct, but also speak with empathy and kindness
- Listen, listen, listen!
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<tr>
<th><strong>DO</strong></th>
<th><strong>DON’T</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>• Realize conflict is healthy and natural, don’t be scared</td>
<td>• Argue about the past</td>
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<td>• Take responsibility for your actions</td>
<td>• Raise your voice or swear</td>
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<td>• Express appreciation for the other person</td>
<td>• Tell the other person what to do</td>
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<td>• Be open to feedback</td>
<td>• Respond to provocation; those with passive aggressive behavior will deliberately provoke to justify their own behavior</td>
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<td>• Pay attention to body language</td>
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“When partners begin to respond with passive aggression to the passive aggressive personality the circuit closes in an endless loop where no one says what they mean”

-Andrea Brandt
Don’t get stuck in the loop

“Going on a coffee run, can I get you anything?”

“Now you ask me?”

“I was just trying to be nice”

“What?”

“Nothing. I’m fine. Got TONs of work to do”
Setting Boundaries

Boundaries are important in ALL relationships
What are Boundaries?

- Boundaries can be physical, attached to ego or about self-image.
- Those who demonstrate passive aggressive behavior typically have weak boundaries and don’t respect others boundaries.
- Those with weak boundaries are easily persuaded.
“Boundaries are the invisible lines that draw our self-identity.”

-Andrea Brandt
# Healthy vs. Weak Boundaries

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<th>HEALTHY</th>
<th>WEAK</th>
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<td>Flexible and adaptive to the person or circumstance</td>
<td>Boundaries that are rigid, intolerant, black and white and intended to isolate</td>
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<td>Ask assertively for what they need and/or say no</td>
<td>Fear of conflict and expressing feelings because they don’t want to be abandoned</td>
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<td>Understand their own needs and feelings</td>
<td>Always say yes, or always say no.</td>
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<td>Can separate their own feelings from other people’s feelings</td>
<td>Get taken advantage of or take advantage of others</td>
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<td>Don’t tolerate any abuse</td>
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What you allow is what will continue.

Enabling
Are you stuck in a loop?
Are you an enabler?

DO YOU?

- Bail the person out of tough circumstances
- Make excuses for their behavior
- Keep quiet to “keep the peace”
- Have a hard time saying no
- Deny there is a problem with the behavior
- Apologize for things that aren’t your fault
Traits of enablers

- Can be emotionally needy
- Might have grown up in an environment of conflict
- Sometimes grew up in homes where they had to be the “fixer” or like “little adults”
- Have needs to feel wanted and indispensable
Develop a healthy detachment

- Set limits
- Let others solve their own problems
- Try not to take things personally
- Develop healthy outlets to release anger
- Step away with love and empathy
Dealing with a passive aggressive boss

- This is a very difficult situation, if you can get out: do
  - Over-communicate
  - Always ask for clarification, don’t let them be vague
  - Try to find healthy outlets and safe spaces
  - Document problem behavior, take it to HR if necessary
- "Just keep swimming"
Dealing with a passive aggressive employee

- Communicate in writing as much as possible
- Bring witnesses into difficult conversations if possible
- Don’t tolerate passive aggressive behavior—call it out
- Be direct in your communication
- Set clear goals during performance evaluations
Discussion

Questions?
Share your experiences
8 Keys to Eliminating Passive-Aggressiveness by Andrea Brandt

Living with the Passive-Aggressive Man: Coping with Hidden Aggression from the Boardroom to the Bedroom by Scott Metzler

Bright-sided: How Positive Thinking is Undermining America by Barbara Ehrenreich


The Angry Smile: The Psychology of Passive Aggressive Behavior in Families, Schools and Workplaces by Jody and Nicholas Long and Signe Witson

Society of Human Resource Management