

DEALING WITH DIFFICULT PEOPLE

Unfortunately... impossible people exist.

- ❑ You will encounter them.
- ❑ You can't avoid them.
- ❑ You can't fix them.
- ❑ You can't make them like you.
- ❑ You can't beat them.
- ❑ They may not want your help

Dealing with Difficult People?



...no, this is the **WRONG** attitude for dealing with problem clients...

Your attitude is the key to dealing successfully with difficult people on the job, or off....

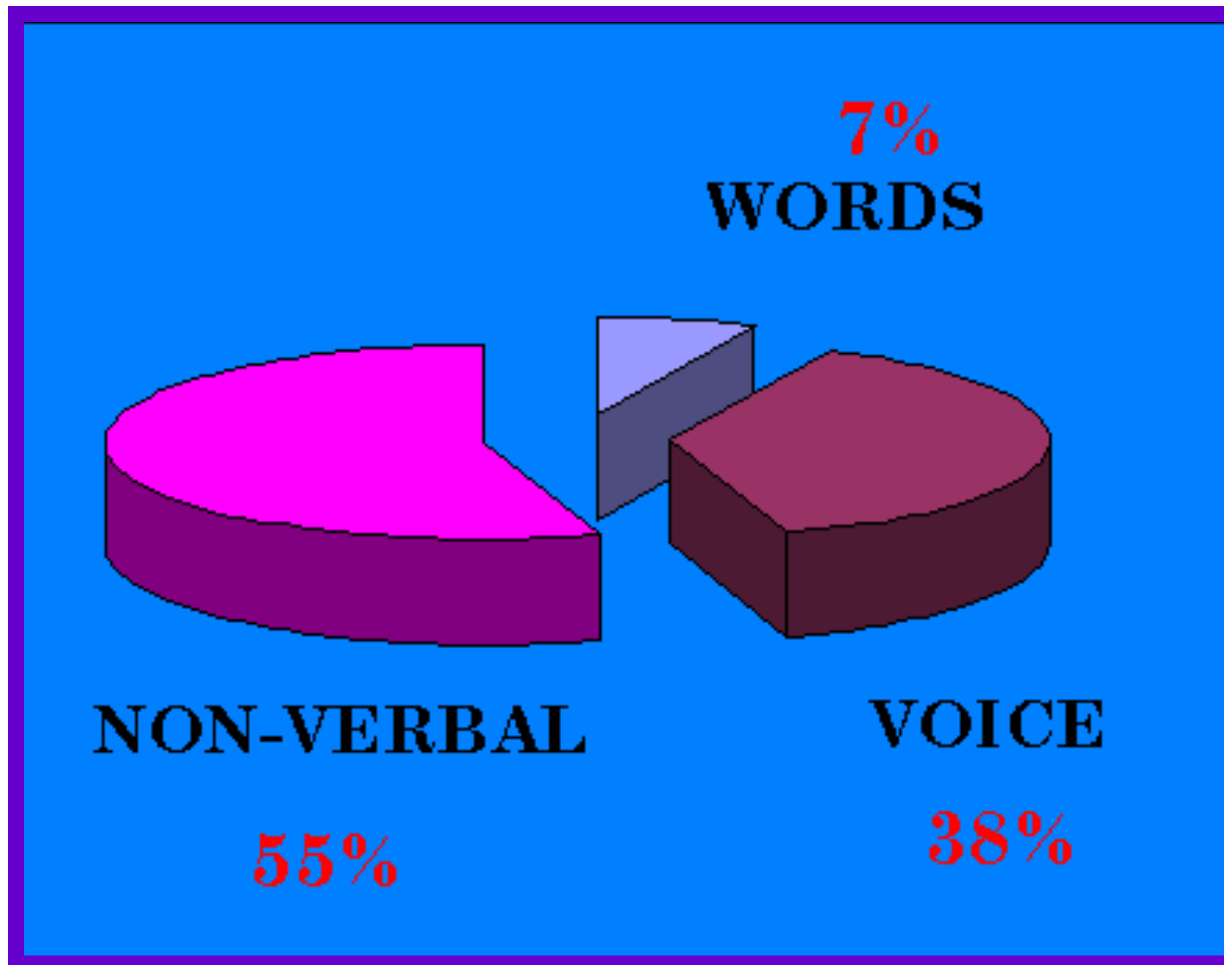


Attitude IS everything!

★ The “can do” attitude is
fundamental ★



How we communicate.....



Three attitude types –

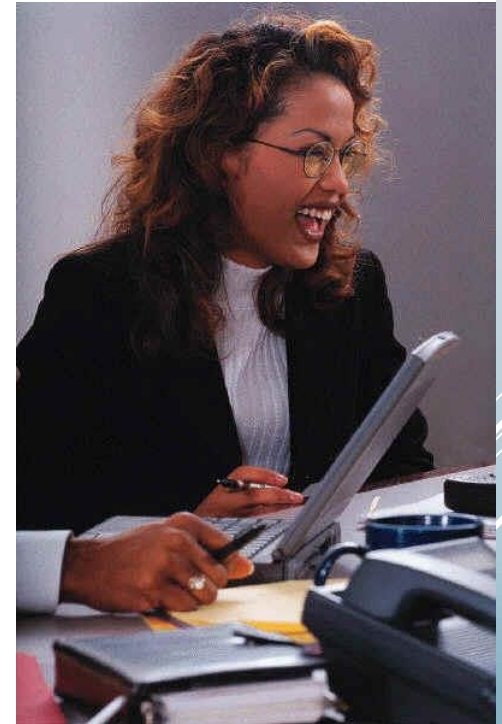
NEGATIVE



NEUTRAL



POSITIVE



How to do an “attitude adjustment”....

- Listen” to yourself
 - words
 - tone of voice
 - body language

- Think good thoughts

- Don’t “second guess” yourself

Difficult Patients

- Prevalence estimated at 15%
- Patients who exhibit the following:
 - Repeated visits without apparent medical benefits
 - Do not seem to want to get well
 - Abrasive personalities, demanding
 - Focus on issues seemingly unrelated to medical care
 - Poor adherence to treatment

Patient Characteristics

- Angry, defensive, frightened, resistant
- Grieving
- Manipulative/Demanding
- Somatizing/“Frequent fliers”

What makes an interaction difficult?



The label “difficult” is subjective

- Interpersonal in nature
- A function of the relationship
- Based upon discomfort with:
 - ▣ What has happened
 - ▣ What might happen

“Difficult”: different for different individuals

- Someone labeled “difficult” by a person may not be seen as quite so difficult by another
- Differences in *expertise and experience* account for differences in perception

Clinicians can have fewer “difficult” relationships by:

- Discovering what factors contribute to the label “difficult”
- Exploring techniques that can lead to more satisfactory relationships
- Experimenting with new skills

What makes an interaction difficult?

Fear – of the unknown, of not knowing how the other person will react, of hurting someone's feelings or of feeling hurt

Conflict – few people enjoy conflict and most go out of their way to avoid it

Surprise – catching someone off guard can make an otherwise smooth interaction difficult

Change – interactions involving having to make a change often make people feel uncomfortable

Why we avoid difficult interactions

We're afraid we'll make the situation worse

We don't want to feel bad, and we don't want others to feel bad

We may hear things about ourselves that we don't want to hear

We, and the other person, may get emotional

We don't know how the interaction will end, and we fear the consequences

Types of Patients

There are FOUR types of PATIENTS...

1. **PRAISERS** (Happy & will tell you so)
2. **PATRONS** (Happy but won't say anything)
3. **TALKERS** (Unhappy and are sure to let you know)
4. **WALKERS** (Unhappy and just leave, never to return)

Think of a difficult situation...

- What made it difficult?
- What was the outcome you were hoping for?
- What actually happened?
- What would have made it go better?

How to minimize difficult interactions

- Know your purpose
- Frame your message
- Use an assertive approach
- Use cooperative language
- Use active listening skills

To deal with a negative person you should...

- Assess your level of involvement
- Be understanding; where they're coming from
- Influence their attitude
- Help resolve the source problems
- Recover from the experience

Negative Attitudes = Difficult People

Among the most difficult - the “Hostile Aggressive” types...



The Tank...



The Sniper...



The Exploder...

The “Sherman Tank”

...they bully and push people around....

- Stand up to them
- But don't get into an argument
- Maintain a civil but undaunted composure
- Keep your cool
- Once you've stood up to them, be ready to be friendly



The “Sniper”

...they are sarcastic and critical....



- Smoke them out
- Polite confrontation in private about the “jokes”
 - “Did you mean it that way?”
 - Challenge them every time in this manner
- KEEP YOUR COOL!

The “Exploder”

...normal one moment, out of control the next....

- After explosion, do nothing but look them in the eye
- Take a break, get some privacy
- Offer a pragmatic plan of action
- **KEEP YOUR COOL!**





Focus and Keep your
cool



The “Complainer”
will complain and
whine about
everything.

- ❑ Listen actively
- ❑ Get them involved in solutions
- ❑ Don't apologize

The “clam” – silent and unresponsive no matter what.

- ❑ After opening conversation, go silent
- ❑ Friendly silent stare
- ❑ Non-confrontational comment on the silent treatment
- ❑ Emphasize how important the work is
- ❑ Schedule another meeting



The “super-agreeable” -- always says yes, and usually let you down.



- Empathize with their difficulties
- Offer to help them get the job done
- Go for “win/win” compromises so they can relax.
- Don’t keep accepting false agreements

“Naysayer” - says no to everything.


- ❑ Come back with a positive but realistic statement
- ❑ Never argue with a negativist
- ❑ Acknowledge what they say
- ❑ Show alternatives
- ❑ Explore worst case scenarios
- ❑ Be ready to act alone



The “Know-it-all” is always right....

- Paraphrase back at them their solution
- Propose alternatives as questions
- Give them a way to save face when they're wrong
- Know your facts
- Be positive (it's an attitude thing)
- Thank them for their help





The “Indecisive”
waits until you or
chance decides for
them.

- ❑ Ask them for help with specific task problems
- ❑ Offer your problem-solving ideas
- ❑ Find out the real reason for indecisiveness, and help
- ❑ Give them your support after decisions are made

Your positive attitude is your best weapon in dealing with difficult people.

- ❑ Be open and honest
- ❑ Keep your smile
- ❑ Stay frosty, don't let anger divert you
- ❑ Calm directness will win out
- ❑ Cultivate patience



Adapted From:



- ▶ Kelley School of Business. X420 Class. (2005) *Dealing with Difficult People*. [PowerPoint slides]. Retrieved and adapted March 20, 2019, from www.indiana.edu/~jobtalk/ppt/DiscussionSessions/DifficultPeople.ppt
- ▶ Pascual, Aileen, MD (2013) *DEALING WITH DIFFICULT PATIENTS* [PowerPoint slides]. Retrieved March 22, 2019, from <https://www.slideshare.net/abpascual/2013-dealing-with-difficult-patients>