

## Characteristics of Difficult People and Responses to Them

<b>1. The Sherman Tank</b>	
<b>Common Characteristics</b>	<b>Responses to Them</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Abrupt, abusive, often arrogant.</li> <li>• Possess and use interpersonal power which generates confusion, flight, or helpless frustration in others.</li> <li>• Cool thinkers and quite merciless.</li> <li>• Expect compliance and efficiency.</li> <li>• Give negative feedback freely but are unable to receive any.</li> <li>• In attack mode a lot of the time.</li> <li>• Often despise non-STs as weak and unimportant.</li> <li>• Often out to prove themselves to themselves.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stand up to them without fighting. They'll usually eventually listen to somebody who knows what they want.</li> <li>• Give them time to run down.</li> <li>• Don't worry too much about being polite when you stand up to them.</li> <li>• Be firm even if feeling the fear.</li> <li>• Call them by name / get their attention.</li> <li>• Try to get them to sit down.</li> <li>• Maintain eye contact.</li> <li>• State your opinions assertively.</li> <li>• Be ready to be friendly once confrontation dealt with.</li> </ul>
<b>2. Snipers</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Less direct but still use ways to put people down.</li> <li>• Often observe social conventions but their effect is just as negative as Shermans.</li> <li>• Will use tactics such as purportedly helpful comments rather than overtly bullying.</li> <li>• This means fewer choices for those on the receiving end.</li> <li>• Bystanders can get irritated and expect you to react.</li> <li>• May have the same inner resentments as Shermans, but don't have the same compensating power to move others into action.</li> <li>• They like to win and expect others to respond.</li> <li>• Victim must decide to stop being a victim and change the nature of the interaction.</li> <li>• Need power without personal danger and are often better at sniping than outright battle.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Surface the attack by questioning / testing your reading of their behaviour and statements – do this with a smile.</li> <li>• Seek group confirmation / denial. This means that they are flushed out into the open and there is opportunity to evaluate their responses. Snipers usually deny attacks.</li> </ul>

<b>3. Exploders</b>	
<b>Common Characteristics</b>	<b>Responses to Them</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Throw tantrums apparently from nowhere.</li> <li>• A friendly discussion with them suddenly turns, as a result of a barely perceived threat or blockage.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Give them time to simmer down.</li> <li>• If no pause, interrupt to make them pause.</li> <li>• If that isn't working, take time out.</li> <li>• Be very clear about your intentions. Make it clear you're able to discuss it but not in the midst of a hissy fit.</li> <li>• Don't panic.</li> <li>• Make sure others don't panic.</li> </ul>
<b>4. Complainers</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exert control by incessant comment and making others feel guilty.</li> <li>• Often self righteous.</li> <li>• Find fault, not solutions.</li> <li>• May be a "triangular" complainer.</li> <li>• "Perfect" and blameless.</li> <li>• They get attention but seldom get action.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listen attentively.</li> <li>• Acknowledge by repeating the gist.</li> <li>• Interrupt if unending – seek summary.</li> <li>• Do not reinforce by agreeing.</li> <li>• Do not apologise, to avoid accusation – defence – reaccusation.</li> <li>• State fact without comments.</li> <li>• Switch to problem solving by asking questions and getting their action.</li> <li>• In a triangular situation, offer to contact the other person there and then.</li> <li>• If nothing works, set the limits and stop the conversation.</li> <li>• Ask how the person would like the conversation to end.</li> </ul>
<b>5. The Clam</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unresponsive even when asked.</li> <li>• Use silence to make people uncomfortable.</li> <li>• Therefore use it to gain some control.</li> </ul> <p>NB: Isolate real claims from panel members / participants who are keeping quiet for other reasons (e.g. inexperience, awe).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use open-ended questions.</li> <li>• Use friendly silent stare (rather than talking for them).</li> <li>• Comment on what's happening, including non-verbal language.</li> <li>• Elaborate if that doesn't work.</li> <li>• Be attentive if the clam opens.</li> <li>• If they don't say you'll be back to it later.</li> <li>• Set limits.</li> <li>• If none of this works, state that you consider the silence an assent.</li> </ul>

<b>6. Superagreeables</b>	
<b>Common Characteristics</b>	<b>Response to Them</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They're fun and they promise what people want.</li> <li>• They want to be liked and make others feel approved of.</li> <li>• Can make unrealistic commitments.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make honesty non-threatening and they might use it.</li> <li>• Don't accept unrealistic commitments.</li> <li>• If you don't confront the problem, they'll keep letting you / others down.</li> <li>• Keep the confrontation 'friendly'.</li> </ul>
<b>7. Wet Blankets</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "It won't work", "we tried that before", "there's nothing that can be done" – knocking plans, not finding solutions.</li> <li>• No one can be entrusted with a task and no one cares.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Don't get drawn in and don't let others.</li> <li>• Be optimistic.</li> <li>• Change tack but don't try to argue – you won't convince a negativist.</li> <li>• Rushing in with solutions will delight them with more opportunities for attack.</li> <li>• Use catastrophizing – "what's the worst that can happen?"</li> <li>• Use their "black hat" constructively at times.</li> </ul>
<b>8. Bulldozer Know Alls</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Productive, competent, radiate power and self-sufficiency.</li> <li>• Make others feel inferior.</li> <li>• Right with monotonous regularity.</li> <li>• Make it difficult for others to be creative, or even efficient.</li> <li>• They do not listen.</li> <li>• Authoritarian and impose their own ideas on people.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Study the subject matter.</li> <li>• Listen and acknowledge their ability.</li> <li>• Ask questions, rather than challenging (they will usually know what they're talking about).</li> <li>• Avoid dogmatic counter argument.</li> <li>• Give them a few things they can just remain superior on.</li> </ul>
<b>9. Balloon Know Alls</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unlike bulldozers, these are the phony know alls.</li> <li>• They kid themselves and others into belief of competence.</li> <li>• They often get into positions of power and you may be at a loss as to how they got there!</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do challenge, but present facts rather than just arguing.</li> <li>• Other panel members may take this person on as a "pet" task.</li> </ul>