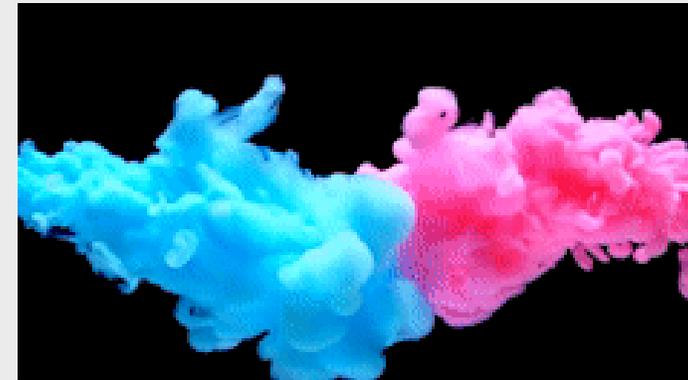


## Managing Difficult People



Dr. Thomas F. O'Brien, Ph.D., Ed.D.

## Five Marks of a Catholic School

### Mission Statement

*Children entrusted to Catholic schools are persons created in the image and likeness of God with an eternal destiny. Each child possesses an intellect and free will. Each possesses unique talents and abilities.*

1. Inspired by a supernatural vision.

*We educate for eternal life.*



2. Founded on Christian anthropology.

*We act, think, and come to knowledge through our human experiences .*



3. Animated by Community.

*A community of faith – a family – a team.*



4. Infused with a Catholic view of life.

*A spirit of Catholicism – a love of wisdom – a passion for truth.*



5. Sustained by Gospel witness.

*Administrators and teachers who practice the faith and believe deeply in the mission of the Church.*





“Seek first to understand, before you seek to be understood.”

Stephen Covey – 7 Habits of Highly Effective People

“Lord, help me not so much to seek to be understood as to understand.”

Saint Francis of Assisi – Italian Catholic Friar, Deacon, Mystic and Preacher

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ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI



“Managing a difficult person means first managing oneself.”

Carol Tavis – Social Psychologist - beliefs and practices that guide people’s lives



## What do we know about Parents Today



- Less respectful of authority
- Better educated
- Distrustful with institutions
- Are a better organized group
- Are often disengaged from full involvement with family and school
- More stressed so they are feeling guilty
- Fearful their child(ren) won't measure-up



## WHAT ARE SOME THINGS THAT MAKE PEOPLE ANGRY AND DIFFICULT?



- Lack of communication

***Results in misunderstanding, unnecessary conflict and the “Grapevine Effect.”***

- Closing ranks

***Members stay united in order to defend themselves.***

- Stonewalling

***A refusal to communicate or cooperate.***

- Overreacting

***Responding to something with too strong an emotion or reaction.***

- Assumptions and stereotypes

***Forming a fixed or untrue (or partly untrue) idea about something that is unfair.***

- Defensiveness

***Defending or protecting oneself from attack.***

- Breaking promises

***Not doing what one said they were definitely going to do.***

- Intimidation and blame

***I did nothing wrong. It's you and you deserve it.***



## WHAT ARE SOME THINGS THAT MAKE PEOPLE ANGRY AND DIFFICULT? Continued

- Condescension

***An attitude or behavior that says, "I know more than you."***

- Rudeness

***An attitude or behavior of not respecting the other person.***

- Dishonesty

***Intentionally deceptive and/or misleading through lies or misinformation.***

- Using educational jargon

***Terminology that uses buzzwords or acronyms to describe something.***

- Failure to admit mistakes

***A persistent and rigid refusal to admit wrong.***

- Unable or unwilling to apologize

***A conscious refusal to accept responsibility for one's own mistake.***

- Seeking someone's advice and not using it

***Accepting a different perspective and ignoring it.***

- Acting in an unprofessional manner

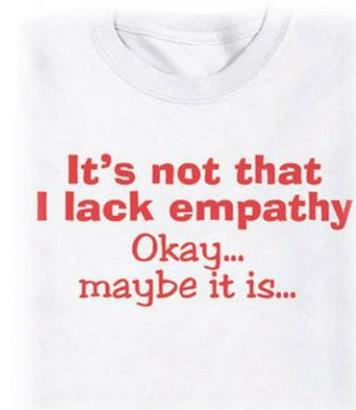
***Violating the basic rules or acting justly and fairly.***



## THINGS WE DO THAT CAUSE A PERSON TO BECOME DIFFICULT



- Interrupting.
- Changing the subject.
- Focusing on things that can't change.
- Gripping about your problems.
- Engaging in silent combat.
- Rehearsing your answer while the person is talking.
- Advising without being asked.
- Trying to persuade a person that you are right; they are wrong.
- Trying to be so neutral that you lack empathy.
- Talking compulsively and over explaining.
- Coming across as a know-it-all professional.
- Getting backed into a corner by a person who intimidates you.
- Being intent on avoiding conflict you give a superficial solution.





You will encounter angry and difficult people in your work.  
But they should not leave you in the same way.

- Will they always get what they want? **NO**
- Will you always agree with them? **NO**
- But should you listen to everything they say? **YES**
- Should you engage in meaningful problem solving? **YES**



## Understanding and Dealing with Difficult Personality Types

### I. Dictators

*People who feed on power and are driven to control.*



### II. Know-it-Alls

*People who think they know everything want everyone else to believe the same.*

### III. Negativists

*People who tend to approach every project or suggestion with an objection.*



### IV. Cry Babies

*People who gripe incessantly but never take action to remedy the situations they complain about.*



### V. Con Artists

*People who are phony, manipulative types who are masters at deception.*



VI. Always Agreeable

*People who are personable, funny, and outgoing but don't make good on their promises.*



VII. Bullies

*People who intimidate others by making sarcastic remarks.*



VIII. Fence Straddle's

*People who are wishy-washy and stall decisions until someone else makes them or the situation goes away.*

IX. Silent Sam's

*People who are silent and unresponsive types.*



## FEARS THAT KEEP US FROM CONFRONTING UNREASONABLE BEHAVIOR

1. Fear of Injury



2. Fear of Failure



3. Fear of Hurting Another's feelings



4. Fear of Rejection



5. Fear of Insecurity



## UPSET PEOPLE CAN:

- take temper tantrums
- be verbally assault
- Use threats



### Keep this in mind

*People who are more experienced and polite may not be less angry or upset. It is that they manage their feelings in more appropriate ways.*

## WHY DO PEOPLE REACT?

Two important factors that cause a reaction:

1. Any *problem or potential threat to someone's integrity* will automatically bring out the worst in them.
2. Most people have *personal and secret sensitivities* that cause them to feel threatened, fearful, or uncomfortable.

People who have experienced failure, rejection, or prejudice will arrive with one set of feelings then people accustomed to solving problems, having answers, taking charge, and getting their own way will arrive with different expectations.

## REACTING TO DIFFICULT TYPES

**Aggressor** is one who is intimidating, hostile and threatening. What to do?

*Listen attentively to everything the person has to say. Avoid arguments, be formal, and use the person's name.*

*Be concise and clear with your feedback.*

**Underminer** - is one who takes pride in criticism, sarcasm and deceitfulness. What to do?

*Focus on the issues. Do not acknowledge the sarcasm or criticism. Do not react.*

**Unresponsive** – is one who is difficult to talk to because s/he never reveals their thoughts. What to do?

*Ask open- ended questions and learn to be silent --- wait for the person to say something. Be patient and friendly.*

**Egotist** - is one who knows it all, and who feels, and acts superior. What to do?

*Know the facts. Agree, when possible, ask questions and listen. Disagree only when you know you're right.*

## THINGS YOU CAN REMEMBER TO DO

- Never talk about people disparagingly.
- Never make promises you can't keep.
- Seek to do more than expected.
- When wrong - apologize.
- Confront with care and respect.
- Tell the truth.
- Say what you mean - mean what you say.
- Compliment whenever you can.
- Be on time.
- Be thorough and conscientious.
- Attack the problem, never the person.

## STEPS TO DIFFUSE ANGRY PEOPLE

Do not act irritated, perplexed, or defensive.

*Instead, thank the person for bringing their concern to your attention.*

Apologize for the problem or the cause of their concern.

*Never do it first because it is thought to be patronizing.*

Take steps to calm the person.

*Tell the parent that you will listen and deal with their concern and help anyone who needs assistance.*

Gather Information. Remember: How you ask is important.

*Never say "I'll need information if you want me to help you." It places the solution of the problem on them.*

*Ask "If we do (a b c) would this help?"*

Correct the situation as quickly as possible.

*The longer it takes you to act the more irritable a person gets.*

Never end without closure.

*Ask: "Do you feel your concern has been addressed?"*

