

# “Challenging” Personnel WHAT TO DO??

APPA Institute



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## Challenging....Difficult...Problem People

- Who are they?
- What makes them difficult?
- What can we do about them?
- Why do we need to deal with them?

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## “Dealing with People You Can’t Stand How to bring out the best in People at Their Worst”

*By Dr. Rick Brinkman  
and  
Dr. Rick Kirschner*

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**The Choices:**

- You can stay and do nothing
- You can vote with your feet
- You can change your attitude about your difficult person

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**Why are “they” difficult??**  
Goes back to why do people do what they do.....

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**Four Basic Intents of People**

- Get the task done
- Get the task right
- Get along with people
- Get appreciation from people

Behaviors are driven by intentions.....

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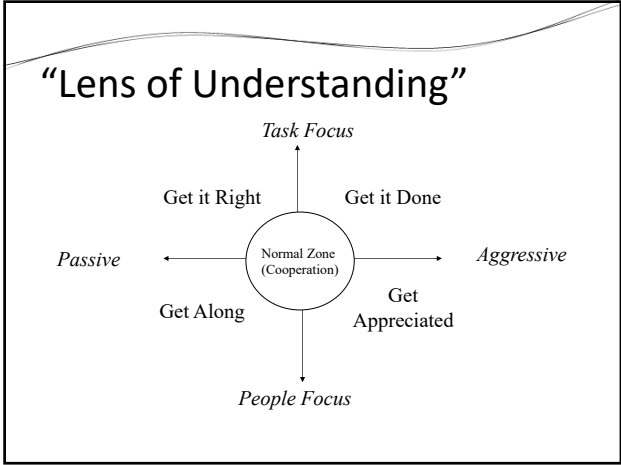
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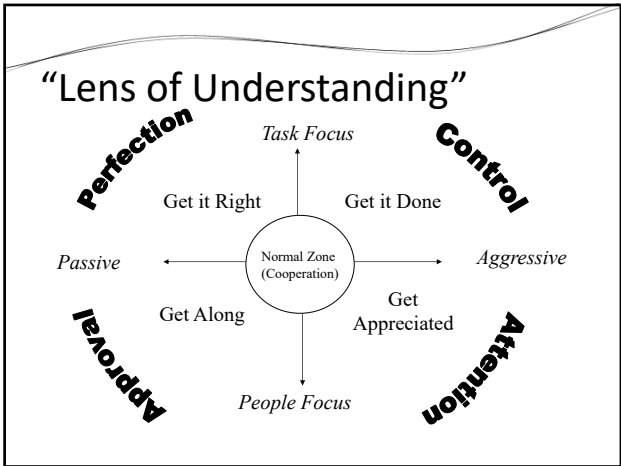
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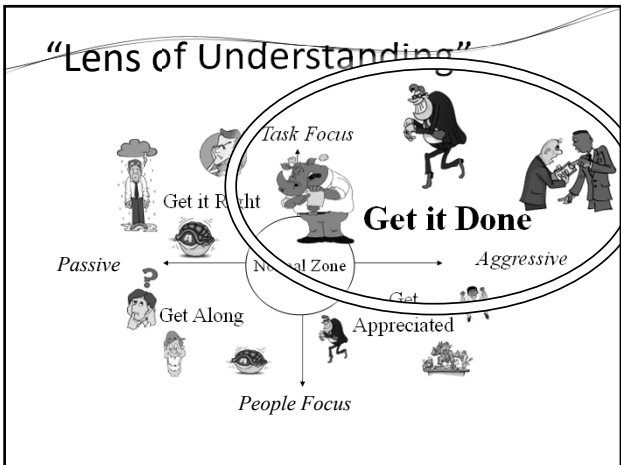
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**“Get it Done”**  
 Task Focus + Aggressive = Controlling



The Tank

The Know-it-all

The Sniper

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**The Tank**

- Aggressive
- Focused on end result
- Direct approach
- You are targeted as part of the problem
- Nothing personal
- Pointed, angry
- Pushy



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**The Know-it-all**

- Knowledgeable and competent
- Can be controlling
- Low tolerance for correction and contradiction
- Can't be wrong
- Can dominate or manipulate



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## The Sniper

- Tries to make you look foolish
- Can use confusion as a weapon
- Some snipe to get attention, some carry a grudge
- Biting sarcasm, rude comments, non-verbals
- Sometimes trying to undermine efforts of others



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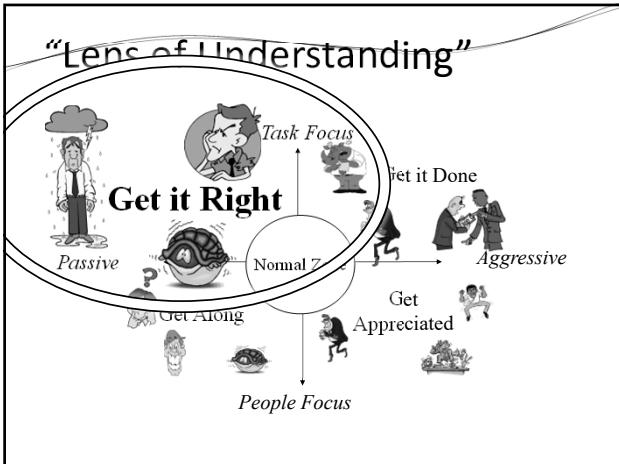
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## "Get it Right"


Task Focus + Passive = Perfectionist



The Whiner



The No person



The Nothing person

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## The Whiner

- Wallowing in woe
- Related to the No person
- Get it right
- Can't see what could
- Feeling of futility



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16

## The No Person

- Get it right, no mistakes
- Perfection standard
- Feeling despair, all negatives, verbal and non verbal
- Not intentional
- Feeling of futility
- Most destructive to team motivation



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## The Nothing Person

- No feedback, verbal or nonverbal
- Get along and get it right people
- Can sometime boil over



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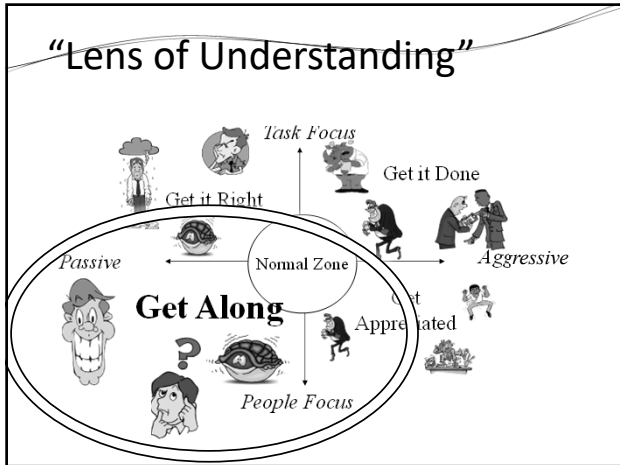
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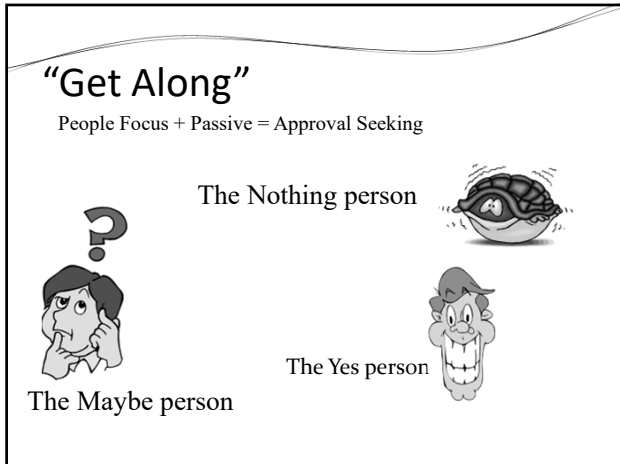
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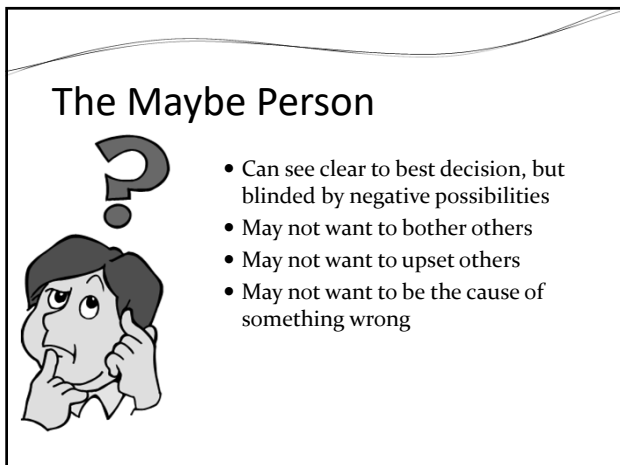
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## The Nothing Person

- No feedback, verbal or nonverbal
- Get along and get it right people
- Can sometime boil over



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22

## The Yes Person

- Working under intention to get along
- Limited follow-through
- Over-commit in order to please
- Feels bad when it doesn't work out



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## "Lens of Understanding"



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# “Get Appreciated”

People Focus + Aggressive = Attention Grabbing




The Friendly Sniper



The Grenade

The Think-they-know-it-all Person



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25

# The (Friendly) Sniper

- Tries to make you look foolish
- Can use confusion as a weapon
- Some snipe to get attention, some carry a grudge
- Biting sarcasm, rude comments, non-verbals
- Sometimes trying to undermine efforts of others




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# The Grenade

- Demands attention – trying to get appreciation
- Holds and then BLOWS, losing emotional control
- Fighting feelings of insignificance
- Explosions can be years or hours apart




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27

## The Think-They-Know-it-all

- Trying to get appreciation and attention
- Addicted to exaggeration
- Know enough about topics to be conversational
- Strong people focus
- Caught in a vicious scheme to grab attention



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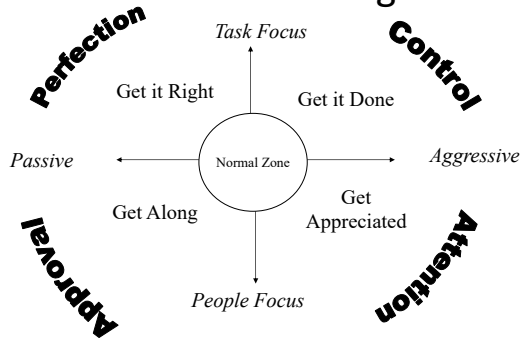
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## “Lens of Understanding”



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Essential

Communication Skills

Being Aware

Blending

Speaking and Listening

*Communication*

30

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**Being Aware**  
Be deliberate about being self-aware  
“What am I bringing to this situation?”  
“Emotions? Mood?”  
“Situation history?”

Be deliberate about being tuned into the other person.  
“What are possible explanations  
to this person’s behavior?”  
“Is this person’s tone and attitude really about me?”

***Communication***

31

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**Blending**  
Differences Create Conflict

*Goal is manageable conflict*

Ways to blend  
facial expressions and degree of animation  
voice volume and speed  
non-verbal expressions and other body language  
words or language style

***Communication***

32

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**More on Blending**  
Get it Done  
Be brief and to the point  
Get it Right  
Pay great attention to the details in your communication  
Get along  
Incorporate friendly chit-chat and be considerate  
Get Appreciation  
Recognize their contributions with appreciation

Acknowledge their priority and  
Identify their positive intent

***Communication***

33

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**Speak To Be Understood**

- Monitor your tone of voice
- State your positive intent
- Tactfully interrupt interruptions
- Tell your truth
- Be ready to listen
- Verbally accept criticism

*Communication*

34

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**Listen to Understand**

- Blend both verbally and non-verbally
- Backtrack by using their words
- Clarify meaning and intent
- Summarize what you hear
- Confirm to find out if you have it right

Assume the best and  
Give the benefit of the doubt

*Communication*

35

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**Who me???**

Could there be something wrong with  
our perspective  
that we bring to the  
“lens of understanding?”

Naah.....

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Could mean disaster when dealing with your "difficult" people.....

Over reactions in your thinking

- Catastrophizing and awfulizing
- Absolutist and shoulding

Under reactions in your thinking

- Rationalizing
- Feelings of anxiousness, anger, defensiveness, burned out or guilt

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**Back to The Choices:**

- You can stay and do nothing
- You can vote with your feet
- You can change your attitude about your difficult person
- You can change your behavior

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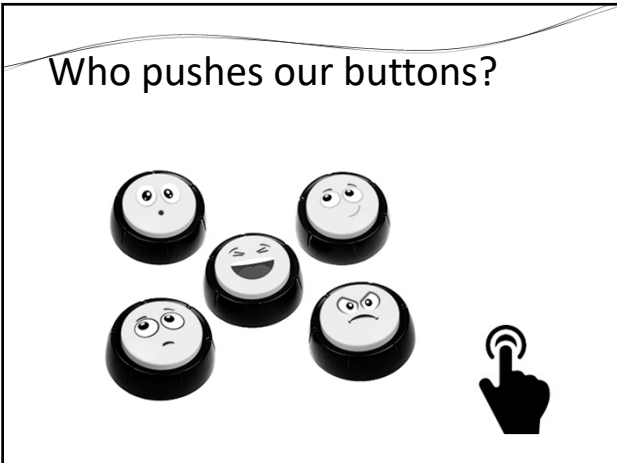
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**How to change your attitude**

- Change your reactions
- Change your mood
- Changing your perspective
- Changing the way you “talk to yourself”

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**Changing your perspective**

Am I using assessment or assertions?  
*Fact or Opinion?*

How am I feeling...and therefore acting?  
Are my feelings appropriate?

What am I thinking to make myself upset?  
How can I challenge my thinking?  
What realistic preferences can I substitute?

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**Back to The Choices:**

- You can stay and do nothing
- You can vote with your feet
- You can change your attitude about your difficult person
- You can change your behavior

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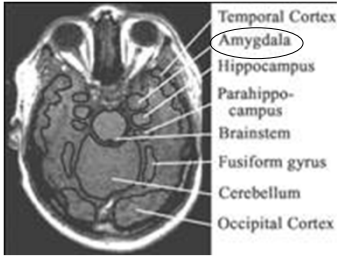
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Do you know Amy G. Data?  
She remembers you.....



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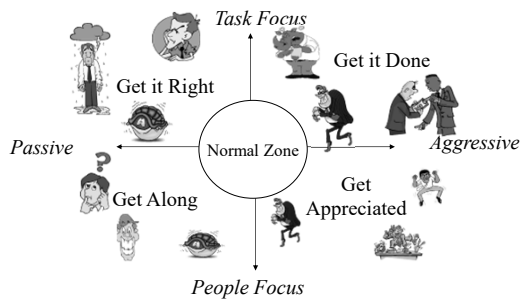
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## “Lens of Understanding”



44

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## The Tank

- Aggressive
- Focused on end result
- Direct approach
- You are targeted as part of the problem
- Nothing personal
- Pointed, angry
- Pushy



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## The Tank

### The Strategy

- Hold your ground
- Interrupt the attack
- Quickly backtrack their main point
- Summarize with ownership
- Being straightforward, but don't shut them out



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## The Tank

ADJUST YOUR ATTITUDE

- Don't be tempted to counterattack
- Don't attempt to defend or explain
- Don't shut down and become a Nothing person
- Find courage and demand respect

47

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## The Sniper

- Tries to make you look foolish
- Can use confusion as a weapon
- Some snipe to get attention, some carry a grudge
- Biting sarcasm, rude comments, non-verbals
- Sometimes trying to undermine efforts of others



48

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## The Sniper The Strategy



- Stop, look, backtrack
- Ask what they mean? What does that have to do with our project?
- Might need a private meeting
- Let them know you would prefer honesty

49

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## The Sniper



ADJUST YOUR ATTITUDE

Watch your emotions – be cool/calm/collected

Instead of reacting – focus on the sniper with amusing curiosity

Deal directly and assertively

Don't act out of revenge

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## The Know-it-all

- Knowledgeable and competent
- Can be controlling
- Low tolerance for correction and contradiction
- Can't be wrong
- Can dominate or manipulate



51

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## The Know-it-all

### The Strategy

- Be prepared
- Backtrack respectfully
- Blend with doubts and desires
- Present your views indirectly



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## The Know-it-all

ADJUST YOUR ATTITUDE

Resist temptation to become a Know-it-all

Be flexible and patient

Try to open their minds to new information or ideas



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## The Think-They-Know-it-all

- Trying to get appreciation and attention
- Addicted to exaggeration
- Know enough about topics to be conversational
- Strong people focus
- Caught in a vicious scheme to grab attention



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## The Think-They-Know-it-all The Strategy



- Give them a little attention
- Clarify for specifics
- Tell it like it is
- Give them a break

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## The Think-they-know-it-all

### ADJUST YOUR ATTITUDE

Don't challenge or confront aggressively

Don't be tempted to stretch the truth in another direction

Use compassion and patience

Use restraint and consider long term affects



56

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## The Grenade

- Demands attention – trying to get appreciation
- Holds and then BLOWS, losing emotional control
- Fighting feelings of insignificance
- Explosions can be years or hours apart



57

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## The Grenade

### The Strategy

- Get their attention
- Show concern for their problem
- Reduce intensity
- Might need to cool down
- Try to find the grenade “pin” so you don’t pull it



58

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## The Grenade

ADJUST YOUR ATTITUDE

Wrong: Most people either blow up at the Grenade or retreat and hate from a distance

Remember they are humiliated by their behavior

Take control of the situation

59

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## The Yes Person

- Working under intention to get along
- Limited follow-through
- Over-commit in order to please
- Feels bad when it doesn’t work out



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## The Yes Person

### The Strategy

- Make it safe to be honest
- Talk honestly
- Help them learn to plan
- Ensure commitment
- Strengthen the relationship



61

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## The Yes Person

ADJUST YOUR ATTITUDE



Help them develop their task  
and organization skills  
Lots of patience

Get commitments you can count on



62

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## The Maybe Person



- Can see clear to best decision, but blinded by negative possibilities
- May not want to bother others
- May not want to upset others
- May not want to be the cause of something wrong

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## The Maybe Person

### The Strategy

- Establish a comfort zone
- Try to find where the uncertainty comes from
- Use a decision-making system
- Reassure, then try to ensure follow through



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## The Maybe Person

ADJUST YOUR ATTITUDE

Irritation is ineffective  
Use warmth and sensitivity  
Lots of patience



Help them learn to think decisively



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## The Nothing Person

- No feedback, verbal or nonverbal
- Get along and get it right people
- Can sometime boil over



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## The Nothing Person

### The Strategy

- Plan enough time
- Ask open-ended questions expectantly
- Lighten it up, use humor
- Guess what the problem is....
- Show the future – what can happen with “nothing”



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## The Nothing Person



ADJUST YOUR ATTITUDE  
 Hard as it is, need to slow down  
 Be careful of aggressive behavior  
 Don't lose your temper

Persuade the Nothing Person to talk



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## The No Person

- Get it right, no mistakes
- Perfection standard
- Feeling despair, all negatives, verbal and non verbal
- Not intentional
- Feeling of futility
- Most destructive to team motivation



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## The No Person The Strategy

- Go with the flow – allow them to be negative, don't try to talk them out of it
- Use them as a resource
- Give them time and ask them for options
- Go for the polarity response "You can't do that"



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## The No Person

### ADJUST YOUR ATTITUDE

Compassion instead of contempt

Remember it doesn't have anything to do with you

In the long-term, does their negativity matter?

Try to be understanding



Move from fault finding toward problem solving



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## The Whiner

- Wallowing in woe
- Related to the No person
- Get it right
- Can't see what could
- Feeling of futility



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## The Whiner The Strategy



- Listen for the main points
- Interrupt and get specific
- Shift the focus to solutions
- Show them the future
- Draw the line

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## The Whiner

### ADJUST YOUR ATTITUDE

- Don't agree with them
- Don't disagree with them
- Don't try to solve their problems
- Don't ask them why they are complaining to you

PATIENCE COMPASSION COMMITMENT  
Form a problem-solving alliance



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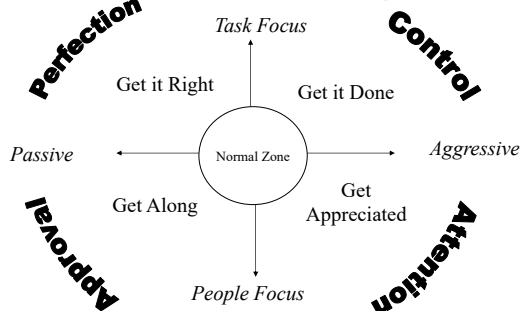
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## "Lens of Understanding"



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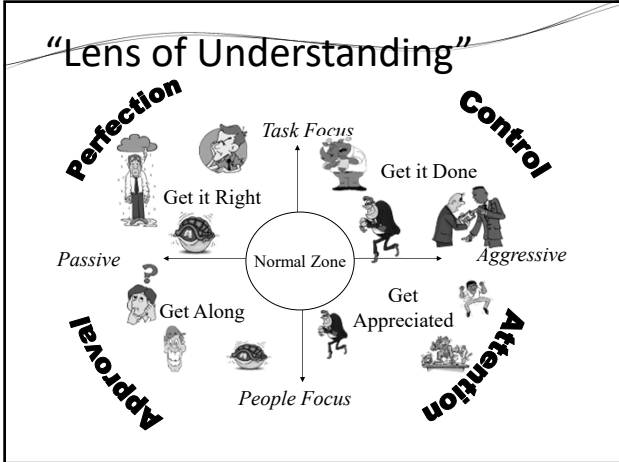
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## GOOD LUCK!!

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APPA Institute 

77

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## Sources

“Dealing with people you can’t stand”  
By Rick Brinkman and Rick Kirschner

“How to keep people from pushing your buttons”  
By Albert Ellis and Arthur Lange

“Since Strangling Isn’t An Option....”  
By Sandra A. Crowe

[www.despair.com](http://www.despair.com)

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