BUILDING POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS AT WORK
Debra Barker

Debra Barker is a premiere keynote speaker who holds a bachelor’s degree in psychology with a minor in crisis counseling and a master’s degree in business administration with a minor in accounting.

She started her career as a life skills counselor and has maintained those licenses since the early 1990's. She is a solution focused financial counselor/Coach as well as an adult educator. Additionally, Debra holds certifications as a personal fitness trainer and sports nutritionist and she works with clients on both emotional and physical fitness in all aspects of their professional and personal life goals.

Debra has been a keynote speaker for more than 20 years and has taught over 10,000 hours of solution focused developmental programs in psychology as well as finance.
LEARNING OBJECTIVES

• Discuss different personality types in the workplace

• Understand how to build relationships by recognizing differences as strengths

• Identify your own attitudes and perceptions of those who are different from you

• Discuss how to approach workplace differences constructively

• Understand the benefits of a diverse work group
DEFINING DIFFERENCES

Considering differences based on:
- Age
- Gender
- Race
- Ethnicity
- Culture
- Disability
- Education
- Values
- Business roles
- Attitudes
- Behaviors
- Personality types
10 CHALLENGING PERSONALITY TYPES

1. The Staller
2. The Sniper
3. The Complainer/Whiner
4. The Tank/Bulldozer
5. The Volcano/Exploder
6. The Yes Man/Woman
7. The Competitor
8. The Pessimist
9. The Clam
10. The Know-It-All

Adapted from: Brinkman and Kirschner (2012) and Tucker-Ladd (n.d.)
PERSONALITY: THE STALLER

CHARACTERISTICS

• They can’t make a decision
• They second guess
• They are afraid to be wrong or to be held accountable
• They put off people and things
• They wait…and…wait…
PERSONALITY: THE STALLER

HOW TO BUILD A RELATIONSHIP

• Establish a ‘comfort zone’

• Clarify options

• Assist in problem solving

• Highlight the benefits of deciding
PERSONALITY: THE SNIPER

CHARACTERISTICS

• They criticize with sarcasm and humor

• They might make a statement and then rescind it
PERSONALITY: THE SNIPER

HOW TO BUILD A RELATIONSHIP

• Manage your emotions – keep your cool
• Address useful comments or concerns
• Ask them if they really mean what they are saying
• Bring their intentions to the forefront
• Be assertive – hold your ground
PERSONALITY: THE COMPLAINER/WHINER

CHARACTERISTICS

• They whine, “Nothing is right.”

• They may feel powerless

• They see things as too much or not enough
PERSONALITY: THE COMPLAINER/WHINER

HOW TO BUILD A RELATIONSHIP

• Listen actively and paraphrase their statements

• Do not agree or disagree

• If you are the manager, ask for complaints in writing

• Set time limits for complaints and try to illicit positives
PERSONALITY: THE TANK/BULLDOZER

CHARACTERISTICS

• They can be abusive and intimidating
• Aggressive communication style
• They have a tendency to dominate a situation
PERSONALITY: THE TANK/BULLDOZER

HOW TO BUILD A RELATIONSHIP

• Stand your ground and be assertive
• Avoid becoming defensive
• Stay calm
PERSONALITY: THE VOLCANO/EXPLODER

CHARACTERISTICS

• They can be composed one minute, and then angry the next

• They may become agitated under pressure
PERSONALITY: THE VOLCANO/EXPLODER

HOW TO BUILD A RELATIONSHIP

• Keep your cool and stay objective

• Let them know that you understand their feelings but that their actions are inappropriate in the workplace

• Offer resources for assistance
PERSONALITY: THE YES MAN/WOMAN

CHARACTERISTICS

• They are super nice
• They always say “yes” and may bite off more than they can chew
• They want to be well-liked
• They need recognition
• Tendency to get burned out
PERSONALITY: THE YES MAN/WOMAN

HOW TO BUILD A RELATIONSHIP

• Help them prioritize

• Help them problem solve

• Help them to not take on more than they can really handle

• Give them support to say “no” or manage responsibilities appropriately
PERSONALITY: THE COMPETITOR

CHARACTERISTICS

• They are overachievers
• They can stretch themselves to the breaking point
• They want to achieve greatness
• They will sometimes criticize others in the process of trying to get noticed
HOW TO BUILD A RELATIONSHIP

• Recognize your own competitive qualities

• Don’t allow yourself to be afraid, intimidated, or provoked

• Communicate a secure image
PERSONALITY: THE PESSIMIST

CHARACTERISTICS

• They expect the worst

• They engage others in negative thinking

• They look at the “cup as half empty”
PERSONALITY: THE PESSIMIST

HOW TO BUILD A RELATIONSHIP

• Don’t argue or get involved in the negative comments
• Utilize positive responses
• Acknowledge good intent and try to involve them in the solution
PERSONALITY: THE CLAM

CHARACTERISTICS

• They don’t say much
• Difficult to get them to open up
• They don’t display an obvious response
• They can be tough to read
PERSONALITY: THE CLAM

HOW TO BUILD A RELATIONSHIP

• Ask open-ended questions

• Avoid small talk or excessive chatter – be comfortable with silence

• A friendly smile and nod while looking at them can sometimes illicit a response
PERSONALITY: THE KNOW-IT-ALL

CHARACTERISTICS

• They always have an answer
• They bombard you with facts
• They can be similar to a tank/bulldozer
• They may use a loud voice
• They may insult you if you disagree
• They may have an imposing physical presence
PERSONALITY: THE KNOW-IT-ALL

HOW TO BUILD A RELATIONSHIP

• Avoid questions

• Try not to argue, they might not hear what you are saying

• Expect to be interrupted

• Paraphrase back their main points; they may have knowledge that is helpful

• Be self-confident

• Express your opinions without confrontation
REFLECTION QUESTION

Which type of these challenging personalities do you find the most difficult to work with and why?
HOW DO YOU DEAL WITH DIFFERENT PERSONALITIES?

Remember the goal:

• Mutual respect
• Individual responsibility
• Communication
• Flexibility
• Teamwork
How do you usually experience conflict at work?

A. Both parties getting defensive or “heated”
B. One party demanding his/her way
C. Both parties listening to the other and seeking a solution
MANAGING A DIFFICULT INTERACTION

• Take some deep breaths
• Pay attention to the speed and loudness of your speech
• Gather your thoughts before responding
• Avoid “You” words or phrases and replace with “I” statements
• Keep your posture upright and relaxed
• Use a firm yet respectful tone of voice
• Declare your limits, intent and boundaries; be assertive
EMBRACE A DIVERSE TEAM

- Evaluate your attitudes
- Be open to change
- Respect differences
- Integrate those differences
- Use differences and strengths to achieve a goal
CREATING A POSITIVE TEAM

- Utilize the group’s strengths
- Focus on the end result
- Realize you gain more by working together
- Focus on the positive
- Each interaction builds on the last
FOR ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE
CONTACT YOUR EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (EAP)

