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On the topic:
Dealing with Difficult Team Members and Patients

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Dealing with Difficult Team Members and Patients

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Introduction

- Healthcare is full of rewarding experiences. Patients are assessed, diagnosed, treated and healed. Illnesses are caught in the nick of time for successful treatment. Elderly patients are cared for in their final days, and new life is brought into the world. These are just a few examples of why we may have chosen this field. But it is not always bliss.

- Patients don’t usually come to us because they feel great. They are often standing in front of us needing help because they are ill, depressed, even scared.

- As healthcare workers, we all do not have the same personality making it a challenge at times to understand how to interact with each type. This program will provide you with some insight into different types of personalities and how to deal with them, as well as how to handle difficult patients.
Dealing with Difficult Team Members

PART ONE

Ideal Work Environment

• An ideal work environment is usually reported as one that is friendly, professional and has a culture that promotes teamwork.

• But the fact is there are times when you will be faced with a team member that has a difficult and even challenging personality. These types of coworkers can make a negative impact on the entire organization.

• Let’s identify some of the more common difficult workplace personalities and learn ways to effectively communicate and interact with them.
The Gossip

• The gossip seems to be the most common personality found in the workplace and needs little explanation. These personality types talk about other people and spread rumors.
• They often behave this way because they are insecure and creating drama can take the attention off themselves.
• The best communication strategy is to tell the gossip directly that you don’t want to be a part of this type of behavior.
• You will want to steer clear of gossipy conversations and avoid divulging details of your life with them that you do not want shared.

The Blamer/Guilt Tripper

• The blamer or the guilt tripper is another common type that can be easily recognized as they are always pointing the finger at someone else.
• This type will rarely accept responsibility for their mistakes or apologize.
• Effective communication skills with them involve redirecting them to the facts.
• They will likely attempt to continue pointing the finger back and forth so you must learn to not engage in this game with them.
The Flyer

• The flyer is one of the most likely to “fly off the handle.” To them, everything is a crisis. They are attention-seeking, flamboyant and will exaggerate the facts.

• When they are in a good mood this type can be entertaining and funny, but in the blink of an eye they can become angry and over-dramatic.

• To effectively communicate with this type, you will need to praise and recognize before you give any type of constructive criticism.

• By remaining calm during one of their tirades you can model a more appropriate behavior. Be direct and let them know how their behavior affects others.

The Control Freak

• The control freak type of personality is often critical of anyone or anything not done their way. They will often overstep their boundaries in an attempt to control a situation that at times may not even pertain to their responsibilities.

• This type has a very high expectation of themselves and this can be a valuable asset due to their high level of organization and attention to detail.

• Strategies for effective communication include praise for their contribution to the workplace and helping them realize that sometimes it is ok to let go of control when the task may not be one that is as important to oversee.

• Don’t take it personally when their need for control is at it’s peak.
The Victim

• The victim is obvious to spot with their constant complaining. They often truly believe they are a victim.
• This type is less stable, less independent and less extroverted.
• To communicate effectively with them you will want to exercise patience as they really believe they are a victim. Use facts to dispute any claims they may have and have empathy, making sure not to fall into a trap where you enable them to continue being helpless.
• Maintain the stance if they’ve complained to you once about an issue that you already have the information. Do not tolerate constant complaining.

The Quiet Type

• The quiet type is self explanatory and also easy to identify. While not necessarily difficult, this type can be confusing for those that do not understand them.
• They will not be found hanging out in the breakroom and will seem unapproachable to others by keeping their office door shut or by wearing headphones.
• To effectively communicate with them you will want to give them their space where they have time to process their thoughts and feelings.
• By acknowledging their value to the organization and not pushing them to fraternize they may eventually warm up. Take time to get to know them and don’t take it personally if they don’t want to interact with you or other coworkers.
The Passive-Aggressive Type

• The passive-aggressive type can be very difficult to spot and do real damage in your work environment.
• This type can be “phony” and may even do things to sabotage the work or performance of others.
• To communicate effectively with this type you will want to confront problems head on, using tact and good timing.
• Be direct and let them know how their behaviors negatively affects the work environment. Show interest in their feelings and create a safe space for them to express themselves.

The Paranoid One

• The paranoid one can be frustrating to deal with; they are constantly suspicious and distrustful even if there is no cause.
• This type tend to communicate their view to their peers, which can have a negative impact on the entire team.
• Communicating with paranoid personalities can be tricky. You will need to use caution and be very clear as they will spin your words differently in their head. Be factual and rational and give an explanation for why the decisions are made.
• Use policies to refer to when speaking to these individuals. This will help as they can reference these when they have a moment to calm down and think at a rational level.
The Narcissist

- The narcissist may be the most difficult workplace personality. They are often found at various levels of management within organizations.
- This type has a high level need for admiration and often expect unearned praise even if they were not part of the actual effort or accomplishment. They can be arrogant and annoying, yet charismatic and well liked by many coworkers.
- Their attempts to control situations and gain support for their viewpoints regardless of the damage it could cause to others make them toxic to the workplace.
- This type responds well to praise and recognition. If you maintain realistic expectations of how they will respond you will have a better outcome.

The Psychopath

- The psychopath is very harmful to an organization as you can well imagine. They have a blatant disregard for the rights of others. They are deceitful and manipulative. Their actions can be damaging, unethical and even illegal.
- Good news – true psychopaths are rare and once discovered they will usually self-destruct or be fired.
- Do not expect them to feel remorse. If you are faced with a difficult encounter with this type of personality, your best recourse is to be clear about your boundaries.
- Do not give them any information they could use to harm other coworkers or the organization.
Summary - Part One

• We will all at some point find ourselves working with difficult people.
• The more informed we are about these personalities, the better we will be able to navigate our professional relationships.

Dealing with Difficult Patients

PART TWO
Communication is Important

• Communication takes many forms. There is verbal and written communication, and we also communicate with our body language.

• It is common for patients to feel anxious about their visit. This can cause them to be impatient, maybe even rude or aggressive.

• Practicing effective communication skills may help them reduce their anxiety, build their confidence, and help to engage them in managing their care.

Communicate with Empathy

• Many of our patients feel they are giving up control of their lives once they become ill. Losing control can make them feel helpless and hopeless.

• Good communication with patients can minimize these feelings and help them to be engaged in their care, appointment schedule, and financial responsibilities.

• When we show patients that we care about them by listening to them trying to understand how they are feeling, we are making them feel valued.

• Communication is much more than the words we say; the attention we pay them, the tone of our voice, and the position of our bodies also send messages.
Respond Effectively to a Difficult Patient

• We must learn to put our emotions aside temporarily so that we don't take the difficulty personally.
• Remain calm; it is bad enough the patient is acting badly. If we respond the same way, we are only adding fuel to the fire.
• Engage in conversation – get them talking and listen; allow them to be heard.

Tips for Dealing with Difficult Patients

• Be empathetic – showing them you genuinely care will go a long way.
• Avoid arguing – even if you know you are right, it is best to not argue. Give them time to calm down before you attempt to educate them on whatever issue is at hand.
• Set boundaries – it is ok to let them know their behavior is unacceptable. The patient may truly be unaware of how they appear to others. Calmly let them know that you want to resolve their issue. Set an expectation of mutual respect and courtesy.
Standards of Behavior

PART THREE

Standards of Behavior

- Standards of behavior can be defined as written expectations set forth by an organization that relates to interpersonal relations.

- These expectations should be clear and concise and correlate to your organization’s mission.

- They should be reviewed with each employee during orientation or onboarding. It should be understood the expectation is that they abide by these Standards of Behavior.

- When dealing with difficult team members, almost every situation can be backed up with these standards. Employees should be required to sign the document and a copy should be placed in their personnel file.
Key to Putting It All Together

• Now that we have identified different personalities and strategies for communication, the key to putting this all together lies in being able to listen.
• We must listen to learn, not to be polite.
• We must maintain eye contact and ask follow-up questions.
• We should repeat back what we have heard and wait until the person is finished talking before we respond.

Respect

“Show respect even to people who don’t deserve it; not as a reflection of their character, but as a reflection of yours.”

- Dave Willis
Resources


QUESTIONS?

• Thank you for attending

• Get your questions answered on PMI’s Discussion Forum: http://www.pmimd.com/pmiForums/rules.asp