

LEADER READERS

CHALLENGING MEMBERS

“Challenging members” (aka “difficult members) are found in every organization. It is important that the leader learn to deal effectively with these individuals and ensure that their behaviors and attitudes do not adversely affect the group’s functioning. Here are six types of difficult behaviors that can be found in many group settings and some tips on how to deal with each.

TYPE: Hostile Aggressives

DESCRIPTION: Try hard to bully and overwhelm by bombarding others with cutting remarks.

TIPS:

- Stand up for yourself or the group if they are out of order.
- Give them time to wear out.
- Look directly at them and wait.
- Get into the conversation.
- Get their attention.
- Make sure they are seated, not standing over you.
- Don’t argue or try to cut them down.

TYPE: Complainers

DESCRIPTION: Gripe without ceasing, but never try to do anything about what they complain about.

TIPS:

- Listen attentively to them.
- Acknowledge them by paraphrasing their allegations.
- Don’t agree with or apologize for their allegations.
- Put them in charge of “fixing” what they think is wrong.
- Ask, “How do you want this situation to be resolved?”

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TYPE: Silent Unresponsives

DESCRIPTION: Answer with grunts or one syllable responses (when they answer at all).

TIPS:

- Don't interrupt silence; give them time to open up.
- Ask open-ended questions.
- Listen attentively if they open up, but don't gush.
- If they will not open up, end the meeting and set another appointment.

TYPE: Super Agreeables

DESCRIPTION: Very personable, funny members who never act the way they say they will or how you thought they would.

TIPS:

- Let them know you value them as a person.
- Ask them to be honest with you.
- Carefully point out inconsistencies in their behavior (without judgement)
- Listen to their humor, as there may be messages hidden in their comments.

TYPE: Negativists

DESCRIPTION: Never expect anything to work and never have anything positive to say about anything or anyone.

TIPS:

- Be alert to avoid being pulled into their despair
- Don't try to argue them out of their position.
- Listen to their messages – the root of the pessimism may be hidden.
- Play "devil's advocate" by thinking about negatives and having solutions ready.

TYPE: Know-It-All

DESCRIPTION: Condescending, pompous people who claim to know it all about everyone and everything.

TIPS:

- Know what you are talking about when you converse with them.
- Listen attentively, then paraphrase the main points they make.
- Question firmly about inaccurate facts or inconsistencies, but not in a group setting.

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