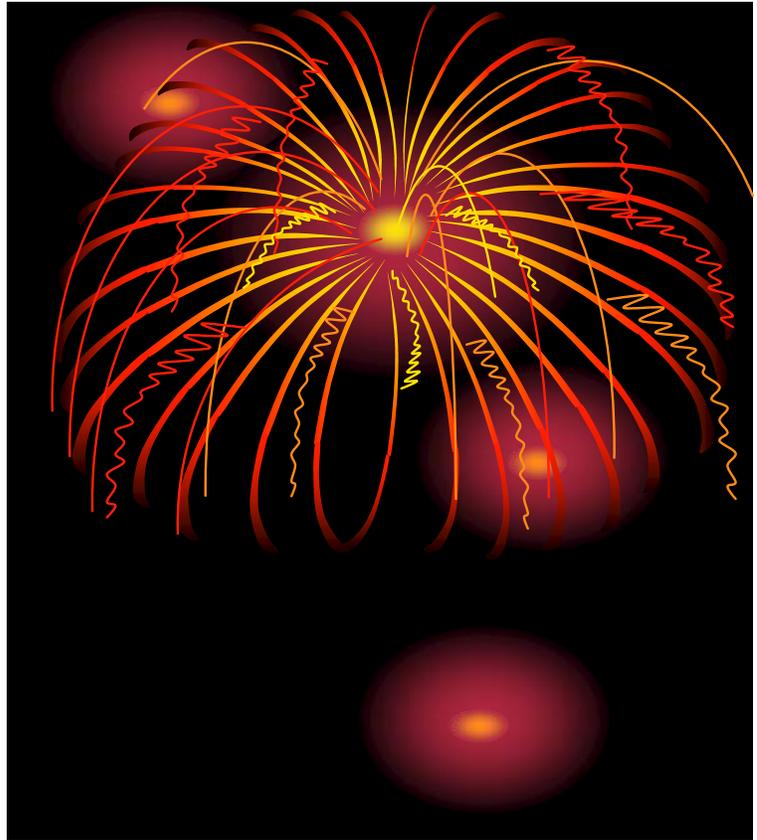


# Dealing with Difficult People



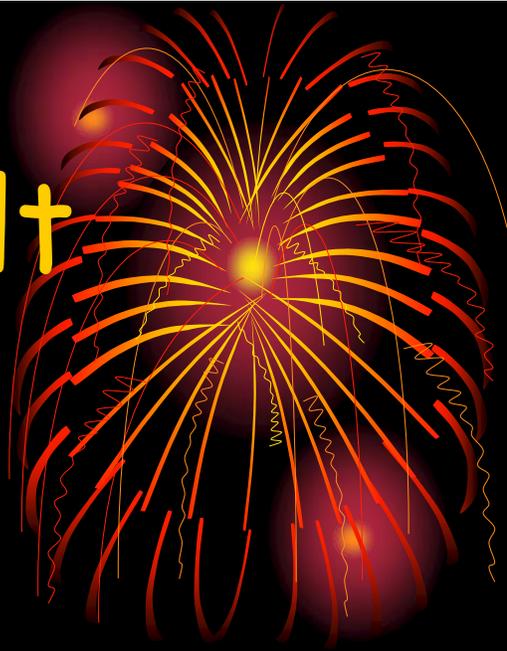
Defining Difficult People

Type-casting Those Difficult People

Understanding Difficult People

Tips and a Tool-box of Techniques  
for Dealing With Difficult People

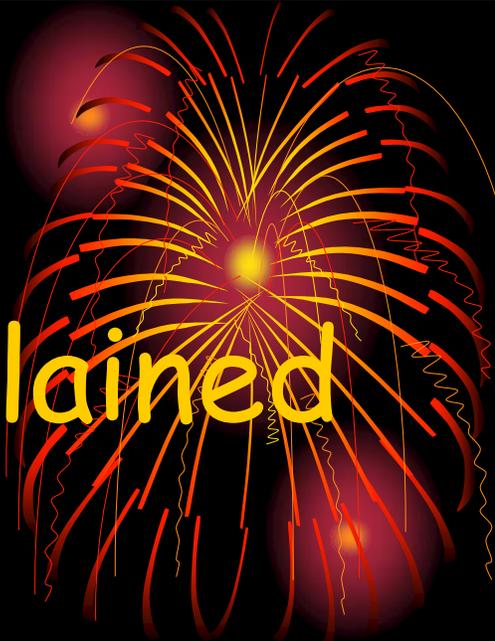
# Defining Difficult People



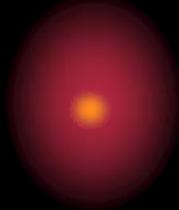
- How would you define a difficult person?



# Difficult People Defined and Explained

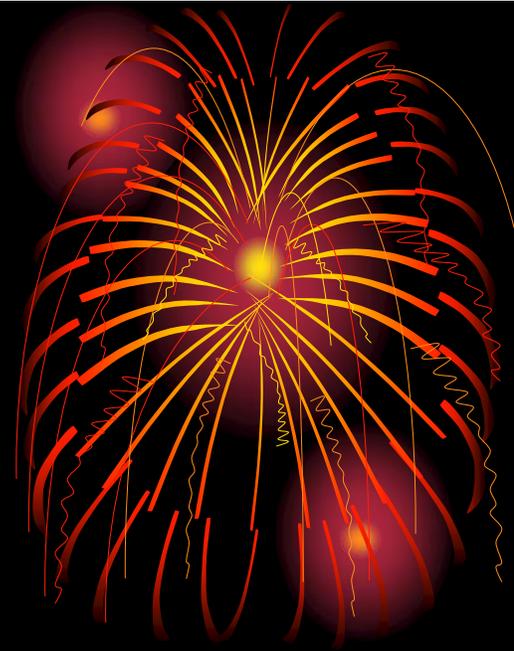


## The Hostile Aggressive



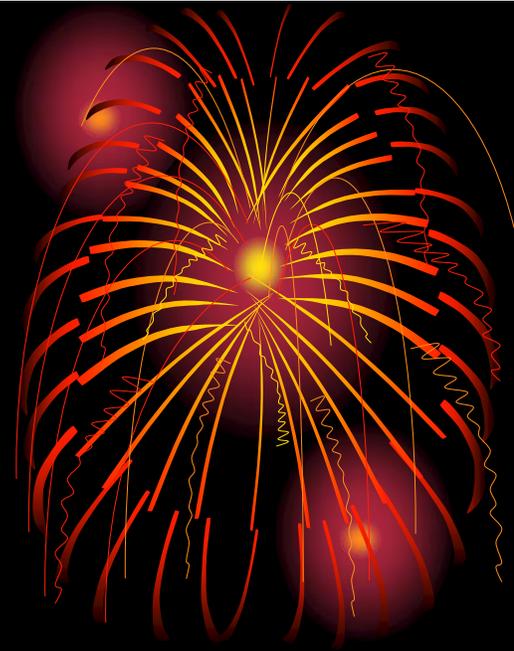
The bully that always needs to be right. They tend to be abusive, abrupt, accusatory, intimidating, arbitrary and arrogant. They value high levels of self-confidence and aggressiveness and demean those who don't possess them. The "Wolverine."

# Coping Strategies



- Stand up to them without fighting by aggressively expressing your opinion ("in my opinion, I disagree with you.") If you allow a fight to escalate you'll never win against these people and you may end up losing the war.
- Take unpredictable actions to get their attention: drop a book, stand up, firmly call them by name, get them to sit down and don't sit until they do.
- Be prepared for friendly overtures as soon as they view you as worthy of respect.

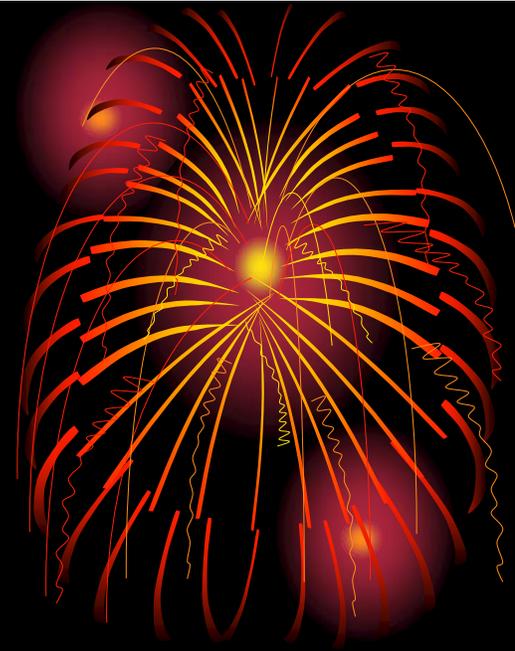
# The Complainer



They avoid taking responsibility.

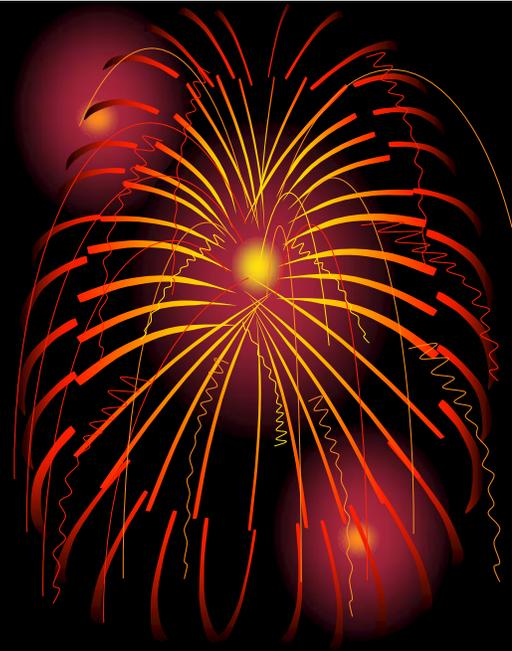
These are the people who find fault with everything, but may have some legitimacy to their complaints. They use an accusatory tone, and come across as powerless, fatalistic, morally perfect and self-righteous.

# Coping Strategies



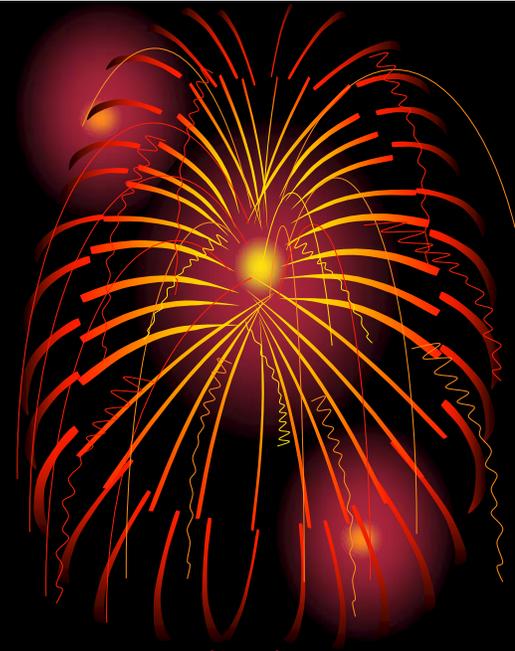
- Break the self-fulfilling cycle of passivity, blaming, and powerlessness by insisting on a problem solving approach. Ask for complaints in writing, ask open-ended questions and assign them to fact-finding tasks.
- Listen attentively. They may just need to blow off steam, which could provide information that is important to you.
- Be prepared to interrupt and take control. Pin them down to the specifics.
- Don't agree. Agreeing only validates for them that it is your fault and they are blameless.
- If all else fails, ask them how they would like the discussion to end; what results do they want to achieve.

# The Silent \ Unresponsive



- These people limit risk and seek safety by refusing to respond, and often are non-committal despite the fact that something is definitely wrong. They use this form of calculated aggression to avoid facing their fears.

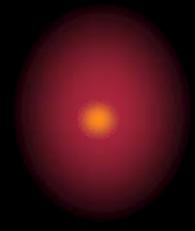
# Coping Strategies



- Persuade them to talk by asking open-ended questions that require a response.
- Wait for a response with a friendly, silent stare, but do not be tempted to fill the space with words.
- You can ask them if they are not talking because they may be concerned about your response. You can ask them, "How do you think I will react?"
- If they begin to respond, be attentive demonstrate active listening and allow them to be vague if they are getting around to the point.
- If they do not respond to not let them off the hook by using a polite ending but let them know you intend on visiting the issue again, and you can only assume their lack of response indicates.....

# Super-Agreeable



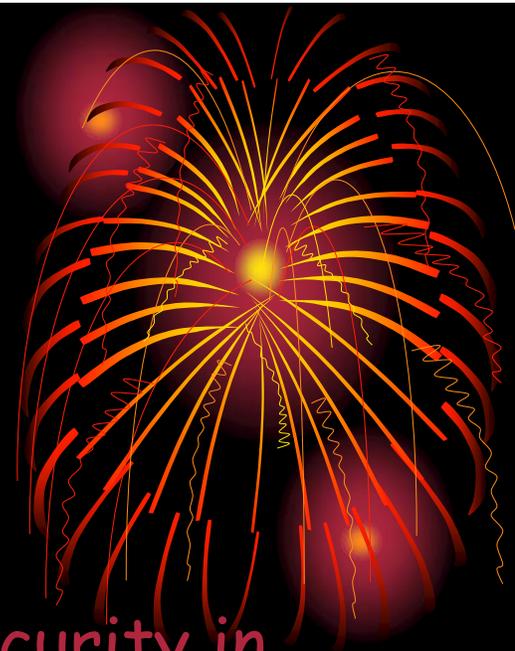
- This is the “people-pleaser who over promises and NEVER delivers. They avoid conflict at all costs, are outgoing, sociable, personal with others, and very attentive. They will tell you things that are great to hear and then let you down by making unrealistic commitments.
- 

# Coping Strategies



- Make honest non-threatening. Ask for their opinion without jeopardizing your acceptance of them as individuals.
- Be personal with them without being phony and let them know you value them as people.
- Don't allow them to over-commit or take on more than they can handle.
- Ask for feedback on things that may interfere with maintaining a good working relationship.

# The Know it All Expert



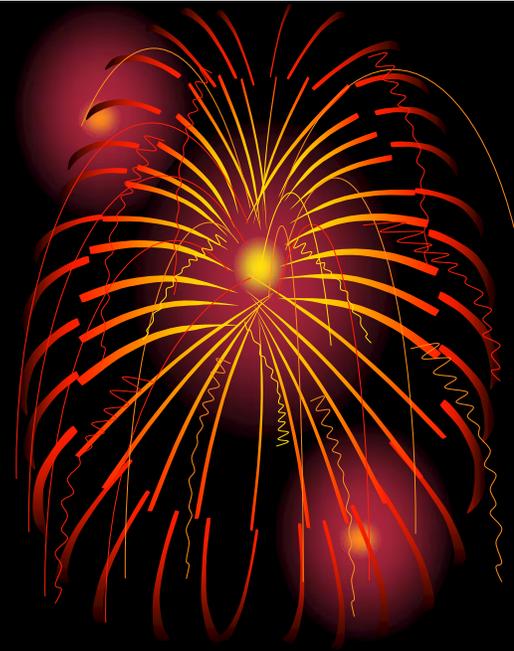
- They have a strong need for security in an unpredictable world, value facts and logic, and seek respect through acknowledged competence. Often described as "bulldozers" or "Sherman tanks" they are productive, thorough and accurate. They possess an aura of personal authority and sense of power and a tone of absolute certainty. They are usually right and will confront those who question their logic with a "data dump" that leaves others overwhelmed. They can be condescending, imposing, pompous and sometimes make you feel like an idiot.

# Coping Strategies



- Help them seek alternative views while avoiding direct challenges to their expertise.
- You must do your homework, discuss facts in an orderly manner, and make sure your information is accurate and complete. If you "ball-park" with a Sherman tank you'll be dismissed as incompetent.
- Listen attentively and acknowledge. Paraphrase rather than interrupt; it shows you respect their expertise.
- Resist the temptation to assert your own credentials. It won't work because no one knows more about the subject than they do.
- Pay attention to their humor it often masks their true thoughts.

# Toolbox of Techniques.....



- **Step back from the situation:** Quick comebacks are not required when faced with a difficult situation. Difficult decisions require thought so give yourself enough time to work the problem through to a satisfactory conclusion.

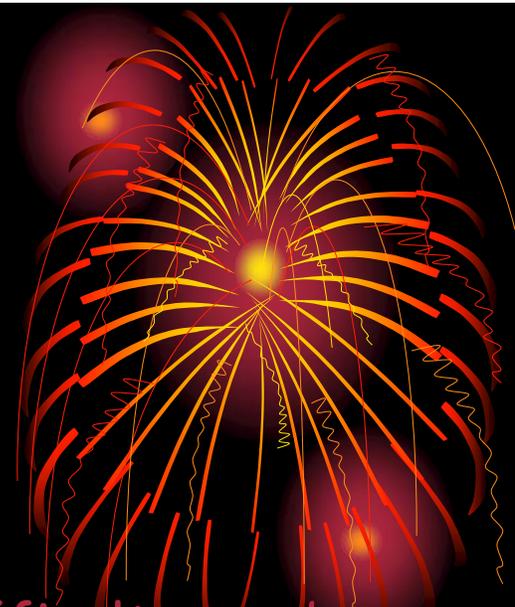
"Let's think about this for a minute....."

- **Stay in the adult mode:** According to some experts there are three types of communication-child, parent and adult. When dealing with conflict stay in adult mode. Don't act like a parent and be judgmental or a child and be defensive. Accept the responsibility that is yours.

"I was the one that made that decision."

"Is there something I failed to consider?"

# Toolbox of Techniques.....



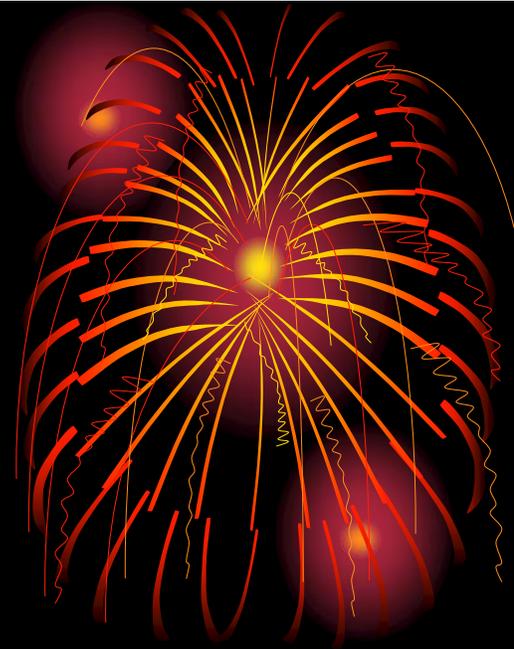
- **Seek Agreement:** A solution to a difficulty can be found in agreement even if the start of that agreement is just to acknowledge the problem exists. Be positive but specific, there may be things you can do as well as things you cannot do.

I can see you have a problem, what I can do is,.....  
and what I can't do is.....

- **Communicate and explore alternatives:** Never assume you can't help someone. By thinking about and verbalizing alternatives you keep things positive. Determine what would solve their problem by asking them and you may find their problem is less than you anticipated.

Have you considered .....?  
What would happen if you did.....?

# Toolbox of Techniques.....



- **Establish some boundaries for yourself:** Know what you are going to tolerate. Sometimes you may want to verbalize those boundaries sometimes you may not.

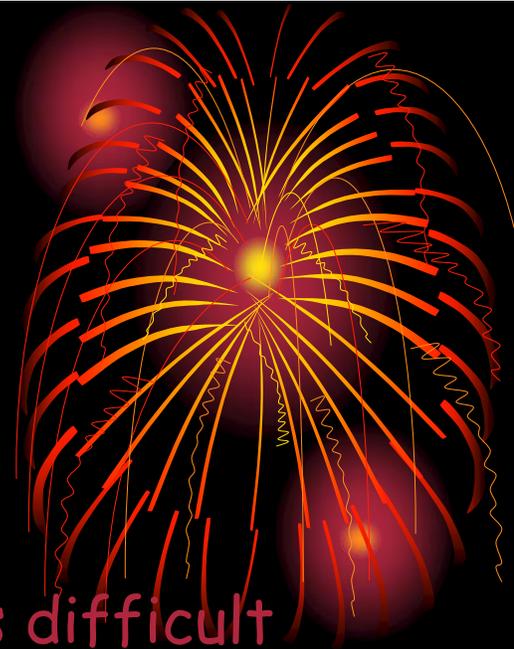
"I'm not here to talk about....."

"I'm here to....."

- **Speak in private:** If you are dealing with a difficult issue speak with the person in private. The Marine Corp Manual is as true today as it was when it was written....Praise in public, criticize in private.

"Can I have a minute to discuss this with you in your office....."

# Toolbox of Techniques.....



- **Don't take things personally:** It's difficult sometimes but hey, it's not necessarily about YOU. Often people do not realize the reason someone is upset doesn't have anything to do with them.

Look Mother Theresa,  
could you put the cap on the toothpaste.....?

- **Use I language instead of YOU language:** "YOU" language can make people defensive, try the "I" technique. Instead of saying "you should have...." or "Why didn't you.....", try "I was expecting you to....." or "I encourage you to go back and....." \*

# Toolbox of Techniques.....

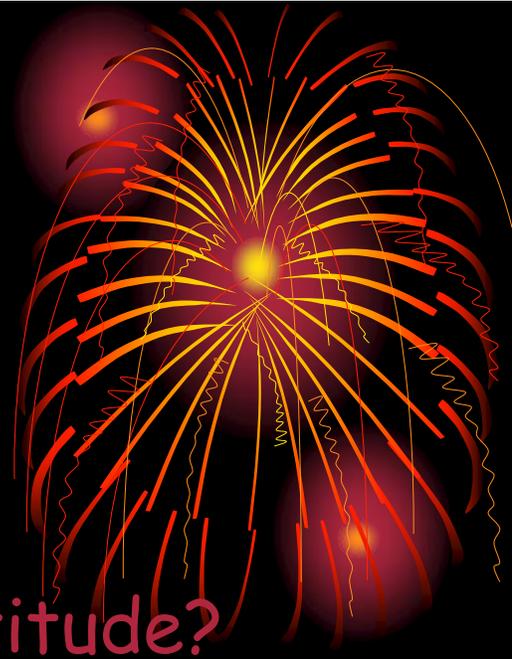


- **Keep your cool:** If either party begins to get upset suggest resuming the conversation later.

“Let’s meet back here at.....to resume the conversation, so we can reach a solution.”
- **Keep the lines of communication open.** Ask questions, listen repeat the problem/solution and restate the message if necessary. Checking for understanding is a great way to insure the message you sent is the one that was received.

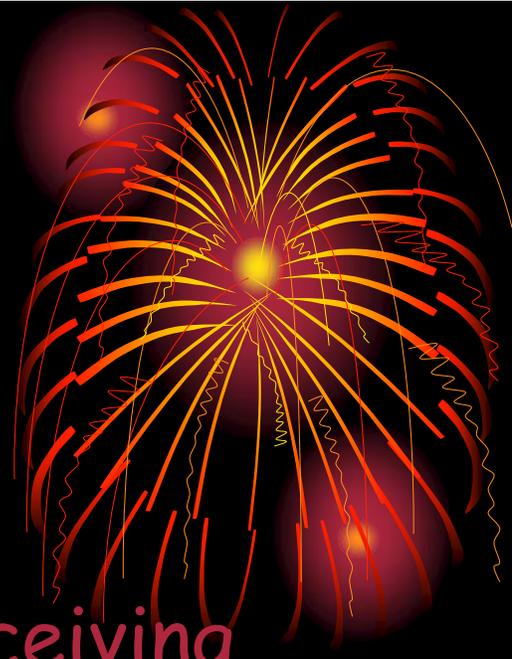
“So to see if we’re all on the same page, I was going to.....you were going to..... by this date.”

# Telephone Tips for Assisting Angry People



- How important is your attitude?
  - It's important. Stay cool, stay calm, stay clear-headed.
- If someone gets angry do you have a right to get angry back?
  - It's an option by why make their elevated blood pressure your problem. Don't waste your time.
- Should you let people know they upset you?
  - Don't let people get to you, most of the time it isn't personal. Don't make it personal.

# More Tips



- Monitor how you are receiving this phone call in your head.....
  - If you find yourself silently labeling the caller a loser....better check the attitude, stay positive.
- Keep your body relaxed.
  - Clenched fists and white knuckles on the desk are a good reminder to stay calm and take a deep breath....
- Have some standard responses prepared.
  - "I believe I can help you."
  - "I can appreciate your concerns, let's see if I have this correct." \*