Dealing with Difficult People
Personality Disordered Psychopaths

Anna Salter
Goals?

- Protect self
- Protect others
- “Fix” other person
- Limit harm
- Manage relations with difficult people
In Sheep’s Clothing

George Simon
Dealing with Manipulative People

Assertive
- Advocating for self
- Respecting rights and needs of others

Aggressive
- Fight unnecessarily
- Little concern for others
- Wants power

(Simon, 2010)
Aggressive Styles

- **Overt aggression**: Open, direct and obvious in fighting

- **Covert aggression**: Subtle, underhanded, & deceptive attempts to get way – active

- **Passive aggression**: Resisting cooperation, silent treatment, pouting, “forgetting”

(Simon, 2011)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Why Don’t Victims See It</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Not obvious</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Gut reaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Deception techniques</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Push buttons</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Pop psychology</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Appear they are</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Guilt? Self-doubt?</td>
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<tr>
<td>• People are basically</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Low self-esteem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Insecurity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• No evidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Really taking</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Bad things/good</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Insecurity</td>
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</tbody>
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(Simon, 2010)
Zeitgeist

- Intuition: Manipulative conniver
- Head: Must be frightened, wounded or self-doubting

(Simon, 2010)
Thoughts That Bias Analysis

- Takes two to tango
- Benefit of the doubt
- They must be troubled
- They must be anxious
- Must have threatened them
- “Analyze to death”
- Try to understand
Theory

- Aggression
- Lack of bonding

Frustration
Fear of Intimacy
Excessively inhibited

Assertive

Excessively aggressive
Excessively Inhibited

- Anxious
- Excessive capacity for guilt or shame
- Use defense mechanisms
- Fear of social rejection
- Symptoms ego-dystonic
- Deficit self esteem
- Hypersensitive to adverse consequences
Excessively Aggressive (Personality Disordered)

- Little anxiety
- Under-developed conscience
- Little shame or guilt
- Power tactics instead of defense mechanisms
- Impression management
- Symptoms are ego-syntonic
- Inflated self-esteem
- Undeterred by adverse consequences
- Behaviors habitual but conscious

(Simon, 2010)
- Overly inhibited: Need encouragement
- Overly aggressive: Need limits
Assertive vs Excessively Aggressive

**Assertive**
- Want to get job done
- Considers impact on others
- Wants to be cooperative
- Compassion for weaker

**Aggressive**
- Want to win
- Ruthless
- Wants to dominate
- Contempt for weaker
Covert Aggressive

- Distinguished by methods
- Use subtle, cunning and under-handed ways
- Try not to appear aggressive
- Manipulate behind the scenes
- Fight unscrupulously
- Want to win
- Seek power and dominance
- Good at impression management
- Good at revenge
- People are pawns
- Impaired conscience
Therapeutic Mistakes with Personality Disordered Clients

- Getting them to “see” behavior is harmful
- Working primarily with feelings
- Working with past trauma
- Letting client control agenda
- Letting client control sessions
“When dealing with disturbed characters, you must remember that power simply can’t be entrusted to those who would almost certainly abuse it.”

(Simon, 2011)
Therapeutic Mistakes with Personality Disorder, Psychopaths & Other Difficult People

- Getting them to “see” behavior is harmful
- Working primarily with feelings
- Working with past trauma
- Letting client control agenda
- Letting client control sessions
- Giving in because it’s easier
- Stretching rules
- Softening boundaries
- Letting client do favors for you
Manipulative Tactics

- Instant intimacy
- Mirroring your values
- Attacking your motivations
- Rationalizing behavior based on former abuse
- Yelling & intimidation
- Making same demands endlessly
- Lying (External corroboration)
New Speak

- Denial
- Acting Out
- Defensive
- Shame
- Splitting
- Passive aggression

- Lying
- Acting up; misbehavior
- Combative
- Anger at being caught
- Divide and conquer
- Covert aggression

(Simon 2011)
Dealing with Difficult People

- Letting go of Rousseau - Not all good people
- Analyze personality structure
- Know your own weaknesses & insecurities
- Know cognitive distortions
- Know psychopathic tactics
- Only fight battles where have power
- Avoid power struggles
- Set limits and expectations

(Simon, 2011)
Dealing with Difficult People

- Never accept excuses
- Judge actions, not intentions
- Set limits EARLY
- Make simple, direct requests
- Accept simple, direct responses
- Stay focused on here and now

(Simon, 2011)