

Identifying and Evaluating Potential Options

(Note: Complete the three columns to the right and add and evaluate additional options below as needed.)

| Options | Possible Advantages | Possible Disadvantages | Likelihood of Success |
|--|---------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| Do nothing directly about the conflict /do not acknowledge the problem to the other person | | | |
| Talk with the other person directly (write a letter to <i>prepare</i> for one-on-one talk with her/him) expressing: 1) specific facts - including naming patterns, 2) impact on you, 3) what you want now. | | | |
| Write a private letter to other person about: facts, impact, requests | | | |
| Mediation | | | |
| Ask for communication training for entire work unit. | | | |

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| Complain to the supervisor of the person engaging in abrasive conduct | | | |
| Grievance (individual or group) | | | |
| Change how you think/feel about the situation | | | |
| Seek employment elsewhere | | | |
| Formally complain to Administrative Agencies (e.g., EEOC) / Courts | | | |
| Write a group letter to the other person's supervisor. If | | | |

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| <p>possible, include a chronology of the events including circumstances, statements, tone, effects, times, setting, witnesses, etc.</p> | | | |
| <p>Hotline (or other similar tool if it exists)</p> | | | |
| <p>Go with a group of concerned colleagues to speak with the other person</p> | | | |
| <p>Write a letter to the newspaper</p> | | | |
| <p>Ask colleagues to speak up if they observe the other person engaging in abrasive conduct.</p> | | | |

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| Keep a journal with details of specific dates, places, witnesses, and behaviors | | | |
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**(Compiled by Tom Sebok and Mary Chavez Rudolph,
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Cheat Sheet for Assisting Targets in Evaluating Identifying and Evaluating Options

(Note: Encourage them to review, modify, etc. and complete last column)

| Options | Possible Advantages | Possible Disadvantages | Likelihood of Success |
|--|--|--|-----------------------|
| Do nothing directly about the conflict /do not acknowledge the problem to the other person | No risk of retaliation. Limit risk of being labeled as a “whiner,” “malcontent,” or “too sensitive” – either by the other person or by those influenced by her/him | Nothing will change, let alone be resolved. Problems may escalate. You may feel weak and disappointed in yourself. You may still need counseling and/or support. | |
| Talk with the other person directly (write a letter to <i>prepare</i> for one-on-one talk with her/him) expressing: 1) specific facts - including naming patterns, 2) impact on you, 3) what you want now. | Shows other person your willingness to establish a boundary AND to make things work. Shows respect by being open, honest, and direct. (Most people prefer you deal directly with them rather than going to others.) Might improve or resolve issues. Good faith effort may be positively perceived by those higher in authority if you choose to tell them later. You may feel proud for standing up for yourself. | Attempts may not be well received. Risk of retaliation. This takes great skill, courage, and/or more emotional self-control than you have. | |
| Write a private letter to other person about: facts, impact, requests | Writing can help clarify your own thoughts and gives you an opportunity to say things diplomatically. What you write can be used as proof later of your attempt to deal with problem directly with | Some people who engage in abrasive conduct may not care how diplomatically you call their attention to their misconduct and they may fear that you will share the letter | |

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| | <p>the other person. It can also provide a record of specific details. And, it can give the recipient time to think about what you are saying and how to respond.</p> | <p>with others – and escalate their abrasive behaviors.</p> | |
| <p>Mediation</p> | <p>Restorative Justice option (e.g., Victim-offender mediation) may be effective in limited circumstances – especially if the other person acknowledges engaging in abrasive conduct, wants to repair harm to relationship, and her/his supervisor agrees to sanction her/him if agreements are not made or kept.</p> | <p>Restorative Justice option may not be available because other person may not accept responsibility for engaging in abrasive conduct, may not recognize or want to repair harm to relationship, and/or her/his supervisor may not be willing to sanction her/him if agreements are not made or kept.</p> <p>Many forms of mediation require parties to agree to change future behaviors and often targets have nothing to offer (trade). Also, continuing the abrasive conduct is not negotiable (i.e., targets will not agree, for example, to allow continuation of abrasive conduct on Tuesdays and Thursdays)</p> | |
| <p>Ask for communication training for entire work unit.</p> | <p>Training can enhance skills of many people – conceivably even the “problem person.”</p> | <p>Training may not affect the other person at all. S/he may not even attend. Others’ time may be wasted and they may resent that. Supervisor of person engaging in abrasive</p> | |

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| | | conduct is allowed to avoid confronting the real problem. | |
| Complain to the supervisor of the person engaging in abrasive conduct | Supervisor might investigate and hold other person accountable for changing her/his behavior. You might “let go” after telling the appropriate authority about the problem. | Supervisor may be conflict avoidant, may minimize the problem, or accuse you of being “too sensitive.” Or s/he may lack the skills to deal with it effectively. The other person may resent you for going above his/her head, and retaliate. You could wind up more frustrated and wishing you hadn’t bothered. | |
| Grievance (individual or group) | Using a formal option creates a record of the complaint. A group grievance may be perceived as having merit because the behavior is of concern to multiple people. Also, an investigation of some kind may result and appropriate consequences may be imposed in an effort to stimulate behavior change. | Problem resolution may get more involved or complicated by involving formal channels and more people. It could result in considerable resentment or even “below radar” retaliation by the other person – or her/his friends. If the other person has the supervisor’s support, making such an allegation could create a supervisor backlash against you. Or, you may not even have grievance rights. | |
| Change how you think/feel about the situation | Could conceivably become more comfortable with or tolerant of problem behaviors by the other person. You could learn to better cope with the stress of the situation. | The other person’s unacceptable behavior would not be challenged or changed. Management would not be informed of the problem. | |

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| Seek employment elsewhere | You will no longer be subjected to the other person's abrasive conduct. | A change in jobs creates other forms of stress, and may be more problematic than the stress created by the present situation. Could result in a pay cut or less satisfying work. You could feel resentful – especially if you believe you did nothing wrong. | |
| Formally complain to Administrative Agencies (e.g., EEOC) / Courts | May result in compensation and/or potential consequences to the supervisor. Could call attention to this issue and stimulate meaningful change. | In almost all cases, this only applies to “protected class” discrimination or harassment claims. Stressful, costly, and time consuming and you could lose. YOU could be seen as the problem. | |
| Write a group letter to the other person's supervisor. If possible, include a chronology of the events including circumstances, statements, tone, effects, times, setting, witnesses, etc. | It creates a record of the complaint and indicates that the behavior is of concern to multiple people (even if all those who sign are not alleging they have, themselves, been subjected to abrasive conduct). Sheer numbers signing a letter suggest the matter is important. | The alleged bully's supervisor might support the alleged bully and not take action. It could result in considerable resentment by the alleged bully. It could result in “below radar” retaliation by the alleged bully, her/his supervisor, or both. | |
| Hotline (or other similar tool) | It will create a record of the complaint and it will be investigated. Someone in authority will be made aware of the problem and may take appropriate action. | If the other person is valued by the person receiving the Hotline complaint, nothing may happen or it may not be taken seriously. | |

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| Go with a group of concerned colleagues to speak with the other person | There may be safety in numbers. The group may signal “this is serious” and succeed in getting her/his attention on the issue and even elicit change – or, at least, a desire to change. | Presence of additional people could elicit greater defensiveness from the other person and/or s/he may not care how others feel about her/him. | |
| Write a letter to the newspaper | Attention would be given to the issue. Pressure might build for action to be taken. | No face-saving is possible and motivation to retaliate may increase. Or the newspaper may not print your letter. | |
| Ask colleagues to speak up if they observe the other person engaging in abrasive conduct. | S/he may listen to them and begin to recognize – and even change – her/his conduct. | They may not be willing or able to speak up. Or, they may agree to speak up but the other person’s misconduct may escalate. It could divide the unit. | |
| Keep a journal with details of specific dates, places, witnesses, and behaviors | It will help you remember important details if you ever want to talk to the other person about the pattern and impacts of her/his behavior. Details can be persuasive if you ever decide to complain to others about this problem. | It takes time and energy. You’ll stay focused on the abrasive conduct, perhaps for longer than is healthy for you. If your journal is found by anyone else, it could be embarrassing – especially if the person who finds it tells/shows the other person. | |
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