



XXVIII IFSO World Congress

9-12 September 2025 | Santiago, Chile

Managing and Leading Difficult Personalities – Strategies to Manage Your Sanity

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Women for IFSO: The Rocky Road to Success

IFSO 2025 Santiago

Sept. 10, 2025

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Combined Therapies, The Dawn of a New Era

Disclosure



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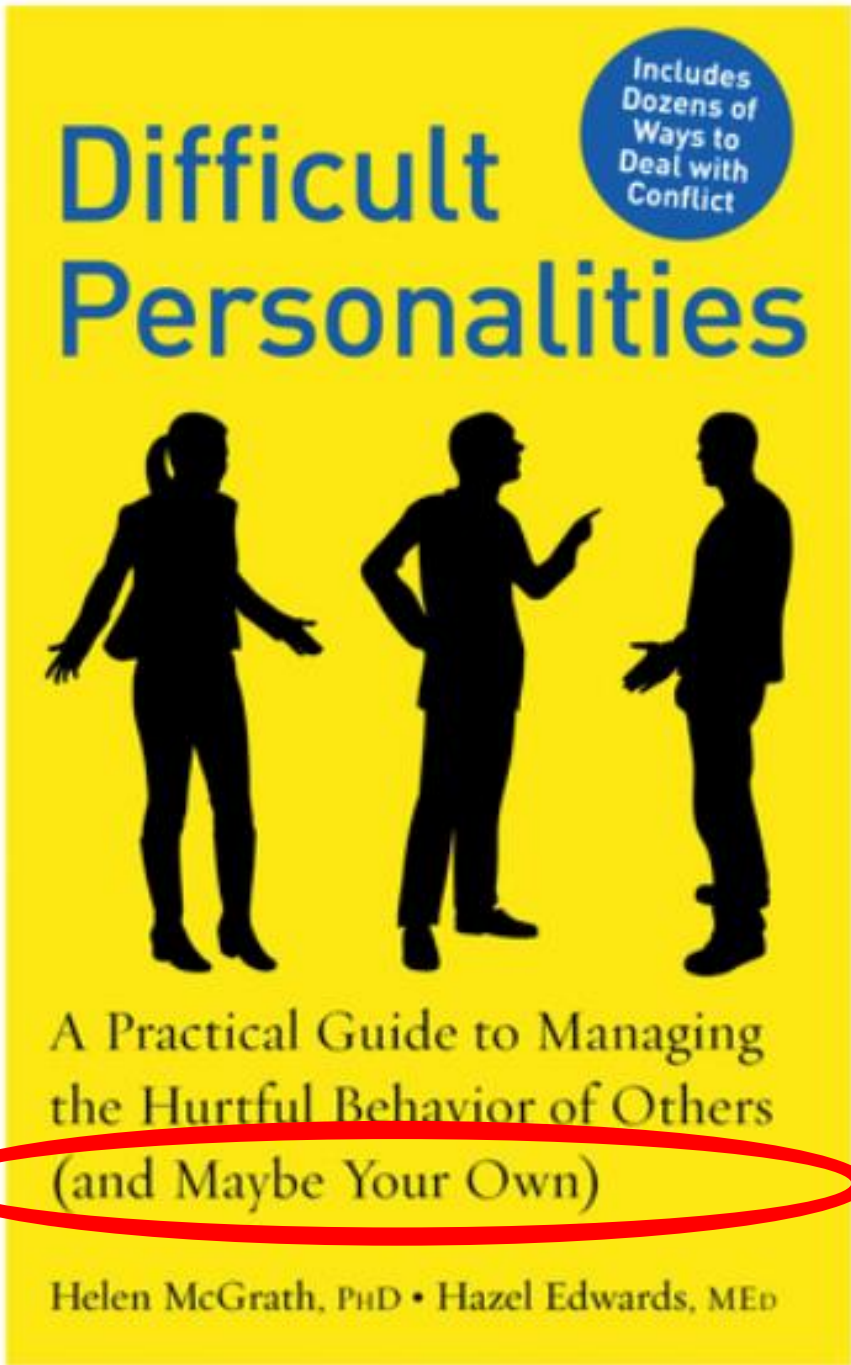
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- **Consultant/Speaker honoraria, Intuitive Surgical**
- **Speaker honoraria, W.L. Gore**
- **Speaker honoraria, Medtronic**
- **Speaker honoraria – J&J Medtech**



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**“Money doesn’t matter”
– Rich People**



**“Looks don’t matter”
– Attractive People**



**“Nothing really matters”
– People who just
killed a man**



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Why Is This Important



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We spend about 2/3 of our lives at work. Sooner or later, in any type of practice, you will encounter difficult personalities and you are going to need to know how to deal with them!

Why Is This Important



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- ***Hiring***
- ***Firing***
- ***Leading***
- ***Managing***



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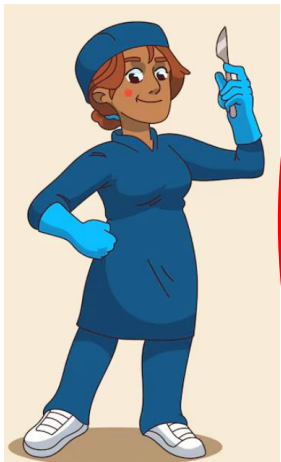
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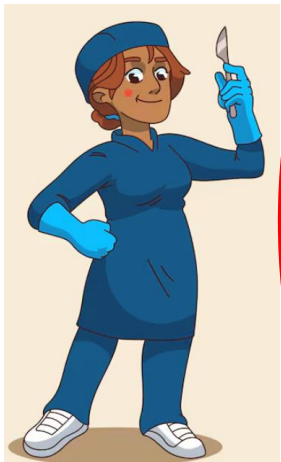
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Taking a Step Back...



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- There is a “five factor model” of personality that includes:
 - Openness to experience
 - Conscientiousness
 - Extraversion
 - Agreeableness
 - And neuroticism

If you parse these out it, you get a list of behaviors that would be perceived as “difficult” in the workplace:

- Callousness
- Grandiosity
- Aggressiveness
- Suspiciousness
- Manipulation
- Domineering(ness)
- Risk-taking



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If It Helps You To Have Labels...



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- Narcissistic personalities
 - Big ego, must be center of attention, may be charming on the surface but can quickly become arrogant and cold, sensitive to criticism, zero empathy
- Passive-aggressive personalities
 - No follow-up on commitment, sabotage others to make themselves look better, perform better when requirements are clearly defined and direct, better with boundaries

If It Helps You To Have Labels...



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- Gossips
 - Common but can be toxic when negative and uncontrolled
- Anger addicts
 - Like to belittle, bully or undermine others, aggressive at work, attacks may be private
- Guilt trippers
 - Like to blame others and believe themselves to rarely be at fault, may lie to avoid consequences, not good at working with others, may have favorite targets



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Dealing with Difficult Personality Types

- Talk to them – problem behaviors are usually in response to personal life challenges. Try to provide solutions.
- Contempt or aggression will worsen the issue. Remain calm; find an effective and constructive way forward.
- Provide a mentor. They may have learned bad practices in a previous work environment.
- Seek assistance. Consider counseling, executive coaching or performance improvement. Not addressing toxic behaviors will be more damaging to your practice in the long run.

Our friend Rhonda

- Extremely bright
- Conscientious
- Neurotic
- Aggressive
- Suspicious
- Domineering
- Grandiose



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Angry? Sad? Frustrated?
Have you tried...
YELLING?

- ✓ Relieves stress
- ✓ Feels good
- ✓ Is scary to birds

YELLING IS LIKE TALKING, BUT LOUDER!

A photograph of a man in a white shirt and dark tie, shouting into a microphone. His face is contorted with anger, and his mouth is wide open, showing his teeth. The image is part of a poster or sign.

**I WANT YOU TO GRAB THREE SHOVELS
AND DIG THREE 6-FOOT DEEP HOLES UP THERE**



I'LL EXPLAIN IT TO YOU LATER



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Rhonda's reports to me:

- staff were coming in late, leaving early, letting phone calls go to voice mail
- patients would call with a complaint of crushing chest pain and the front desk staff would simply make a note of it instead of alerting anyone
- had found things missing from her desk
- would laughingly tell me about something she had seen on the news, such as one of my patients murdering her husband!
- would complain about difficult and entitled patients of mine and tell me about how she had “set them straight”



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Rhonda's behaviors and effects on the other staff:

- **told them they weren't working hard enough**
- **found their problem-solving approaches lacking**
- **implied they were ignorant or stupid**
- **got angry at perceived slights**
- **was territorial about "her" things or domains**
- **searched others (and patients) on the internet – and found dirt on them!**
- **said mean and judgmental things, sometimes to patients**



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Impact of Difficult Personalities in the Workplace

- Decreased productivity
- Staff stress
 - More mistakes
- Absenteeism and sick leave
- High staff turnover
 - Costly and leads to lost skills and knowledge
- Deteriorating business reputation





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Other options I should have considered:

- 1) don't place a friend in a management position under me
- 2) make it an interim position while actively seeking another
- 3) tell her she HAD to change, or she would lose the position
- 4) be a "secret shopper" and find out for myself if there were other problems with the staff



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What Happened to Rhonda

- Staff did an HR “end-run”
- She got put on a Performance Improvement Plan
- She failed to improve
- She was “allowed to resign”
- We were without an NP for about 18 months
- We were without a program coordinator for about 6 months
- We went through two LPNs, 4 RDs and 3 MOAs while righting the ship





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And I lost a friend for what it's worth



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It was UNBELIEVABLY STRESSFUL and Unnecessarily Toxic...



Thanks



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