

The 9 Types of Difficult People

Companion Workbook

Further tips, questions and exercises to help you to spot difficult people and quickly improve working relationships



Part One

The first part of this workbook lays the groundwork for dealing with a difficult person. Answer the questions and respond to the prompts that follow. Use the spaces provided or your own notebook or notes app to record your thoughts.

1. Why You Need This Workbook

Welcome to this workbook, a companion to my book ***The Nine Types of Difficult People.***

It all started with a challenging task: coaching a difficult senior leader. That leader, initially seen as a serious problem, was actually something else entirely. Working together, we managed to create positive changes.

This experience highlighted the importance of a flexible and structured approach to dealing with people who are seen as difficult at work. It showed that they can sometimes be misunderstood but with the right approach that they can change for the better in ways that suit them and others.

Over time that led to more and more coaching work with difficult people and to the creation of my book and this companion workbook.

My book itself is a practical guide and this workbook is designed to help you apply the lessons from the book in your own situation. It's about taking action and making positive changes in your interactions with difficult people at work.



About Nick Robinson

I've been an executive coach since 1999, guiding leaders and managers from a wide range of businesses and other organisations, using a blend of hard and soft skills.

I'm a former Chartered Accountant (FCCA) with an MBA, awarded with Commendation, from Bayes Business School, London. Additionally, I'm a Certified Professional Coach, an NLP Master Practitioner and a graduate of the Newfield Mastery in Coaching Programme.

For over two decades, I've focused on helping leaders and managers to navigate challenging situations and manage difficult relationships at work.

My approach is designed to understand and enhance people's natural strengths. It addresses common concerns, such as boosting confidence, managing workload pressures, stepping up to high-profile leadership roles, and navigating the sometimes tricky dynamics of team relationships.



Starting Out

The following questions are designed to help you reflect on your current situation, set clear goals for what you hope to achieve, and understand your role in the dynamics with the difficult individual at work.

As you go through this workbook, keep these questions in mind and revisit your answers to track your progress and growth.

Please use the spaces provided to write your answers, or use a notebook or your favourite notes app.



Get in Touch

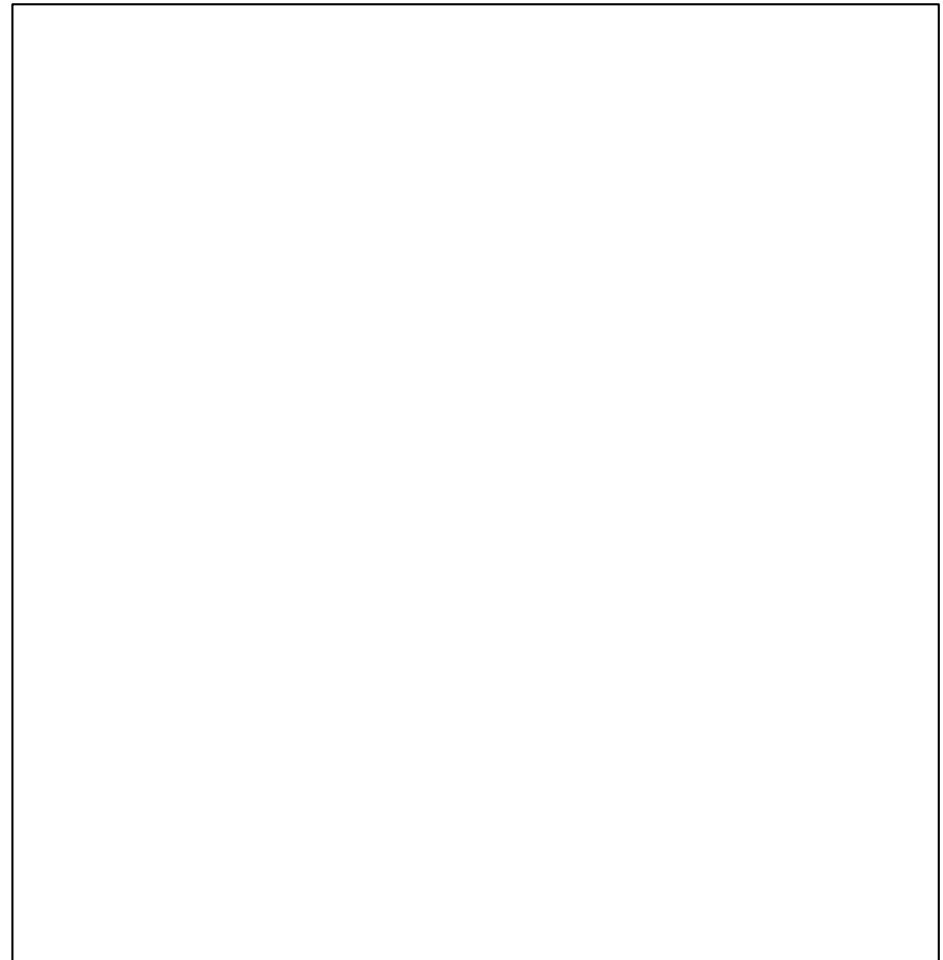
If at any time you need more guidance or want to go deeper into how to deal with a difficult person at work, use my website to discover more resources or to get in touch with me.

Just click or copy and paste the link below.

www.nickrobinson.org

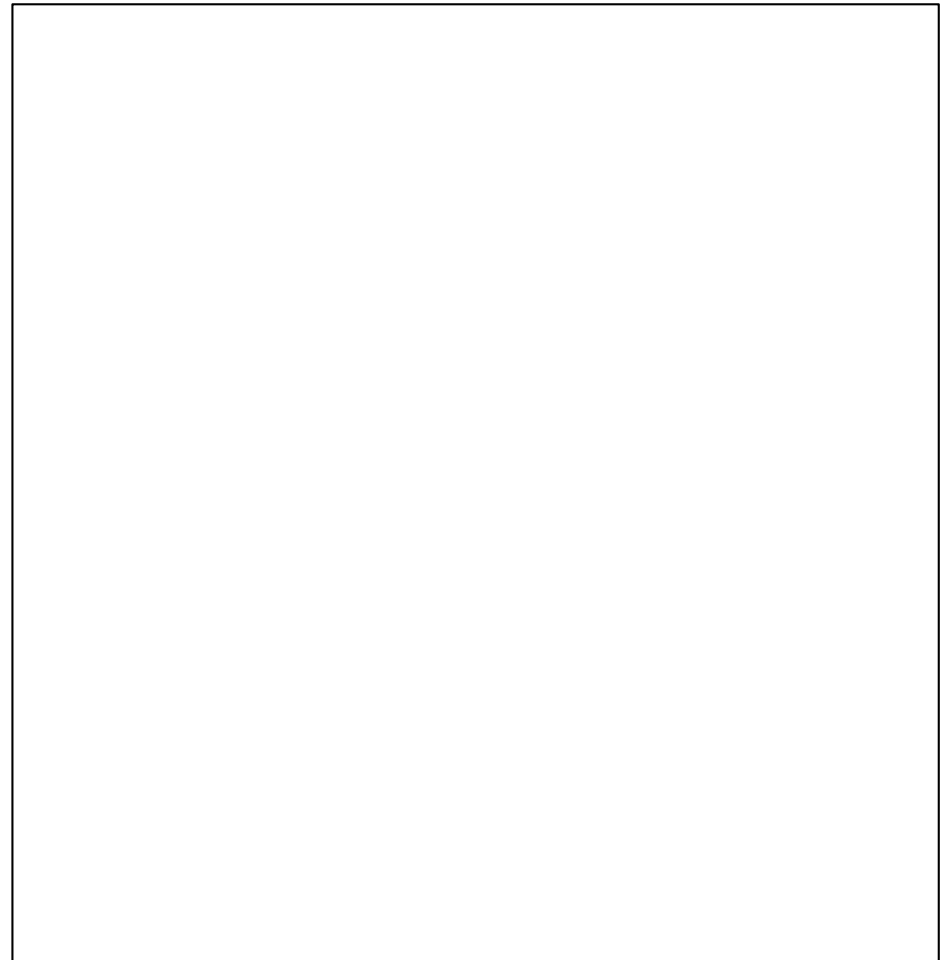
Your Situation

- Describe a current situation where you are dealing with a difficult individual at work.
- What do you notice?
- For example, what makes this person challenging to work with, and how does it affect your work environment?

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Your Goals

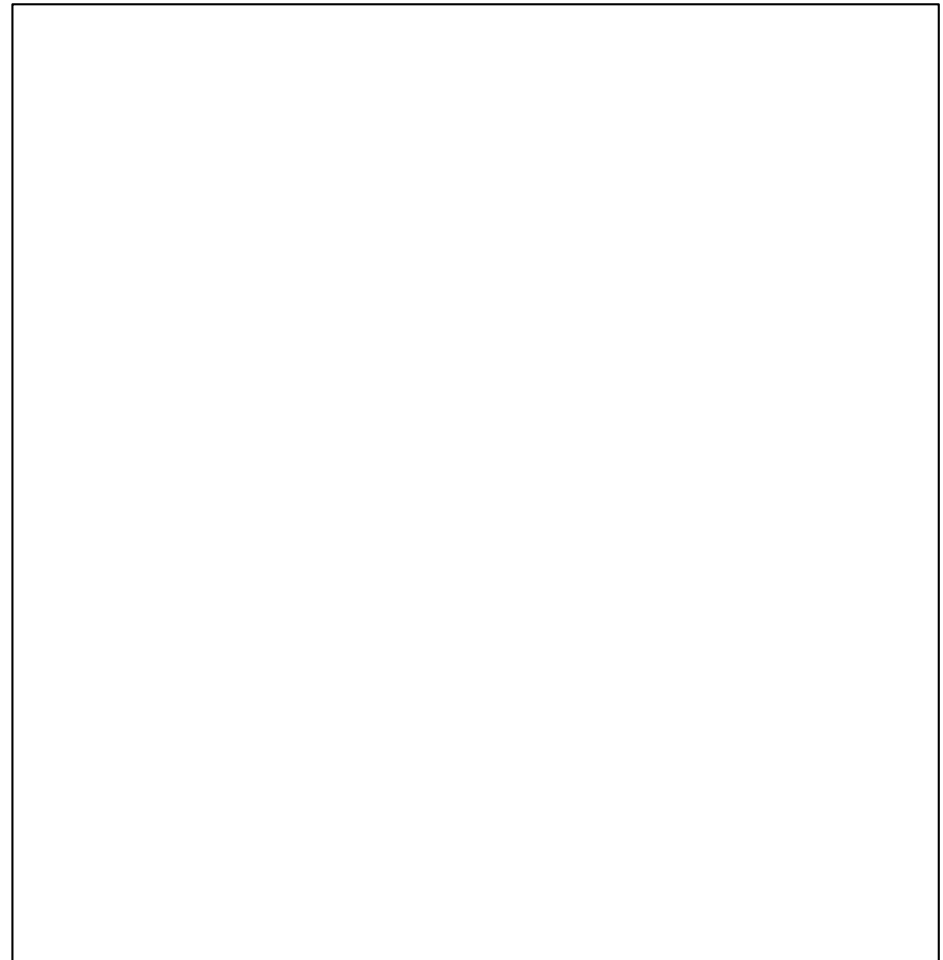
- What specific outcomes do you hope to achieve by using this workbook?
- In addition, what else would you like to achieve, for example:
- Are you looking to improve your communication skills, develop more patience, or perhaps gain a better understanding of how to handle conflict?

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Your Role

Make some notes about who you are in this situation.
For example:

- Are you a colleague, leader or team-member of a difficult person?
- Are you concerned that colleagues might be experiencing you as difficult?

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2. How to Use this Workbook

This companion workbook is designed to complement *The Nine Types of Difficult People* and help you put its strategies into action.

We'll visit the key concepts and tools, such as the Matrix of Difficult People, which aids in categorising challenging personalities we might encounter at work.

We'll delve into why things can go wrong in our interactions and how to spot signs that someone's behaviour has crossed the line into being too difficult to tolerate.

It's important to remember that being **different** is not the same as being **difficult**. We can and should accommodate differences. And we also need to recognize when things really aren't working as they ought to.

This workbook will give you practical strategies and exercises for dealing with each of the Nine Types of Difficult People. In part two, each section will consider one type in depth, helping you understand their behaviours and how to effectively respond.

Whether you're a leader, team member, colleague, or a supportive human resources professional dealing with a difficult person, this workbook is for you to use alongside my book.



Your Choice of Approach

In the "Choice of Approach" section of my book, I explore different ways to use it, depending on your immediate needs and circumstances.

Whether you're dealing with a specific difficult person urgently, or you're looking to gain a comprehensive understanding of difficult behaviours at work, or something in-between.

There are three choices of approach to using the book:

1. Complete
2. Urgent problem
3. Hybrid

Answer the questions that follow to help identify which approach is most suitable for you. And then refer back to the book itself for more guidance about where to start.



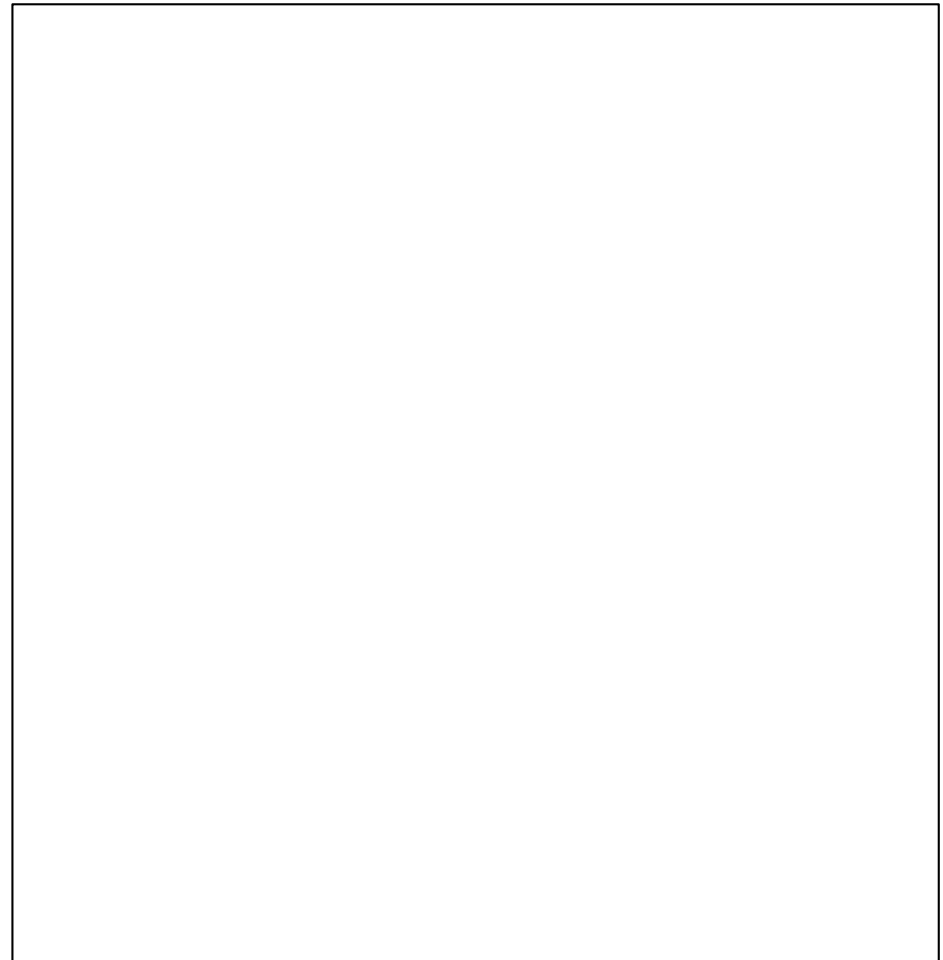
Complete Approach

This approach involves a comprehensive exploration of the book and workbook, starting from the beginning and working through to the end. It's ideal if you're looking to gain a thorough understanding of dealing with difficult people at work and the causes behind this.

Reflect on your own learning style and current needs. For example:

- Do you usually prefer to have a complete overview before diving into specific issues?
- How might taking this comprehensive approach enhance your ability to handle tricky situations at work in general?
- What leadership or wider responsibilities do you have in this situation?

If this approach feels best for you, carry on with section 3. Why Things Go Wrong at Work



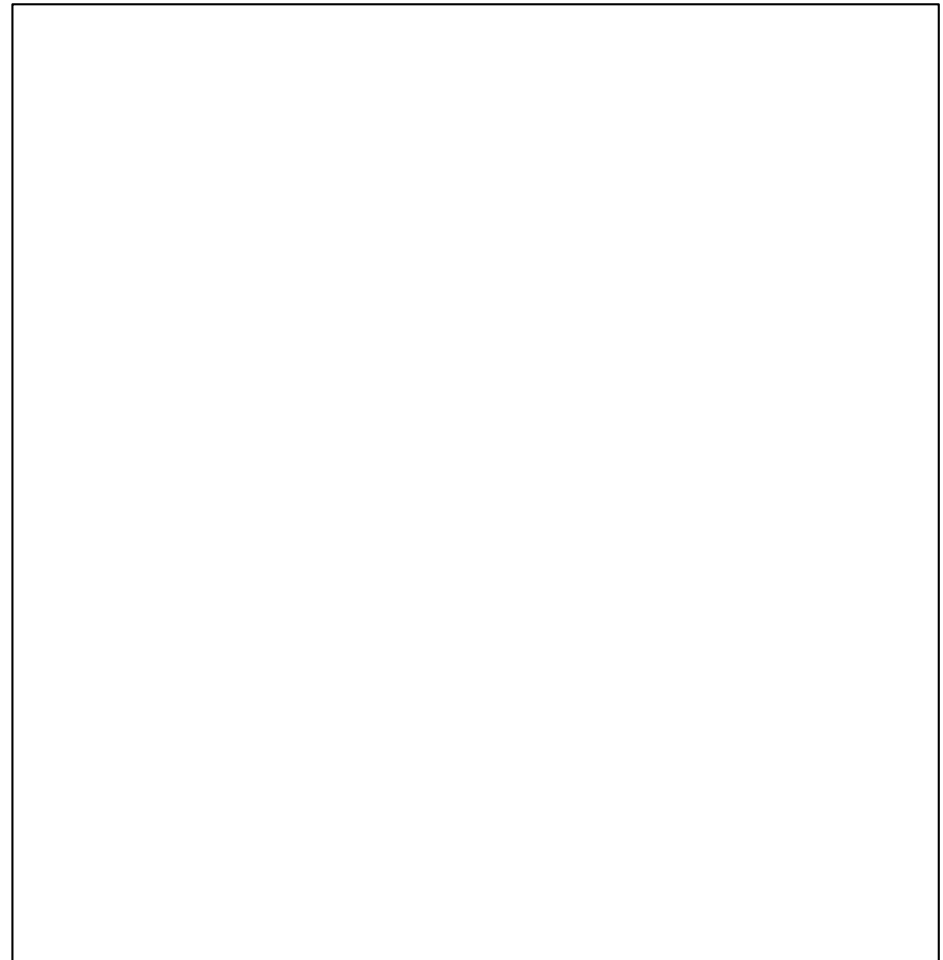
Urgent Problem Approach

This approach is designed for those who have identified a specific difficult person or situation that needs immediate attention. It suggests that you jump to a specific section of the workbook that addresses your immediate concern.

Questions:

- Describe a specific difficult person or situation at work that requires immediate attention?
- Reflect on Ch7 of the book, the Summary of Types. What are you noticing about the issues described there?

If this approach seems best for you, continue forwards from section 7 of this workbook.



Hybrid Approach

This approach offers flexibility. It's suitable if you're aware of a problem but are unsure about the specific behaviours causing it. It allows you to start with a general understanding and then delve into specific sections as needed.

Questions:

- Are you currently facing a situation where someone is difficult, but you're unsure about the specific problematic behaviours?
- Review ch.5. the Matrix of Difficult People at Work.
- Make some notes about your own observations and experiences of the “Task Focus” and “Stress Response” elements of the Matrix.
- How might a 'Hybrid' approach cater to your needs in dealing with such uncertain or complex situations – and how might it not be appropriate?

If this approach looks right for you, continue on from section 5 of this workbook.



3. Why Things Go Wrong at Work

There are four factors that contribute to somebody being experienced as difficult at work:

1. Leadership lapses
2. Turbulent times
3. Comfort zone breaches
4. The dimensions of my Matrix of difficult people

On their own, each of these would not normally be a problem. But when they overlap, possibly three or four at a time, that's when we get the perfect storm of a very tricky situation!

Use this section of the workbook to assess what factors might be contributing to the situation you are facing.



Leadership Lapses

Good leadership is always tough to do. When there are some missing or mismatched leadership functions, it can contribute to somebody becoming difficult at work.

The leadership lapses I see most often in my coaching practice include:

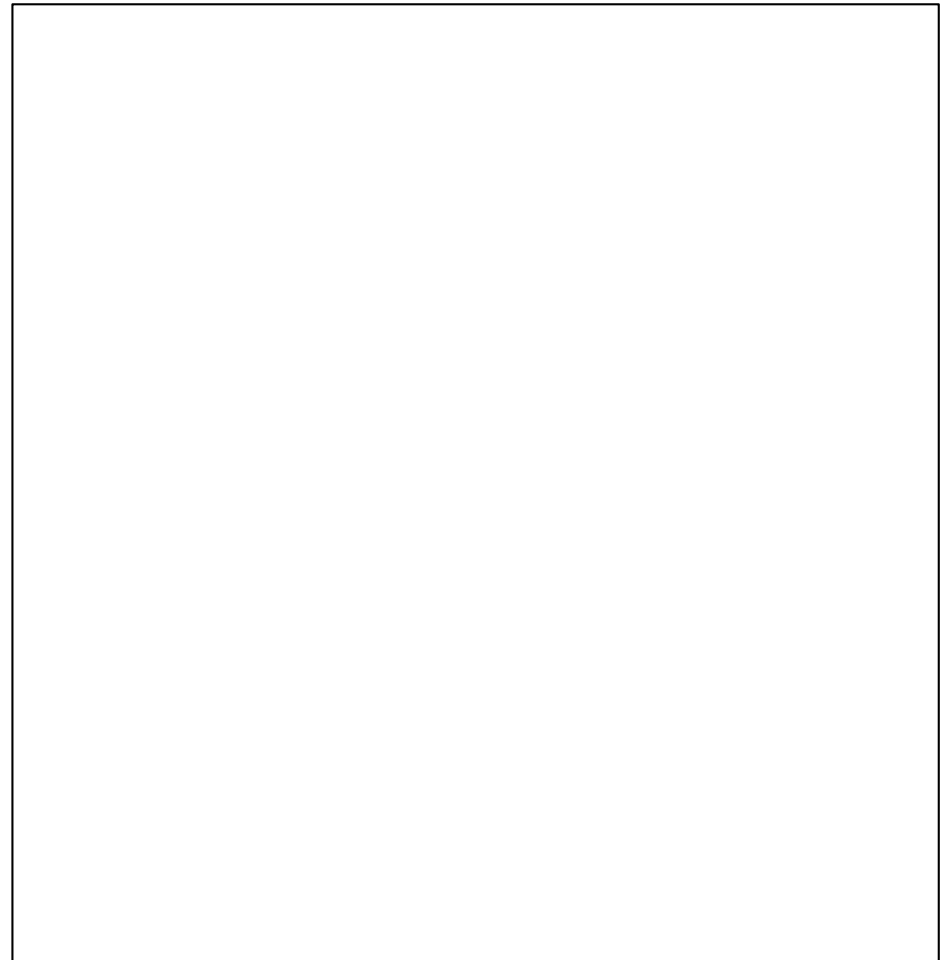
- mismatched levels or styles of communication
- inadequate co-ordination and planning
- elephants in the room.

Use my questions on the following pages to check if any leadership lapses might be causing or exacerbating a difficult-person situation in your workplace. Not all of them will apply to you.



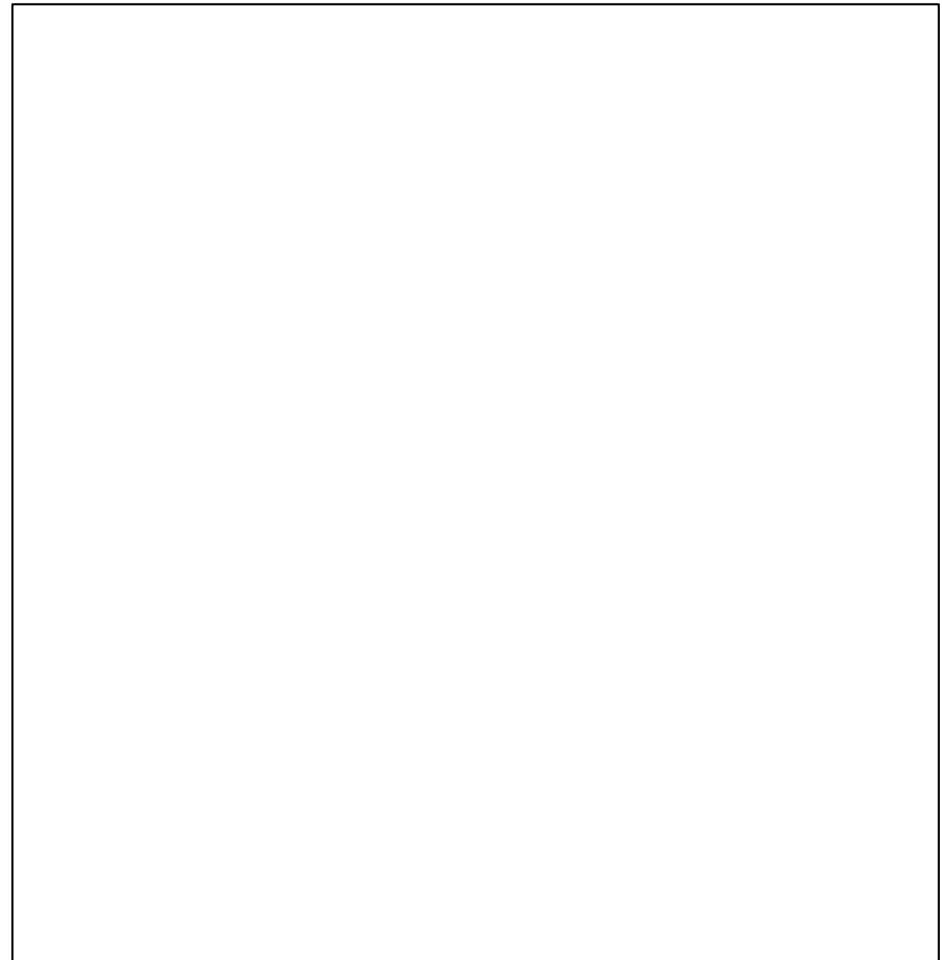
Leadership - communication

- How well do you and other leaders meet people's needs for recognition – being told when they are doing a good job?
- Is your communication style (the way you try to get your message across) convincing - so that people understand and effectively act on your communications?
- How do you measure how well you are doing in your communications with people?



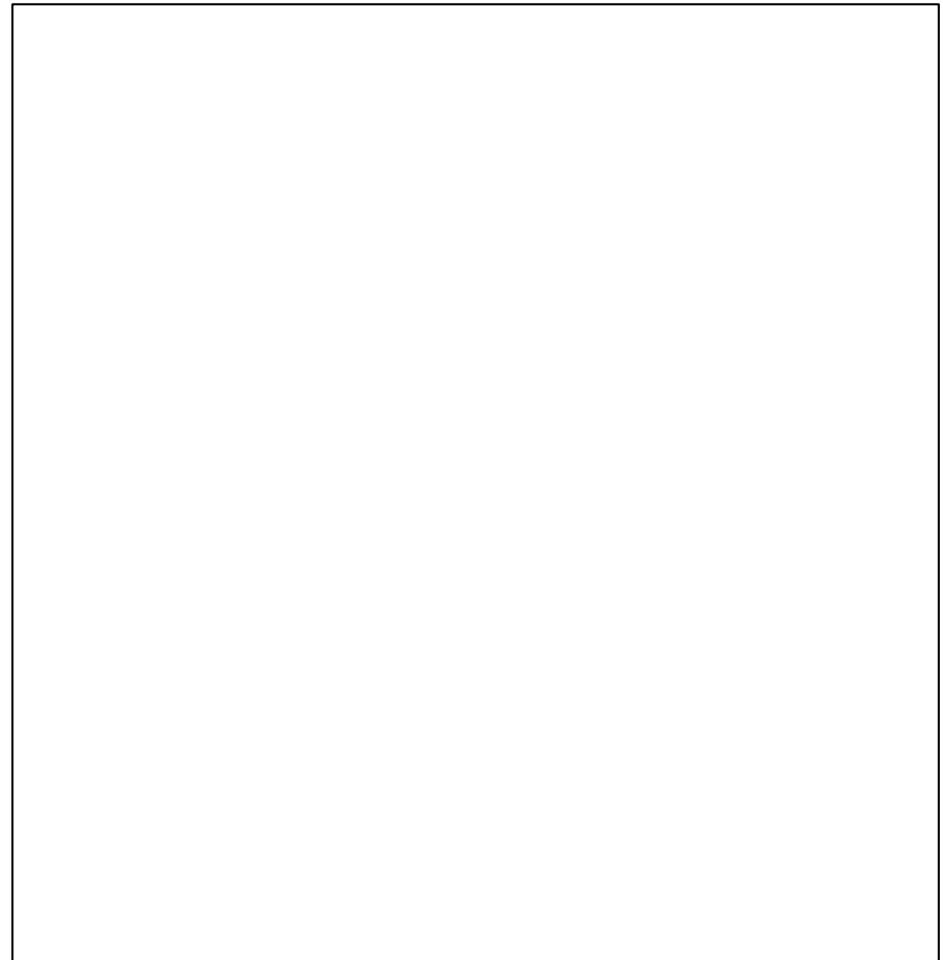
Leadership – co-ordination and planning

- How do you set clear priorities, so that people know how to square the competing demands of immediate tasks vs. longer-term strategy?
- How do you involve people in the development of the vision, so that they understand and own it?
- Have you turned strategy into actions, so that there's a visible set of projects to deliver the vision?



Leadership – elephants in the room

- What issues in the wider business might you be failing to deal with – even though almost everybody knows they exist?
- How often do you ask a selection of people: “In your opinion, what problems or opportunities are we not addressing?”
- What is a possible ‘no-go’ area in your business – an idea or a direction nobody dares to mention?



Turbulent Times

Businesses and other organisations often face turbulence in their operating environment.

Here are some of the most important circumstances when that turbulence might contribute to somebody being experienced as difficult at work.

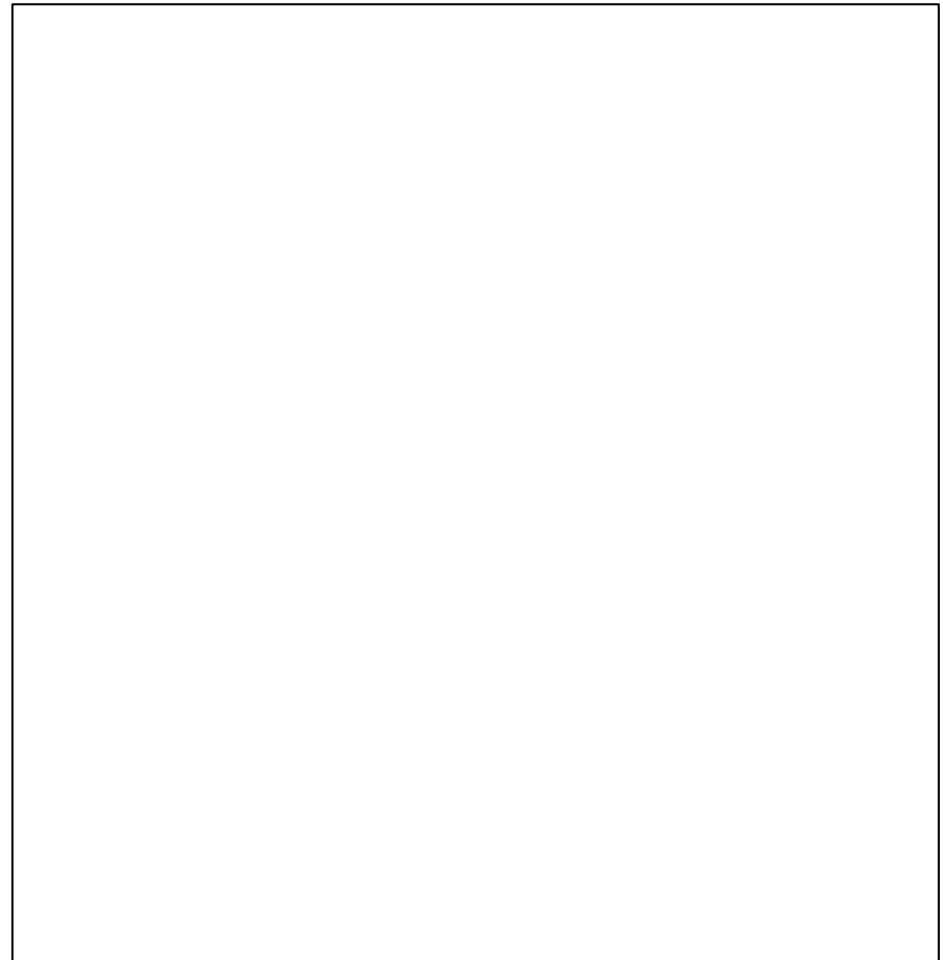
Use my questions to identify any actions you might want to take before you begin dealing with a potentially difficult person.



Turbulence and disagreements

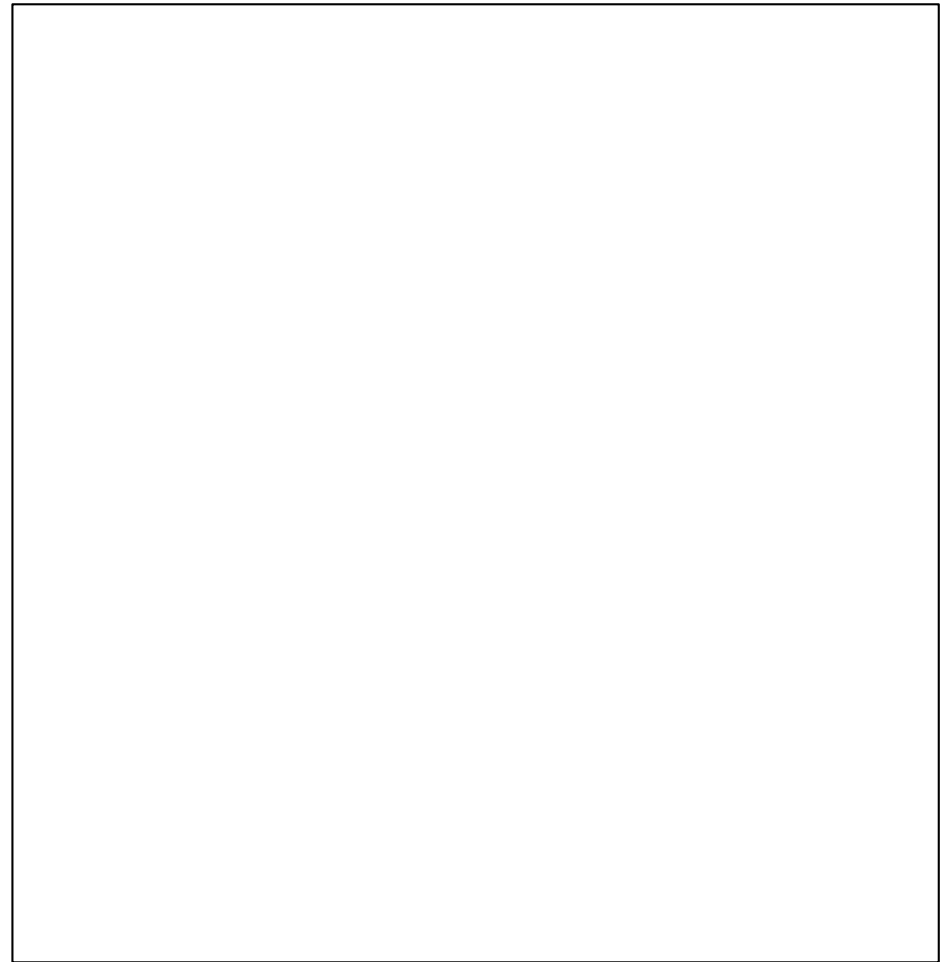
When people disagree with how you're proposing to implement a significant change or deal with a major uncertainty:

- How do you know if such disagreement exists? (because it can sometimes be easy to pretend it doesn't!)
- How might you more effectively influence those who do disagree?
- How well do you listen to other people's points of view, so that you are also positively influenced by them and their views?



People's reactions to turbulence

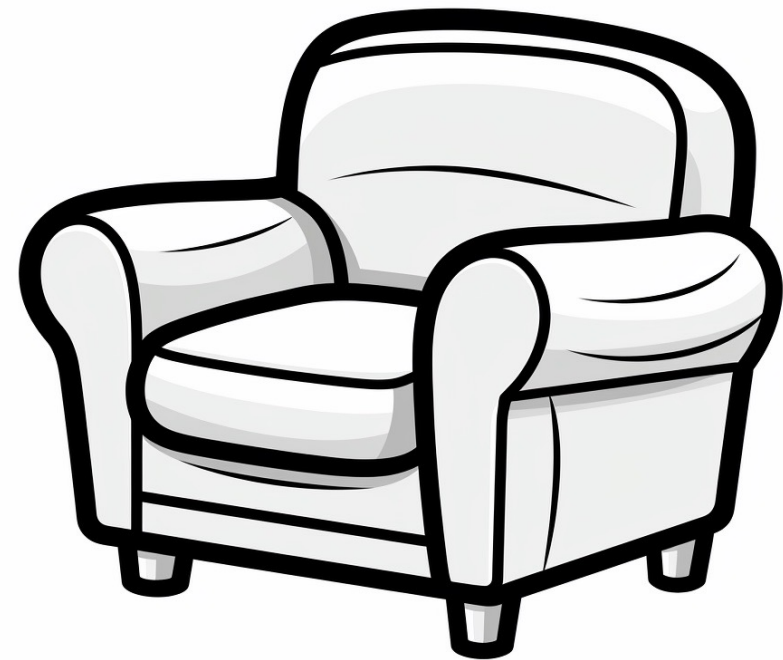
- People who **internalise** the impact of turbulence at work won't necessarily talk about it
- People who **externalise** its impacts might cause those around them to suffer
- How do you create a safe enough space for people to understand and process their own reactions to the turbulence your business might be experiencing?



Comfort Zone Breaches

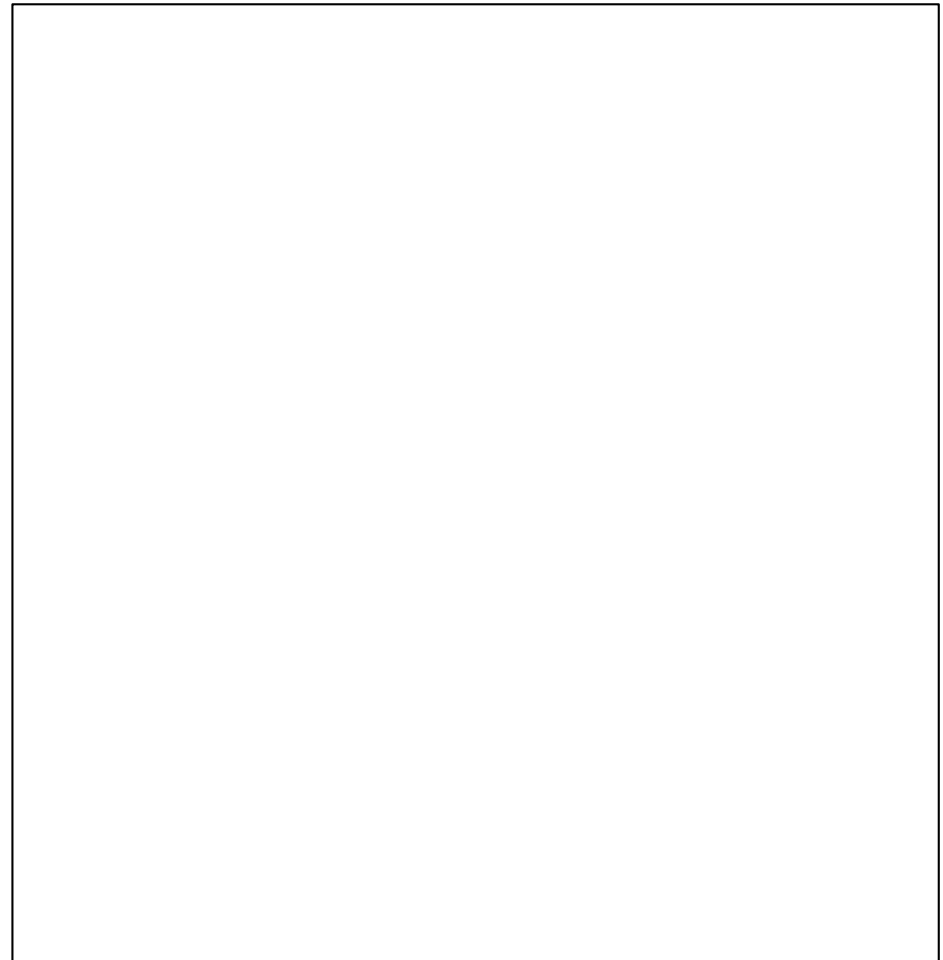
The Comfort Zone occurs when people feel familiar with and in control of their work. Too much comfort (inadequate 'stretch') or being too far out of a comfort zone for too long can contribute to somebody being difficult at work.

Use the following questions to help consider the bigger picture of how 'comfort zones' are approached in your organisation.



Comfort Zones – stretch and stress

- How do you ensure that people in your organisation are *appropriately* encouraged to 'stretch' - so that they can learn and grow?
- How do you monitor the impacts of potentially stressful situations?
- How do you help people to raise their own awareness of when stress might be affecting them – and to seek appropriate help when that is the case?



The dimensions of the Matrix of Difficult people

My Matrix of Difficult People has two dimensions which can both contribute to somebody being experienced as difficult at work:

- **Attention Focus**; and
- **Stress Strategy**

We'll cover both of those dimensions and how they effect different people in different ways in chapter 5 of this workbook.

The Nine Types of Difficult People

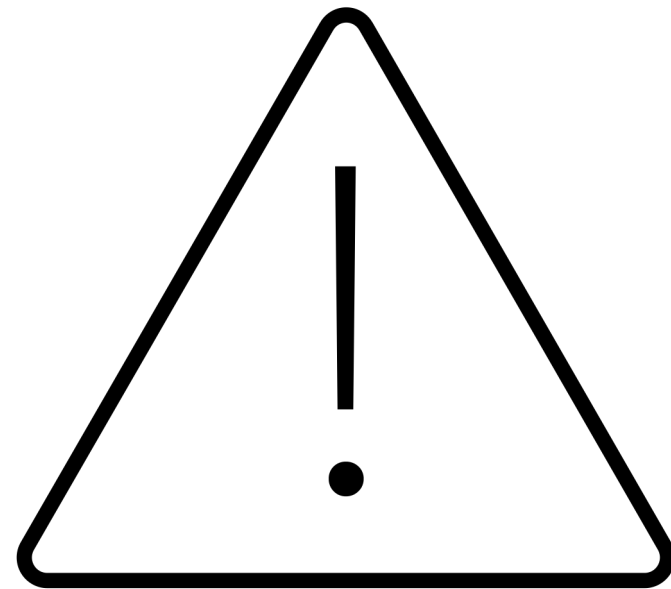
		Attention Focus		
		Tasks	Systems	People
Stress Strategy	Disconnection	 1. Scary Specialist	 2. Dark Strategist	 3. Martyr
	Excess	 4. Driving Force	 5. Revolutionary	 6. Empire Builder
	Avoidance	 7. Worrier	 8. Rock	 9. People Pleaser

4. Warning Signs at Work

Despite what you might think, spotting that there could be a difficult person at work isn't always easy.

Managers and leaders can be physically-distant or otherwise cut-off from what's going on. And even when it does feel like there might be a difficult person around, leaders are sometimes reluctant to acknowledge it. Either from a fear of making things worse by doing the wrong thing. Or just because they're stuck, not knowing what they should do to improve things.

This chapter of the workbook presents my four warning signs to look out for. The signs are a big picture indicator that one or more people in your organisation have hit a severe rough patch and the situation now really needs your attention!



Bruised, blocked or burnt-out

Make some notes about your experiences, using these prompts:

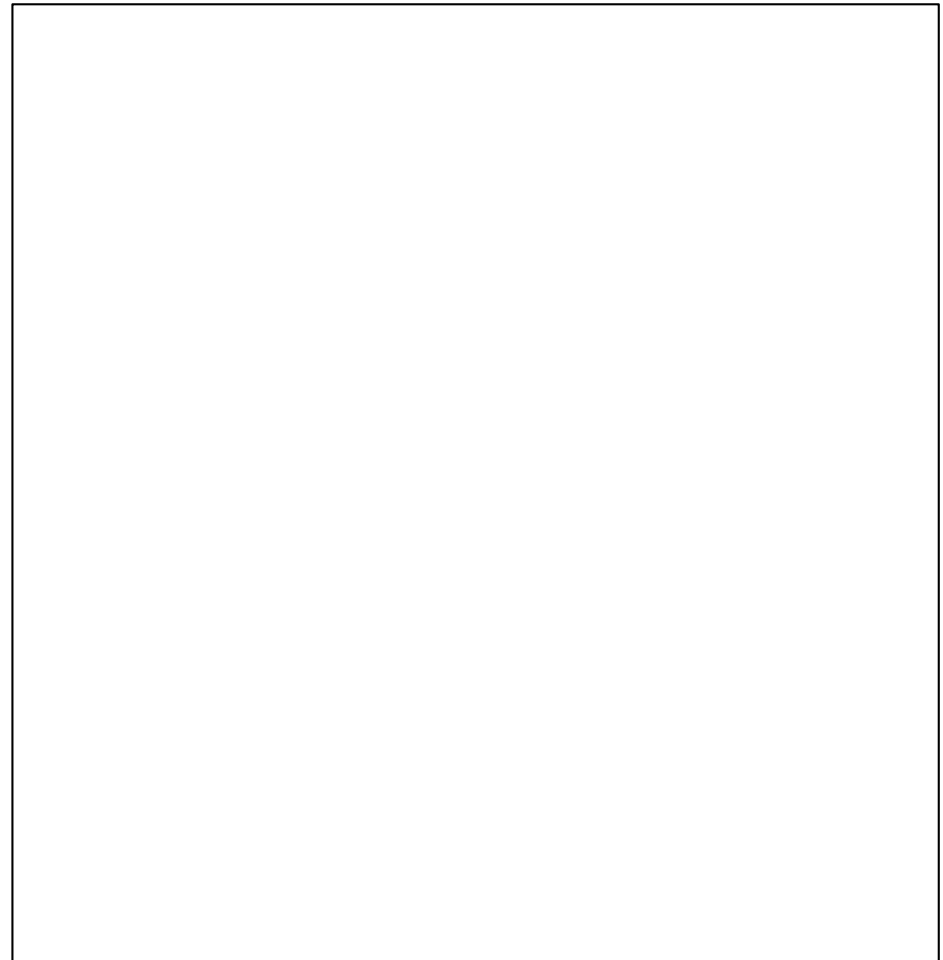
- Is there one specific person at work who leaves you feeling particularly **bruised** by your interactions? You might feel judged by them. Or even when you're in agreement, working with them just hurts!
- Perhaps there's someone who seems to block every idea or objective? They'll have a good reason, but their impact is always the same – **blocked** at every turn.
- Maybe there's someone who leaves you feeling exhausted, or **burnt-out** even? Managing or even keeping up with them comes at the cost of your energy and perhaps your well-being.



A great escape

Often the first clear sign that there's a difficult person somewhere in your business is a mass outbreak of other people leaving. This is expensive and hugely detrimental. In your organisation:

- Which departments seem to have a higher turnover than others?
- How many exit interviews are you or your business conducting – and what are they *really* telling you (or *not* telling you)?
- Which managers do people NOT want to work for, when they have a choice about it?



On shaky ground

Sometimes the indications of a difficult person are about feeling like you're on shaky ground. There's a sense of unknown unreliability. An area you can't lean on. A concern that a hole might open up under your feet.

Make some notes about any of the following issues you might have noticed:

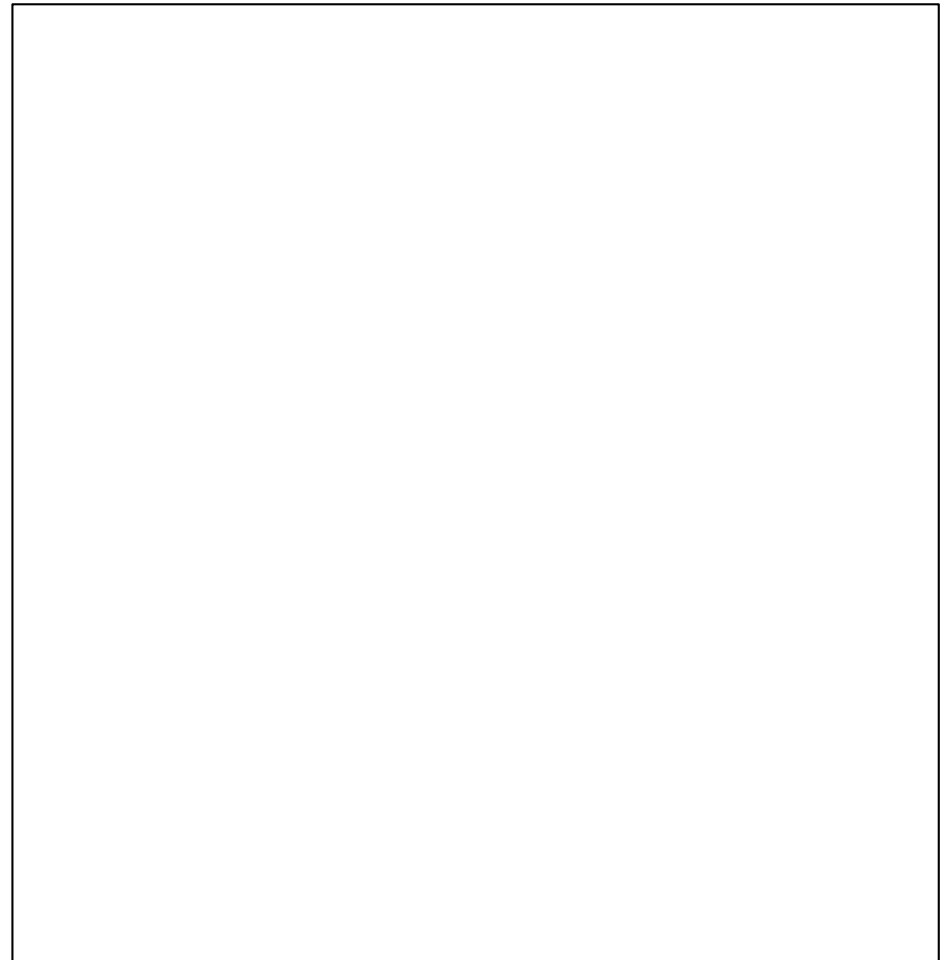
- People who you secretly avoid pushing forwards at crucial moments – in case they drop the ball
- Recent problems that you thought were being addressed but have come to light as actually unresolved
- More than one occasion when you've given someone the benefit of the doubt – but have some unspoken concerns about trust and/or reliability.

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Toxic culture

The presence of one or more difficult people can create a toxic wasteland. A part of the organisation where it's almost impossible to achieve anything worthwhile or positive. For the others in it, even surviving that culture is a struggle. Reflect on these questions:

- Have you recently appointed a 'tough' leader to tackle a big challenge – and are already hearing signs of the fallout?
- Is there part of your organisation that seems much less productive or manageable than other parts?
- What other signs are you seeing about low levels of people-engagement, including: lack of communication upwards; lower customer satisfaction; more absenteeism?



5. The Matrix of Difficult People

My Matrix of Difficult People is a way of understanding what's going on when someone seems too difficult at work.

The two main dimensions are:

- **Attention Focus** – how we receive and process different kinds of experience and relate to the people and things around us
- **Stress Strategy** – the ways in which we sometimes apply distorted versions of our strengths to try and deal with challenging circumstances

The questions about Attention Focus and Stress Strategy on the next two pages will help you prepare for taking my Quick Quiz of difficult types in chapter 6 of my book.

The Nine Types of Difficult People

		Attention Focus		
		Tasks	Systems	People
Stress Strategy	Disconnection	 1. Scary Specialist	 2. Dark Strategist	 3. Martyr
	Excess	 4. Driving Force	 5. Revolutionary	 6. Empire Builder
	Avoidance	 7. Worrier	 8. Rock	 9. People Pleaser

Attention Focus

Looking at **Attention Focus** will also help you to:

- Predict and relate to how someone typically prefers to operate at work;
- Notice if they're stuck or being inflexible in that one way of operating so as to cause problems.

Make some notes about the person you are dealing with. **Which of these is their typical focus or starting point:**

1. They focus on **tasks**? What needs doing; what measurable result is important; what is the most pressing activity right now? Or
2. They place importance on the 'how' of things? How activities are connected; how priorities fit into the bigger picture; how **systems** and processes work? Or
3. They usually put **people** first? Attend to specific people's needs; give weight to other's opinions; have concerns about people's influence?



Stress Strategy

The stress strategies are versions of strengths that come out wrong or at the wrong times – typically when we're under pressure.

Make some notes about the person you are dealing with. What have you noticed about how *they* operate under pressure.

Which of the following three options (disconnection, excess, or avoidance) is their typical stress strategy:

1. They tend to separate themselves? To **disconnect**; to take themselves off, stop trusting others and restrict access to resources? Or
2. They tend to come out fighting or be permanently and perhaps **excessively** ready to bounce back and keep trying harder and harder? Or
3. They tend to try their best to **avoid** problems, errors, rejection, conflict or change?



6. Quick Quiz

Use my Quick Quiz to identify which type of difficult person you might be dealing.

You can either:

- Read through the detailed descriptions in chapter 6 of my book and answer the questions there; or
- Take the online version of the Quick Quiz at the Nine Types website.

Use the tables opposite to record your answers.

Then refer to the key on the next page.

Group One		
A	B	C

Group Two		
I	II	III

Key to Quick Quiz

The matrix below shows the answers to your quick quiz. For example, if you selected option 'C' from Group One and option 'II' from Group Two, you've identified the Empire Builder. You can double-check your results using the summary of types in chapter 7 of my book.		Group One		
		A	B	C
Group Two	I	Type 1 Scary Specialist	Type 2 Dark Strategist	Type 3 Martyr
	II	Type 4 Driving Force	Type 5 Revolutionary	Type 6 Empire Builder
	III	Type 7 Worrier	Type 8 Rock	Type 9 People Pleaser

7. Summary of Types

On the next page I've set out some very brief descriptions of the nine types of difficult people.

I've also given some simple prompts to help you narrow down your choices as you identify which type you might be dealing with.

For a longer summary refer to chapter 7 of my book.



Checking Your Results

- Just from the descriptions opposite, which type seems most like the person you are dealing with?
- Which type did the Quick Quiz indicate to you – and how consistent is that answer with both your experience of that person and the description opposite?
- Which of the types can you rule out, because they definitely do *not* describe the person you are dealing with?
- If you had to make a shortlist of three, which types would those be?
- Just out of interest; when you're under enough pressure, which type of difficult person might *you* become?

1. The Scary Specialist Usually an expert in their field, with a deep and valuable understanding of a particular area.	2. The Dark Strategist Usually someone who likes having a grand plan and will work behind the scenes to perfect it.	3. The Martyr Usually a highly-principled person, with a strong sense of justice and clear belief that things should be improved for the betterment of all.
4. The Driving Force Usually a very resourceful, decisive and can-do person. They believe in their ability to overcome obstacles and, if necessary, to learn how to do so as they go.	5. The Revolutionary Usually a self-starting, enthusiastic person who is great at finding out about new ideas and different approaches.	6. The Empire Builder Usually a charismatic and visionary person with a powerful ability to recruit people to their cause.
7. The Worrier Usually a very conscientious and responsible person who takes their job seriously.	8. The Rock Usually a highly-responsible and committed person, with a deep sense of loyalty to the organisation.	9. The People Pleaser Usually a warm self-effacing person who has built-up a real depth of experience and a wide network of trusted and trusting connections.

8. Dynamic Principles to fine-tune your Mindset

In this chapter are the three mindsets that are most likely to help in shaping your strategy for dealing with a difficult person.

Use these to plan your approach. And also just to get your head in a good space for tackling potentially tricky issues in an effective, compassionate and well-rounded way.

I've called the principles *dynamic*, because they involve balancing seemingly opposite qualities or energies.

That dynamic balance makes the process much more flexible and gives it direction, instead of having the current situation remain rigid and stuck.



Positive Intention vs Actual Impact

Even the most difficult, seemingly counter-productive and troublesome behaviours are usually rooted in something called 'Positive Intention'.

This is the idea that people generally act with the intention of getting to an outcome which – ***from their point of view*** – is a positive one.

If we can look for and seek to understand what people's positive intentions are, then it:

- Makes it much easier to generate empathy
- Aids our interactions with them
- Boosts relationships and reduces the potential for conflict.

Take a moment to step into the shoes of the difficult person you are dealing with:

- What positive intentions, from their point of view might be behind their behaviour?
- What problem, pain, fear or struggle might they be trying to avoid?
- What opportunity, relief, confidence or ease might they be seeking?



Positive Intention vs Actual Impact

Positive Intention on its own though is not enough when dealing with a difficult person at work. It needs to be balanced with a realistic assessment of the actual impact their behaviour is having. Even if, from their point of view, their intention is positive.

Do some preparation now to both help you understand what behaviour is being most problematic and how you might discuss that with your difficult person.

As a result of what this person is doing or saying:

- What is happening?
- What changed because of them?
- On the whole, was the impact they had positive or negative?
- How were others left feeling afterwards?



Fierce Kindness

The second dynamic principle of Fierce Kindness enables you to tackle tricky situations with difficult people directly, without prevarication, but also with deep understanding and empathy. Here's how to prepare for and deliver it:

- Write down your *own* thoughts, feelings and needs in regard to the situation – do this in language that is clear and respectful
- Make notes about what boundaries have been crossed here – what limits need to be established to protect your own and others' well-being and productivity?
- Reflect on what usually enables you to do the following:
 - listen with full attention and with the goal of understanding
 - acknowledge other people's feelings without criticising or judging them.
- Consider what support you might be able and prepared to offer to your difficult person.

if you need further support yourself, there are more tips and suggestions for each of these in the relevant sections of part two of my book.



Empowered Agency

The third dynamic principle of Empowered Agency helps you to take a more strategic view on dealing with a difficult person.

If agency is the ability for individuals to take control and make choices, then empowerment is the external support and environment that allows people to exercise their agency properly and collaboratively at work.

When we have Empowered Agency, people will be equipped and motivated to act, accept accountability and engage effectively with others.



Empowered Agency

The empowerment part is about looking at your and your organisation's process for helping people to take responsibility, and achieve mutually-agreed goals. Here are some prompts to help assess it:

- How well do you and others leaders delegate to the people in your teams? And how do you know?
- Do people always have the necessary authority and resources to do what is being asked of them?
- How involved are people in the decision-making behind the tasks assigned to them?
- What else do you do to foster an environment of effective trust, open communication, and collaboration?
- **Which (if any) of the points above might have contributed to your current difficult person situation?**



Empowered Agency

Agency refers to an individual's own capacity to act independently, make choices and exert control. It's not a fixed trait, but more a skill that can be developed.

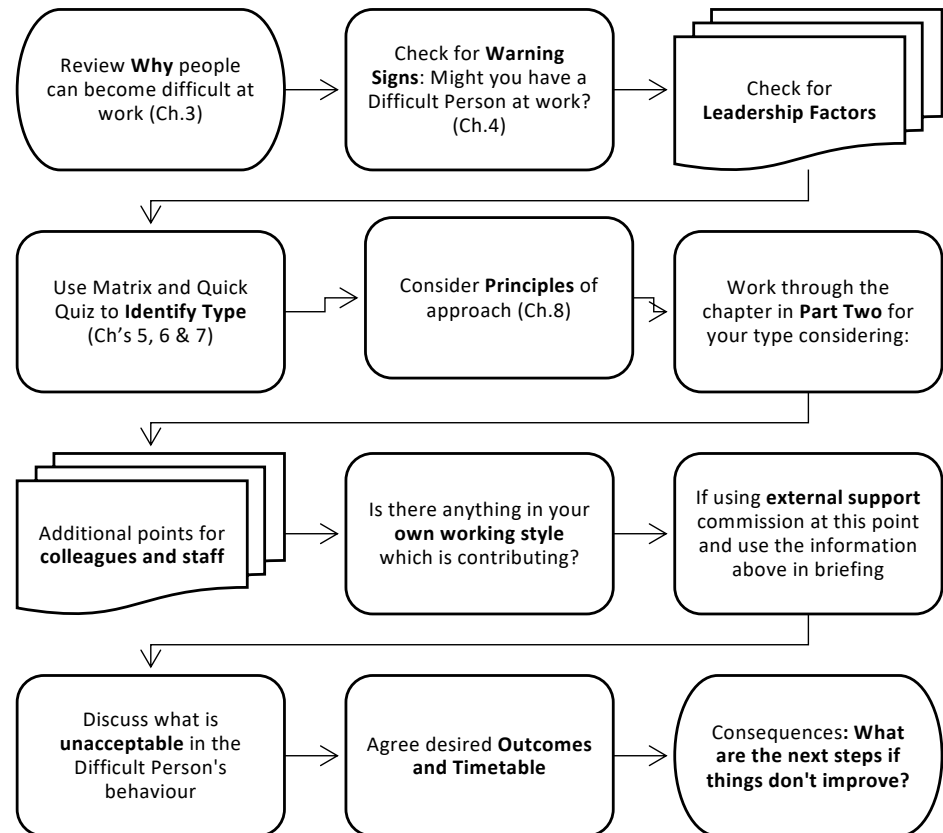
Thinking specifically about the difficult person you are dealing with, make some notes about your observations in the space opposite. Consider whether any of the following points might be an important development need for them and their agency.

- Capacity to take responsibility for what they say and do?
- Ability to express their opinions and concerns in a way that helps identify and solve problems earlier rather than later?
- Skills in empathising with others and understanding that more than one way of looking at things is healthy and useful?
- Willingness to grasp opportunities to direct their own tasks and careers?

A large empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the user to take notes about the person they are dealing with, as instructed in the text above.

9. Visual Flowchart

- Here are the key steps I normally apply and recommend for anyone who is dealing with a difficult person at work.
- Both my book itself and this workbook follow the main steps in the flow of this chart. So if you get stuck, aren't sure what to do next or find that an intervention you've tried hasn't worked out, return to this chart and see if you need to back-up a step or two.
- You'll see that there are extra steps indicated in the chart for 'Leadership Factors' and 'Additional Points for colleagues and staff'. For the sake of brevity, I haven't included those here on the chart, but they are covered in each of the main sections in part two of my book and here in this workbook where relevant.
- Check the Nine Types website for a complete download of this flowchart and the extra steps.



Part Two

Each chapter in Part two deals with a particular type of difficult person. Answer the questions and respond to the prompts here to help spot a difficult person and quickly improve relationships in your workplace.

10. Type 1 – The Scary Specialist

Usually an expert in their field, with a deep and valuable understanding of a particular area.

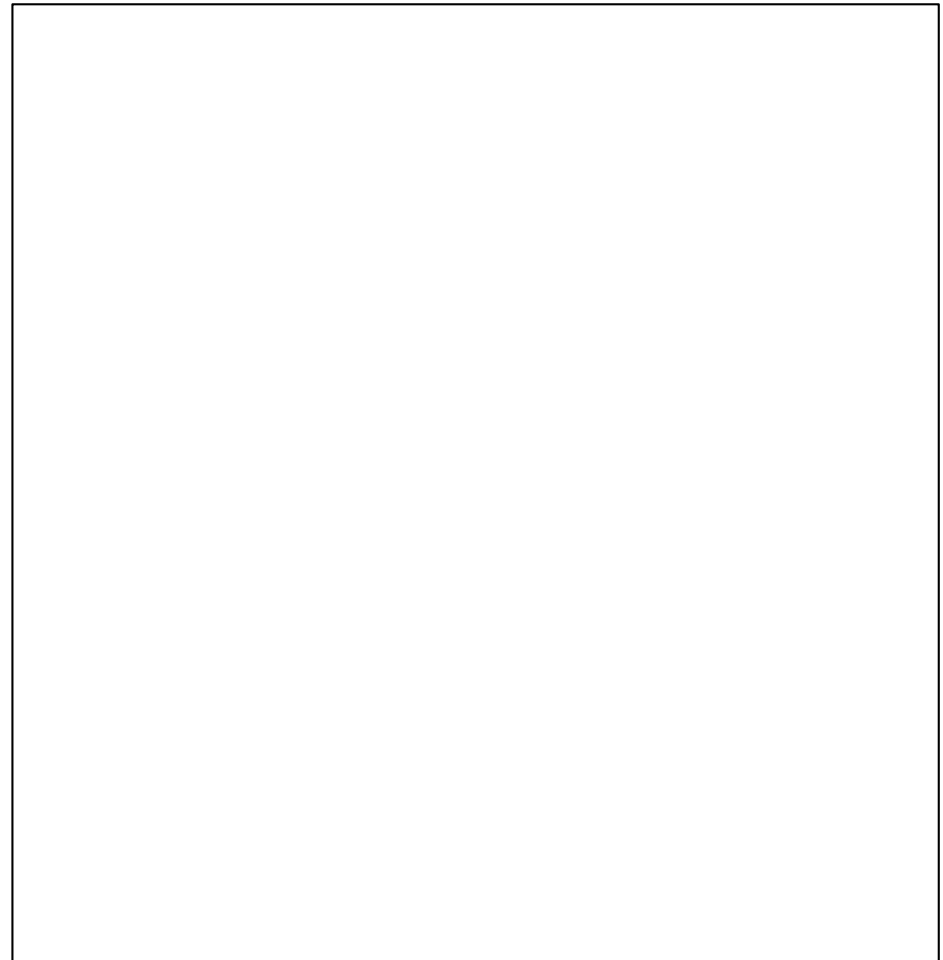
Use the spaces provided or your own notebook to answer the questions that follow.



Spotting a Scary Specialist

Use these prompts to help spot the signs of a Scary Specialist in your organisation. Make some notes about any of the following. Write about what you spotted and when:

- **Collateral damage** – people complaining about feeling threatened, belittled or locked-out. Turnover of staff going up.
- **Threats or demands** – you're tiptoeing around tricky discussion or decisions, and are facing demands to fix processes, systems or support functions
- **The drawbridge is up** – you're getting quite definite 'keep out' messages about their own domain; and they won't play a positive part in issues concerning the rest of the organisation.



Tips for Leaders of a Scary Specialist

Here are the areas where leaders of a Scary Specialist can really help to do something about how difficult they are being and quickly improve things at work. Use the space opposite to jot down your thoughts in response to these questions:

- Are they so important you'll need to tolerate their behaviour and re-arrange things around them to suit?
- Which parts or aspects of the rest of the organisation might need to be brought up to scratch, to match their requirements and expectations?
- How might you make it very clear that they need to change or suffer the consequences? What preparation would you have to do? How would you need to behave with them?
- What new competencies or skills do you want to demand that they develop? These should be things that help them to make a more rounded contribution. (see the Growth tips that follow for some ideas – but use your own knowledge of them and your organisation too)



Tips for Colleagues and Staff of a Scary Specialist

These are the issues that colleagues and staff of a Scary Specialist might want to focus on to quickly improve things at work. Use the space opposite to jot down your thoughts in response to these questions:

- In which aspects of your work (if any) might you genuinely need or want to raise your game a little?
- Who can you tell about the impact this situation is having on you and about what is going on? Friends, colleagues, HR, staff associations, professional bodies. Make a list now and then follow it up. Ensure that you're not tolerating or suffering in silence.
- What boundaries do you need to clearly establish and then protect? Working conditions, unacceptable behaviours, unreasonable requests, hours/time, space, resources etc. What else is a boundary for you?
- Staying connected with others can be an issue for staff and colleagues of a Scary Specialist. Which people and other parts of the organisation do you need to rebuild a connection with? What about outside the organisation, e.g. trade bodies, conferences?



Growth Tips for Scary Specialists

For anybody involved in supporting the professional growth and development of a Scary Specialist here are the key points and areas to consider addressing. Use the space opposite for your notes in response to these questions:

- You'll need to overcome their resistance by being comfortable with your own competency and expertise. What preparation or support might help you?
- Work on shifting their mindset and raising their awareness around their shame, self-sabotage and blaming habits. What models or other resources (in addition to my book, of course) do you want to use to help with this?
- There are two areas of skills and competency you might want them to address. What resources or referrals could you suggest to them for developing:
 - visionary leadership with a big-picture focus?
 - coaching and people-development skills?
- In addition, it will help a Scary Specialist to get more experience and exposure to the kind of listening and consensus-building skills that a really good chairperson exercises. How might you expose them to more of that kind of experience?



11. Type 2 – The Dark Strategist

Usually someone who likes having a grand plan and will work behind the scenes to perfect it.

Use the spaces provided or your own notebook to answer the questions that follow.



Spotting a Dark Strategist

Use these prompts to help spot the signs of a Dark Strategist in your organisation. Make some notes about any of the following. Write about what you spotted and when:

- **Secret, solitary planning** – they are cold and aloof; not working on emotional bonds; have locked themselves in a remote and quiet room
- **1-way info and lack of detail** – they request information, but supply little of it themselves; you're excluded from their planning; details and practicalities are not worked through
- **Manipulation and criticism** – they attempt to gain covert control; treat people like chess pieces; lack of transparency and consensus; critical of those who don't understand the grand plan.



Tips for Leaders of a Dark Strategist

Here are the areas where leaders of a Dark Strategist can do something about how difficult they are being and quickly improve things. Use your notebook or the space opposite to jot down your responses to these prompts:

- Acknowledging their need for a 'grand plan' can be helpful, as well as their need for solitary reflection time
- What opportunities and experience can you use to role-model a more inclusive and collaborative way of planning and tackling problems?
- How is your *own* capability for using models and abstract frameworks for understanding problems and opportunities and planning how to address them? Is there a need for *you* to adopt more of this way of approaching things?
- 'Done is better than perfect' – what opportunities can you use or create to persuade them to deliver more and worry less about planning for every contingency?
- Start having some frank conversations about their tendency to treat people as chess pieces. How does it make others feel? What's the impact of it?

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the user to write their responses to the prompts listed on the left.

Tips for Colleagues and Staff of a Dark Strategist

There's a lot here, so I've tried to keep them brief! Write down your responses to these prompts:

- Lack of recognition – which other sources (a coach, a learning and development set, an external interest group) could you use to tell you when you're doing a good job?
- Connections – who in your organisation and outside it might you need to build (or rebuild) better relationships with?
- Boundaries – don't tolerate a Dark Strategist if they are belittling or undervaluing you. Call them on it and be very clear about what needs to change.
- Involvement/autonomy – they may be closed or hostile to you playing a full part in projects. They may try to move you around like a chess piece. What more involvement and autonomy might you need, so that you can be at your best?
- Being someone who gets stuff done is a good complement to a Dark Strategist. How might you apply more of your strengths in proactively getting things done?
- Upskill your strategic thinking – how might you learn to think a bit more like a Dark Strategist? There are some suggestions in my book about what to start with.



Growth Tips for Dark Strategists

For anybody involved in supporting the professional growth and development of a Dark Strategist here are the key prompts.

- Always start with the bigger picture and if you have a leadership or development model/framework in your organisation, use it. Or ask them to construct their own.
- Help make things more tangible and real by asking them about: the specific people they need to have good working relationships with; the actual task and priorities that need addressing; the true impact that their behaviour is having?
- Explore the importance and functioning of 'connection'. What happens if they separate and disconnect themselves; how might they build more connection with others without becoming overwhelmed - and how would they know if it was working?
- Get them to practice treating people as people – and not chess pieces. How might they learn more about others or even get stuck in alongside them?
- Communication is a two-way street. How could your Dark Strategist allow for more listening, feedback and checking of others' understanding?
- What steps can they take to make sure the rubber hits the road earlier rather than later? What else might they do to create quicker and more tangible outcomes?



12. Type 3 – The Martyr

Usually a highly-principled person, with a strong sense of justice and clear belief that things should be improved for the betterment of all.

Use the spaces provided or your own notebook to answer the questions that follow.



Spotting a Martyr

Use these prompts to help spot the signs of a Martyr in your organisation. Make some notes about any of the following that you might have spotted and when:

- **Indirect criticism** – you're left feeling judged and found wanting by them, as if you haven't lived up to their ideals for principles, integrity or work ethic
- **Defensive cordon** – you notice either you're stuck outside the perimeter, with no access to their team of people; Or you're stuck on the inside, where one or two lame ducks are protected and being carried by the Martyr
- **No compromise; no progress** – you're getting indirect push-back against a reasonable suggested solution; Or you notice that no progress has been made, when it could have been if only one or more unnecessary restrictions had been relaxed.



Tips for Leaders of a Martyr

Here are the areas where leaders of a Martyr can help to make a real differences. Jot down your responses to these prompts:

- Share your principles with them – what are the values or principles that you bring to your work? And how have those benefited others?
- What discussions about the bigger agenda are you having that you could include them in? Focus on discussions that cover real-world constraints that the organisation faces and external stakeholders and influencers who also need to be satisfied.
- Is there any possibility that you might have set them up to fail – e.g. have asked them to deliver something that requires compromises you wouldn't accept or external constraints over which they have no control?
- Consider your organisation's attitude to failure. How acceptable is it to fail there? How might attitudes about failure be getting in the way of progress for your Martyr?



Tips for Colleagues and Staff of a Martyr

- Is a Martyr denying you access to their team?
- Are you being unfairly judged or criticised about your work ethic or integrity?

Both of the above can be dealt with in a straightforward conversation. Make some notes about what happened, the impact it had on you, and how you want their interactions with you to be different in future.

Check for these three potential areas of fallout from being around a Martyr. What steps could you take, sooner rather than later, to counter them:

- becoming disconnected from other parts of the organisation
- not getting the career-development opportunities you need (because they're being overly protective)
- becoming a martyr yourself by hanging around too long if a big project is about to fail?



Growth Tips for Martyrs

To help in supporting the professional growth and development of a Martyr, here are some useful prompts:

- Explore what judgments they might be making about others – especially those around seeing people as uncommitted or lacking integrity. What's the impact of holding those judgements?
- What barriers do they have towards compromise for the sake of progress? Fears and concerns around imperfect solutions, or principles at stake? What would make progress worthwhile and justify a potential compromise?
- What tools and techniques might they need to investigate to help them get better at strategic influencing? (there are some simple suggestions in my book)
- Where might they be self-sacrificing? In regards to their health, their work-life balance, the cost of being in opposition, or the impact it has on not actually achieving their goals?



13. Type 4 – The Driving Force

Usually a very resourceful, decisive and can-do person. They believe in their ability to overcome obstacles and, if necessary, to learn how to do so as they go.

Use the spaces provided or your own notebook to answer the questions that follow.



Spotting a Driving Force

Here's how to spot a Driving Force in your organisation. Write about any of the following signs you might have noticed:

- **“Like getting hit by a truck”** – look out for someone who simply will not be argued or disagreed with and will come back at you very forcefully if you try
- **Disregard for the weaklings** – a refusal to listen to or a blindness to the views of anybody they perceive as lacking in personal power
- **Impatience with the corporate agenda** – it doesn't matter what you've all approved as a course of action, a Driving Force will want to throw everything at it immediately, regardless of the pace and sequence you've actually agreed on or the impact this will have.



Tips for Leaders of a Driving Force

Here are the areas where leaders of a Driving Force can get them onside and utilise their strengths properly:

- Share your version of their 'can-do' resourcefulness – why are you doing things the way you do; what outcomes are you shooting for?
- Do more to embed their understanding of the bigger corporate agenda – what is the consensus at a very senior level about current priorities? And what is *not* seen as a priority just now?
- How might you be quite direct in asking them to develop their soft-skills, especially those around:
 - making their own efforts more sustainable without having to suddenly retrench?
 - being able to value and influence a wider range of people, not just the other 'can-doers'?
- What can you do to relieve some of the pressure around their concern that they'll run out of time to achieve everything they think they need to do?



Tips for Colleagues and Staff of a Driving Force

Start with these points:

- What 'win-wins' can you identify that will help to move your Driving Force away from being combative and towards more collaboration?
- List the boundaries that you might need to protect if working around a Driving Force, especially those around workload and pace. Then be direct and specific in communicating these. What solutions could you offer – instead of just telling them it's a problem?
- If you need to influence a Driving Force it helps to come across as proactive and outcome-focussed. Ask yourself: what needs doing? where will you start? what will it make possible?
- Your Driving Force will be expecting you to have complete charge of your own development. So make sure you're being direct and proactive about it. What support do you need from them? How might you need to stand your ground against any counter-suggestions?



Growth Tips for Driving Forces

To help in supporting the professional growth and development of a Driving Force, here are some areas to focus on:

- Explore what is behind their drive. Might their self-worth be coming solely from their achievements at work? What if they no longer needed to rise to *every* challenge, but could be more strategic and choosy about it?
- How could they make their efforts more sustainable? What would be the benefits of having some energy in reserve? What's the cost of not doing so? What are the early-warning signs that they might have bitten-off more than they can chew?
- How might they learn to value others for who they are, rather than just whether they also share their 'can-do' abilities? Could they explore curiosity about others? Could they look for the positive benefits of different approaches and ways of thinking?



14. Type 5 – The Revolutionary

Usually a self-starting, enthusiastic person who is great at finding out about new ideas and different approaches.

Use the spaces provided or your own notebook to answer the questions that follow.



Spotting a Revolutionary

Write about any of the following signs you might have noticed. These will help you to spot if you've a Revolutionary in your organisation:

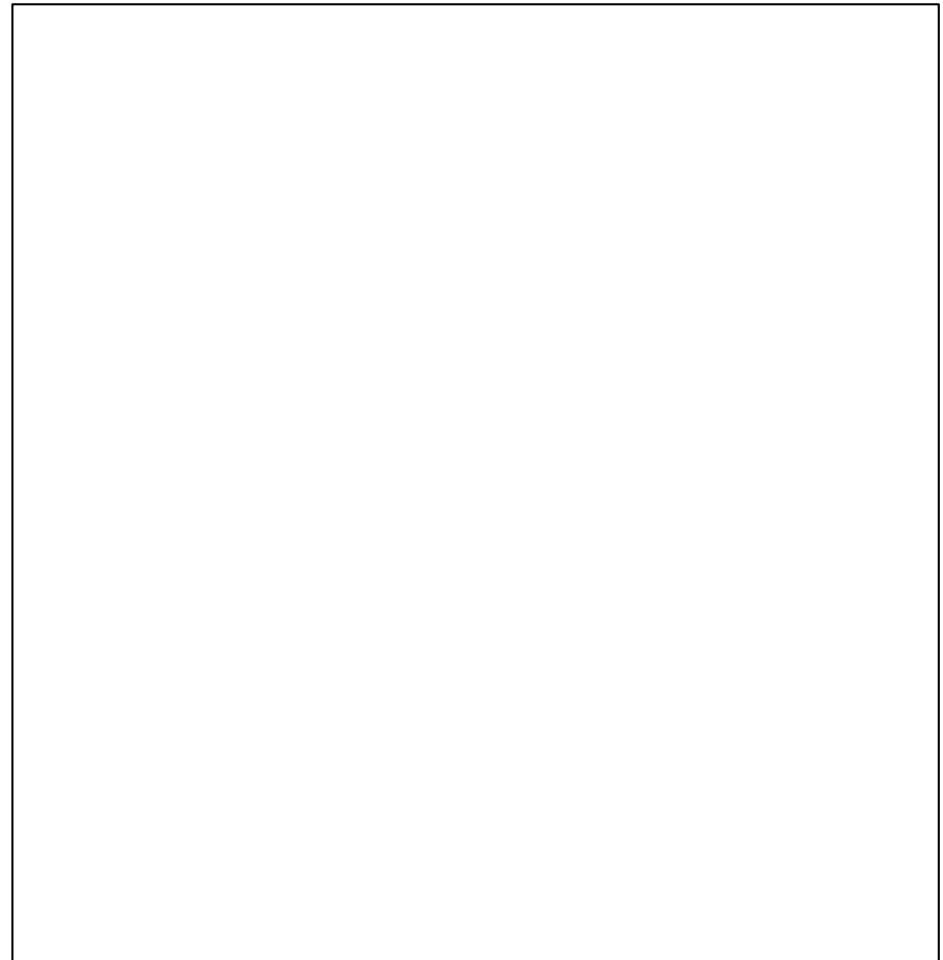
- **It feels like holding a tiger by the tail** – so long as you don't let go, things are safe. But the tiger doesn't like it!
- **Burn out by association** – working around a Revolutionary can be tiring and overwhelming, both with the scope and pace of what's going on
- **Fallout** – a Revolutionary's actions will often cause social and political fallout, as they charge ahead without building consensus.



Tips for Leaders of a Revolutionary

Here are the areas where leaders of a Revolutionary can guide and shape their efforts:

- Are they the right person for the job? Do you *need* fast, extensive and revolutionary change?
- What's your common ground, the important area that you really need them to focus on, and which also interests them?
- What must they not do or not exceed? What bridges must not be burned along the way?
- How might you smooth the way for them?
Removing obstacles; opening doors; cleaning-up any necessary fallout?
- How do you make sure they don't burn themselves out? And that they take time to recharge, taking a break from putting the world to rights?
- And how do you make sure they're not burning-through team members too?



Tips for Colleagues and Staff of a Revolutionary

Working successfully alongside a Revolutionary is largely about not getting too swept up by their zeal. Here's what to look out for:

- Boundary management – make sure you tell them where your boundaries are. Things to consider include: what are you *not* prepared to do? what does a reasonable work-life balance look like for you? what else do you also need to get done?
- Planning and project management – don't let them make you spin *all* the plates at once. Ask them what the plan is and how you will track progress. Push back against a lack of priority or sequencing: what needs to happen first; what gets de-prioritised if something more important comes up?
- Allies and consensus – don't adopt their tendency to leave people by the wayside. Consider: which potential allies do you and the team need? What stakeholders need to be convinced? How might you stay safe yourself if the Revolutionary is blowing up organisational and relationship bridges?



Growth Tips for Revolutionaries

There's quite a few, so I'm just going to jump in:

- Gain rapport and overcome their resistance by being open and honest about your own agenda – what is your role and objective here? How will you avoid taking sides, if there's a schism in their workplace?
- Help them explore any limiting mindsets. Especially around shame – does part of their zeal come from a sense of not being 'good enough'?
- Support them to develop useful skill-sets in project-management and planning, as well as interpersonal skills, such as influencing and consensus-building. If you've successfully overcome their resistance (see above) you can be quite directive in what resources you suggest for this.
- Encourage them to be less consistently conflict-seeking. Who might otherwise be a good ally or source of moral support for them? How might they spend more time around people who aren't all that bothered by their cause?



15. Type 6 – The Empire Builder

Usually a charismatic and visionary person with a powerful ability to recruit people to their cause.

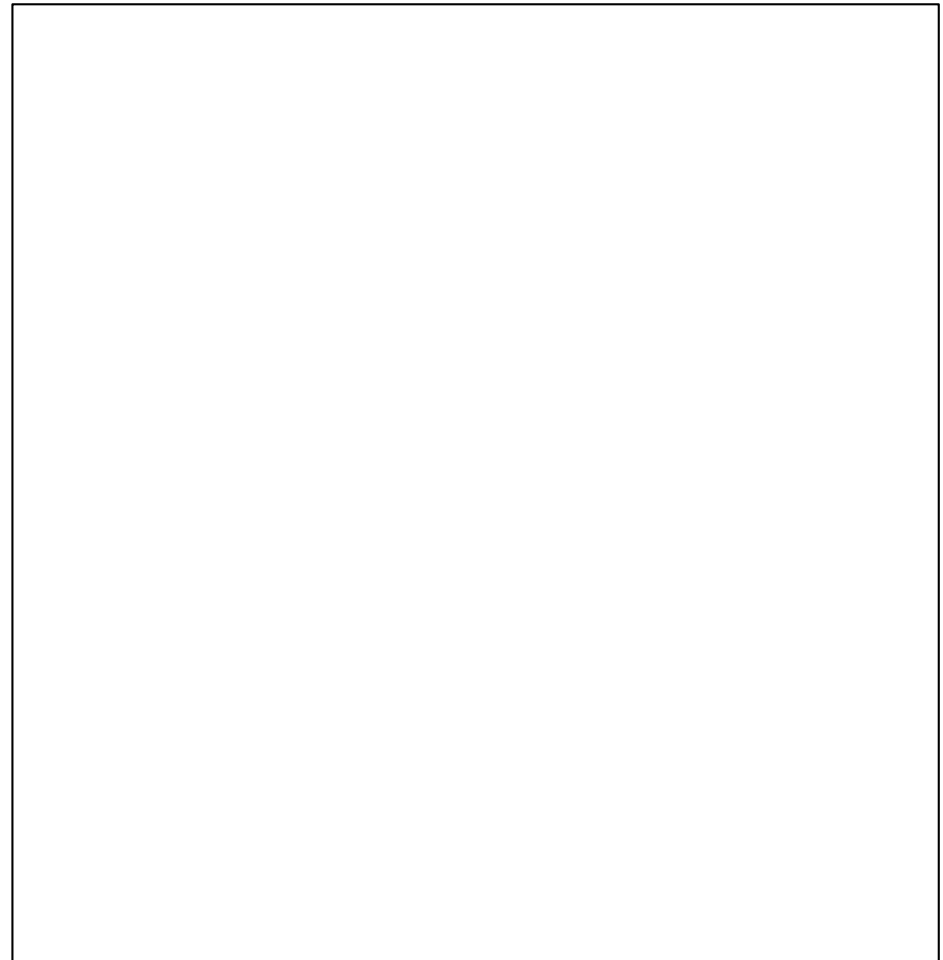
Use the spaces provided or your own notebook to answer the questions that follow.



Spotting an Empire Builder

You may already have felt the strong charismatic pull of this type. And if they're being difficult at work, then here are the negative aspects of an Empire Builder that you might also have noticed:

- **“You’re either for me or against me”** – trying to point out any flaws in their approach, or even just mentioning an obstacle in the way, may be taken as personal criticism
- **“My team can take care of that”** – they may try to sweep up into their control anything that might even slightly impinge on their agenda
- **Point-blank refusal to face problems** – they may try to hide or deny that there are problems, for fear of seeming unconfident, uncertain or hesitant – which they worry might cause them to lose followers.



Tips for Leaders of an Empire Builder

Two areas of role-modelling are important for leaders of an Empire Builder:

- What can you share with them (and perhaps even in the company of others, so that they see you doing it) about your own feelings of vulnerability, uncertainty and overwhelm?
- The best visions *include* those problems that will need to be addressed, instead of denying they exist. How might you use your own visionary leadership to demonstrate this principle to them?

After that, focus on these enforcement and mentoring aspects to help get the most from an Empire Builder:

- Enforcing a more collective approach – which specific people and dissenting voices do you want your Empire Builder to listen to and engage with more?
- They may not have developed their systems- and task-focus abilities. Which aspects of these skill sets might you need to mentor them on?



Tips for Colleagues and Staff of an Empire Builder

Here are some tips for working successfully with an Empire Builder, including how to effectively disagree with them:

- Who do you need to build consensus with, so that you're not a lone, dissenting voice?
- They are focussed on the needs and wants of their followers. Which 'people aspects' of a situation can you emphasise, in order to get their attention and influence their thinking?
- How might you use the "Yes, and ..." tactic to bypass their resistance?
- Look out for your own territory and borders – is your role, department or project about to get swept up by an Empire Builder? Which allies, influencers and resources might you need to engage with before this happens?
- Boundaries – where might you be at risk of getting 'used' in the process of working alongside an Empire Builder?



Growth Tips for Empire Builders

There are two preparation steps:

- How you feel inside about your own abilities? They are likely to spot any insecurities, since they share them!
- Where might you be at risk of colluding with their self-propaganda or charisma?

Then explore the gap between the confidence and charisma they project and how they feel on the inside:

- Self-doubt – what inner-dialogue can you help them notice, especially the “I can’t’s...” and the “I won’t be able to’s”? What about any feelings of anxiety or insecurity?
- Shame – any feelings around not being strong enough or likeable enough? Any inner dialogue, such as “If they knew what I was really like ...”?

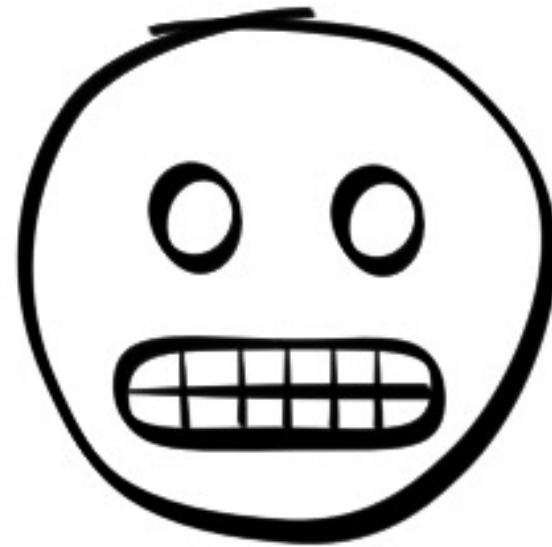
Then help direct their skills development towards Task-management and Systems-thinking. See the tips for leaders part of my book for more detailed suggestions.



16. Type 7 – The Worrier

Usually a very conscientious and responsible person who takes their job seriously.

Use the spaces provided or your own notebook to answer the questions that follow.



Spotting a Worrier

To spot a Worrier in your workplace, pay attention to any signs of these three related issues:

- **Micromanaging** – listen for micromanaging itself, or if that's hard to be sure about, then observe their habits around:
 - their collaboration and delegation styles – are these open and permissive, or closed and prescriptive?
 - their attitudes towards ideas and suggestions – do these regularly flow upwards towards them, or always down, from them?
- **Lengthy and overly detailed presentations etc** – look out for slides crammed with tiny font, reports filled with unnecessary appendices and lengthy verbal briefings
- **Hyper-focus** – this is the self-fulfilling paradox, that their over-focus on what might go wrong makes that problem more likely to occur. How focussed are they on what might go wrong? Also spot this by checking for your own feelings of unreliability about them.



Tips for Leaders of a Worrier

There are some very practical areas of support that leaders can help a Worrier with. Here's a good sequence to try:

- Which organisational doors can you open for them, so the Worrier isn't battering them down in their search for information?
- What relationships can you facilitate, to support them in having a wide range of good connections?
- How might you give them enough positive feedback and also make it OK to drop the ball sometimes
- What are the important features of a more empowering delegation approach you might role-model for them?
- What opportunities can you create to tutor them in a 'less is more' style of communication?
- How much encouragement do they need from you to adopt a more proactive approach to managing their career progression?



Tips for Colleagues and Staff of a Worrier

Working with a Worrier is about using their traits in your favour AND making it clear that some of those traits can't be tolerated.

- How might you safely work around a Worrier (using all of your allies and connections) rather than be stuck trying to placate each and every one of their concerns? What will it take to get your project moving?
- What opportunities can you use (perhaps by triggering their worries) to delegate upwards to them, just to give yourself some occasional headroom? Don't overuse this strategy!
- At what point do you need to fake going nuclear, to really over-react to some of their unreasonable micromanaging, just to highlight how awful it is?
- Are you getting stretched enough, in the way you want to be? Or do you need to look outside for more of your development opportunities?



Growth Tips for Worriers

The first priority in supporting the growth of a Worrier is their **Self-management**. Perhaps even more than other types, Worriers need to work on not falling into their Stress Strategy behaviour of Avoidance. Practices to encourage include:

- Journalling – are they committing their anxieties to paper, rather than have a head full of worries?
- Balance, especially are they spending time in nature and on creative or nurturing activities?

Beyond that, focus on:

- Delegation – do they know how to use an empowering and not a micromanaging style?
- Relationship-building – what are they doing to keep building relationships even when there isn't a pressing need to do so?
- Strategic thinking and communicating – what might help them to keep the bigger picture in mind and avoid just focusing on the details?



17. Type 8 – The Rock

Usually a highly-responsible and committed person, with a deep sense of loyalty to the organisation.

Use the spaces provided or your own notebook to answer the questions that follow.



Spotting a Rock

First, are you feeling caught between a pressing need to deliver and someone who seems impossible to convince of the required speed and course of action? That person might be a Rock.

Second, Rocks are often not very good at communicating their concerns about what's required to keep everything running. Instead, they may seem to be **complaining**. So check if you're hearing anything that sounds like a complaint about:

- not having enough resources?
- how much pressure their team is under?
- the riskiness of your ideas or proposals?

You might also notice some of the following:

- Delays – are they trying to fix what they see as current issues, rather than get on with the priorities you've identified?
- Are you relying on them *a lot* to keep plugging away at the unglamorous stuff?



Tips for Leaders of a Rock

Leaders can bridge some of the gaps between a Rock and the rest of the organisation and help to shift their way of doing things. Here's how:

- Rocks are responsible and usually in it for the long-term. How might you demonstrate a similarly responsible, long-term commitment? What can you do, hands-on, to show this?
- Where do you need to use your own communication and relationship skills to help make the case to colleagues about your Rock's concerns and priorities?
- Rocks need to understand more about the trade-offs and balancing of priorities that happens at a senior level, so they can complain less and influence better. How could you involve them in the strategic decision-making process more?
- Keep an eye on their balance and recognition needs. Are their (and their team's) efforts sustainable? Are you telling them that their efforts are appreciated?



Tips for Colleagues and Staff of a Rock

To make the most of working with a Rock, adopt the following persuasion strategies:

- Apply the 'avoidance persuasion' style, so that you can get a Rock to work on what you regard as the priority. This usually involves emphasising what might go **wrong** if they *don't* help out.
- Stress your own responsible, long-term commitment and show that you're aware of the need to avoid problems.

Check the following potential boundary issues:

- If key milestones are going to be missed because of a Rock, tell others about it earlier
- Make sure you're not getting leaned on for too much effort – Rocks work long hours and sometimes automatically expect others to do the same.

And don't get in the shadow of a Rock's image of being unhelpful and intransigent. Speak directly to people yourself.



Growth Tips for Rocks

Don't collude or argue with a Rock's resistance. Instead, listen out for examples like the following:

- Self-sabotaging – *"I don't have the time ..."*
- Exaggerating – *"I've tried that and it **never** works!"*

... and then just **acknowledge** their concerns.

Then you can encourage them to widen and raise their horizons. How might they:

- Talk more to a wider variety of colleagues about their concerns and priorities?
- Get more involved in senior decision-making processes?

Alongside that, help them to assess their abilities – which of the following might they need to work on:

- Building relationships at work outside their area?
- Communicating complex issues to non-experts?
- Maintaining a healthier balance?



18. Type 9 – The People Pleaser

Usually a warm self-effacing person who has built-up a real depth of experience and a wide network of trusted and trusting connections.

Use the spaces provided or your own notebook to answer the questions that follow.



Spotting a People Pleaser

It can be tricky to spot a difficult People Pleaser, because they're generally pleasant! Their stress strategy is one of Avoidance. So look out for signs that they're avoiding upsetting the harmony or the status quo. In particular:

- **Dodging the tough calls** – Are you seeing any evidence that they are avoiding taking a tough line on anything that might upset others?
- **Dis-Harmony in their team** – Might there be signs of a team that is being disrupted? Perhaps by one or two examples of bad behaviour by its members, and which your People Pleaser is paradoxically tolerating?
- They could do more, but seem to **lack the confidence** – You know they've got the ability and the connections; so why aren't they pushing for more progress?



Tips for Leaders of a People Pleaser

Leaders of a People Pleaser need to check that they are themselves not being 'pleased'. Help them to overcome their tendency to avoid the tricky things; focusing on:

- Avoiding disharmony – open this up by asking them “What kind of negative impacts might this have?”
- Avoiding accountability – ask them “When will this happen, and how will I know?”

Then support them in tackling the thorny issues by:

- Exploring their approach – how will they approach a thorny issue? And what can you share of your own experience with that kind of issue in the past?
- They are worried about upsetting the applecart. How might you make it acceptable for there to be conflict and disruption in the short-term for the sake of resolving an issue?

Additionally, how might you use more of their strengths and network connections? How will you ensure that their pleasantness is not being taken for granted?



Tips for Colleagues and Staff of a People Pleaser

Here's what to do when the problems and opportunities that a people Pleaser can sometimes avoid become unavoidable for you:

- Be alert to poor performance from their team. What are you frustrated by? What is unsatisfactory? How will you make your displeasure about this clear and unambiguous?
- Leverage their network. What new business opportunities, industry insights, or hard-to-reach people would it be good to get their help with?
- Boundaries. Is a People Pleaser tolerating unacceptable behaviour in the team that is affecting you? if so, do not put up with it. Who else might you seek support from? What might help you to be prepared to take things further?
- Be prepared to look outside the team for some aspects of your own development. Especially those around driving disruptive change, having tricky conversations and delivering ambitious goals.



Growth Tips for People Pleasers

First, raise awareness around a lack of confidence and practice how to take action. For example:

- What might they be finding excuses not to do?
- What might they be putting off until they feel strong enough to do it?
- Any limiting inner dialogue? For example: “I can’t deal with that.”, “It will be too disruptive.”?
- What small steps might already be possible in tackling something thorny?
- What support might they need so that taking action on a challenging issue was possible for them?

Second, help them to explore these topics:

- Having difficult conversations (there’s a framework in my book and more on the Nine Types website)
- Being more proactive in creating change.

What do they want for themselves in those two topics?



Next Steps

19. Who's Not here?

Most of what we might encounter in terms of difficult people at work is possible to deal with. Either by positive interventions such as those in my book and this workbook. Or by organisations recognising that formal performance management and or disciplinary procedures are called for. But things don't always go that way.

A few organisations seem incredibly reluctant or slow to deal with these situations, even when they can.

In other rare circumstances, the wrong kinds of people have power in organisations and may abuse that power.

If you are around someone whose behaviour is detrimental to your well-being, or are in an organisation that is not addressing a situation, you must act in your own interests.

Please make sure that you don't wait too long, don't tolerate what is unacceptable, and don't lose sight of your own power to change things.

Make some notes now about your situation. What is happening? Who might be an ally for you? What would be a first step towards seeking support?



20. In Pursuit of a Positive Workplace

My manifesto for fulfilling and effective workplaces:

Work is important because it is such a huge part of our lives. If we get it right, work is where we can find meaning, fulfilment and connection. A difficult person at work is no exception to this. They're almost always somebody trying very hard to do what they see as the right thing, in the way that they know how. But if that's causing a problem then it's bad news all around. Because organisations can consistently deliver great products and services only when the people in them are effective and fulfilled.

We can deal with difficult people and quickly improve working relationships so that the game changes. When we balance those factors properly, work becomes a place where people can come together and support each other to achieve things that we can't do on our own. And then everybody benefits.

How about you? Please use the space opposite for your own views, and then share them with me if you'd like:

- What is the significance of work for you and in your life?
- What are your feelings on work as a place of coming together in pursuit of a common objective?
- What else is there you'd like to say about working relationships?

Share your views via social media or at the website.



21. Other Resources

Please visit the website or any book retailer to grab your copy of the book that this workbook accompanies. An audiobook is also available online.

Here's the link to the Amazon UK page and you also find it at all major book retailers:

<https://www.amazon.co.uk/dp/1292726067>

Other resources you'll find on my website:

- My **Flowchart** for dealing with a difficult person
- The **Interactive Quiz** for identifying types
- Information about **one-to-one Executive Coaching**, for those dealing with difficult people and for those perceived as difficult
- Details of my **Team Development Workshops**
- **Public Speaking**: talks that focus on the strategies for dealing with difficult people in the workplace and fostering a positive work culture.