



Association of Directors of  
Anatomic and Surgical Pathology

# 2020 ADASP

## Annual Meeting

**February 29, 2020**

Los Angeles Convention Center





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Anatomic and Surgical Pathology

# Dealing Effectively With Difficult People At Work

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**2020 ADASP**

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# Notice of Faculty Disclosures

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The individual: Jody J Foster, MD MBA

- Has no relevant financial relationship(s) with commercial interest(s) to disclose



# Educational Objectives

- To understand conflict and develop approaches to its management
- To recognize the most common types of people who have interpersonal difficulties at work
- To develop strategies for intervention with challenging personalities









# Basic Principles

- **Conflict can be anywhere and everywhere, any time we interact. It comes in endless shapes and sizes**
  - Overt vs. insidious
  - Many parallels to children, including in interventions
- **Managers often wait too long to intervene with disruptive behavior**
  - Become frustrated, label people “jerks”
- **One disruptive character can infect a team and even the entire workplace**
  - How people treat each other affects feelings about the job
  - This can affect organizations at large and lead to less motivation, commitment, creativity and productivity



# Basic Principles

- **Most disruptive behavior is not driven by malice**
  - People bring their personalities to work with them
  - Most often self-correct when confronted
- **Behavior affects each of us differently**
  - Responses to behavior tend to be deeply personal
- **Workplace culture often defines what's acceptable**
  - Important to lay out rules of engagement
- **We want to understand why people act the way they do**
  - We also wish we could predict people's behavior





# Manifestations of Unprofessional Conduct

- Profane or disrespectful language
- Demeaning behavior (such as name calling)
- Sexual comments or innuendo
- Inappropriate touching, sexual or otherwise
- Racial or ethnic jokes
- Outbursts of anger
- Throwing instruments, charts, or other objects
- Criticizing other caregivers in front of patients or other staff
- Comments that undermine a caregiver's self-confidence in caring for patients

Porto G, Lauve R. Disruptive Clinician Behavior: A persistent threat to patient safety. *Patient Safety and Quality Healthcare*. July/Aug 2006.

Dealing with Unprofessional Conduct: A guide for physician leaders and healthcare organizations. A Medical Leadership Institute White Paper, Winter 2009.

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# Manifestations of Unprofessional Conduct

- Comments that undermine a patient's trust in other caregivers or the hospital
- Repeated, intentional non-compliance with organization rules/policies
- Intimidating behavior that has the effect of suppressing input by other members of the healthcare team
- Deliberate failure to adhere to organizational policies without adequate evidence to support the alternative chosen
- Retaliation against any member of the healthcare team who has reported an instance of violation of the code of conduct or who has participated in the investigation of such an incident
- Inappropriate comments in the medical record
- Inappropriate use of litigation or threats of litigation

Porto G, Lauve R. Disruptive Clinician Behavior: A persistent threat to patient safety. *Patient Safety and Quality Healthcare*. July/Aug 2006.

Dealing with Unprofessional Conduct: A guide for physician leaders and healthcare organizations. A Medical Leadership Institute White Paper, Winter 2009.

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# R.I.S.E. at Penn Medicine

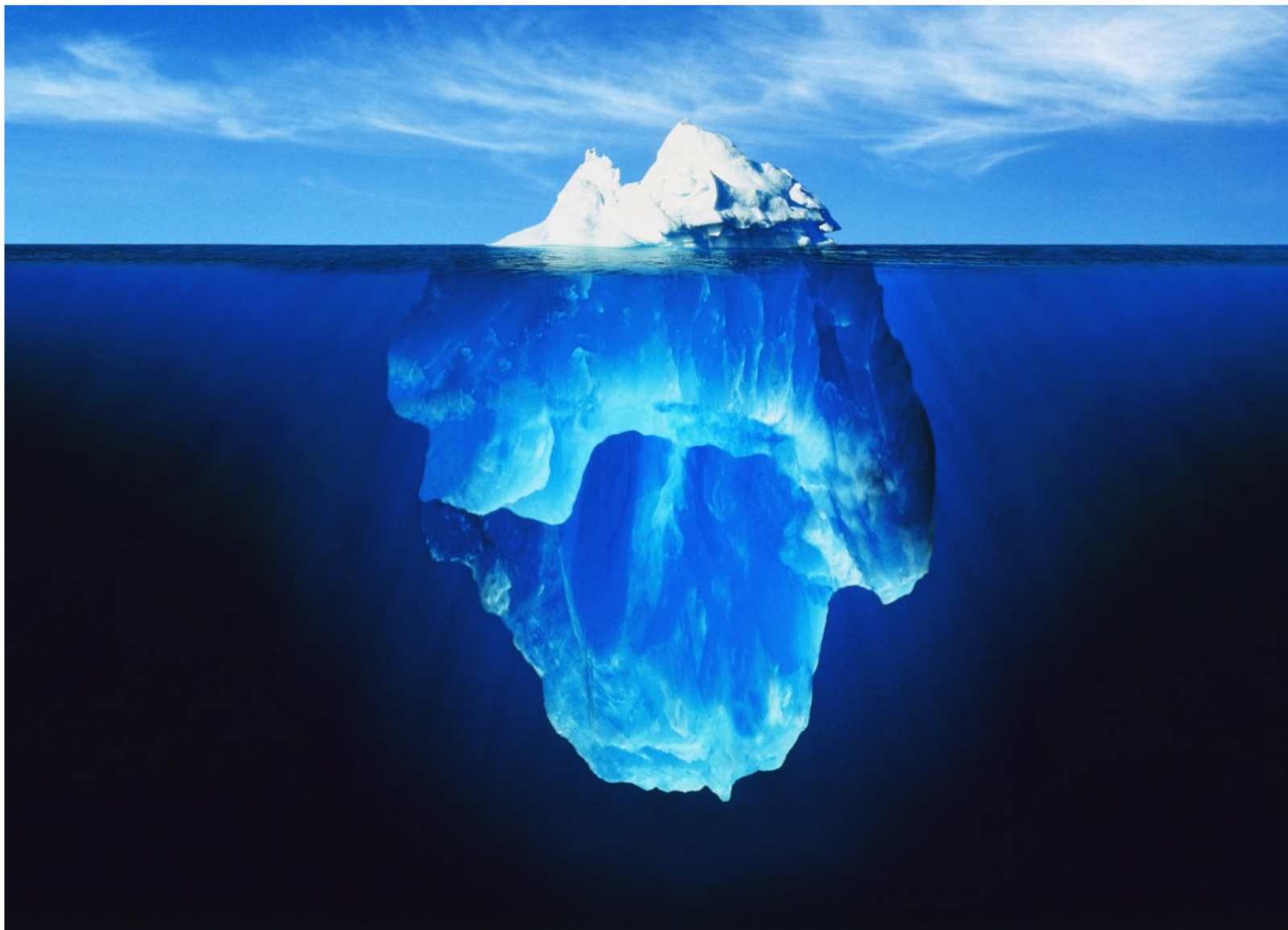


# Impact of Disruptive Behavior on the Organization

The cost of a bad hire is  
15-20 times base salary

(Source: ghSmart)





# Difficult Types



*Narcissus*



*Venus Flytrap*



*Swindler*



*Bean Counter*



*Distracted*



*Mr. Hyde*



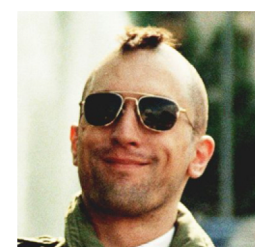
*Lost*



*Robotic*



*Eccentric*



*Suspicious*





# Spotting Narcissus

- ◆ Is “the best” or knows “the most”
- ◆ Focused on own “limitless potential”
- ◆ Fishes for compliments
- ◆ Talks to hear himself talk, name drops, exaggerates accomplishments
- ◆ Takes credit for others’ work
- ◆ “My way or the highway” attitude
- ◆ Is sensitive to rejection



# What To Do About Narcissus

- Flattering with praise and/or compliments can help Narcissus from feeling threatened and reduce angry outbursts
- Encouraging consideration of others' perspectives or even recognition of one's own underlying emotions may be helpful if you need to point out the disruptive behavior
- Framing intervention as a way to achieve leadership goals, as opposed to addressing flaws, may help Narcissus engage in it willingly
- Respond quickly to their requests or invitations and avoid ignoring them
- Where possible, avoid putting the Narcissus in positions where they may take credit for your work



# Spotting The Venus Flytrap

- Highly seductive and appealing
- Intense, unstable interpersonal relations. Cycle of overvaluation vs. devaluation
- Feel empty, bored, looking to fill an abysmal void. Testing and splitting behaviors
- Push/pull, sticky relationships
- Make people “walk on eggshells” around them for fear of their reactions
- Early inconsistency leads to unstable sense of self. Feel unlovable, insecure and angry



# What To Do About The Venus Flytrap

- Continuously define boundaries and clearly reinforce them
- Remember the key to working with the flytrap is structure and consistency
- Avoid getting pulled into the drama at all costs
- Recognize and redirect emotions, rather than restrict without rationale
- Implement empathic but firm zero-tolerance interventions directed toward negative behaviors, as well as immediate positive feedback toward healthy behaviors



# Spotting The Bean Counter

- Is inflexible and closed-minded
- Has difficulty making decisions & being efficient
- Gets “stuck in the weeds” and “can’t see the forest for the trees”
- Micromanages
- Hangs onto details and wants them organized in a very particular way
- Preoccupied with orderliness and control



# What To Do About The Bean Counter

- Avoid direct challenges or arguments concerning their detail-oriented nature
- Express appreciation of their dedication while emphasizing your own
- Document suggested changes made by the Bean Counter, citing them when you re-present your “corrected” work
- Never promise more than you can deliver and take responsibility for mistakes, avoiding rationalization or defensiveness
- If possible, direct the Bean Counter’s job toward detail-oriented duties and utilize clear directions and deadlines





# Spotting The Distracted

- Can't sustain attention
- Makes careless mistakes
- Has trouble listening and following instructions
- Struggles with:
  - Organization
  - Time management
  - Procrastination
  - Diversion



# What To Do About The Distracted

- Encourage the Distracted not to over-commit themselves, to finish one task before starting on the next, and to seek out help or delegate work as needed
- Minimize distractions in the workplace and employ aids for organization
- Implement trainings in time management, planning, and organization
- Enhance productivity by assigning small, achievable projects with step-by-step tasks
- Increase engagement in the job by having imaginative and/or creative components
- The preferred management style is clear, patient, and predictable, without overbearing micromanagement



# Difficult Types



*Narcissus*



*Venus Flytrap*



*Swindler*



*Bean Counter*



*Distracted*



*Mr. Hyde*



*Lost*



*Robotic*



*Eccentric*



*Suspicious*



# Addressing The Situation

#1 - Check Yourself

#2 - Name The Beast

#3 - Try To Empathize

#4 - Call Out The Behavior

#5 – Keep It Short And Be Direct



# Conclusions

- Accept that people don't set out to be disruptive
- People can often be categorized by themes and their common behaviors occur commonly
- What is disruptive in one culture may be perfectly acceptable in another
- Examine yourself--why is the behavior affecting YOU this way?



# Conclusions

- Adult behavioral rules are largely similar to rules for children and should be applied the same way
- Call out what you see, when you see or feel it. Early intervention is key. Be concise and direct
- If it isn't ego dystonic, it isn't going to change, at least not permanently. In this case, boundaries are your only recourse





# And if everyone ELSE is the problem...





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# Thank you!

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