Core Issues of All Personality Disorders

A long-standing pattern of:

#1: SOCIAL IMPAIRMENT and/or INTERNAL DISTRESS

#2: LACK OF SELF-AWARENESS (of their effect on others)

#3: LACK OF BEHAVIOR CHANGE

#4: EXTERNALIZING RESPONSIBILITY

High Conflict Personality Disorders

“High Conflict People” (HCPs) externalize by focusing on specific person/group – their “Target of Blame”

This leads them into intense conflict & sometimes litigation against that individual or group:

“He’s the cause of all of my problems. Once he’s out of my life, everything will be fine.”

“I had to hit her, after what she said to me.”

“The children would be better off if my ex was dead.”
PERSONALITY DISORDERS of DSM-5

A. Paranoid, Schizoid, Schizotypal
   (Tend to avoid people)

B. Borderline, Narcissistic, Antisocial, Histrionic
   (Tend to be high-conflict)

C. Avoidant, Dependent, Obsessive-Compulsive
   (Tend to avoid conflict)

5 “High-Conflict” Personality Disorders

- “I’m Very Superior” (Narcissistic) Personalities
  Demanding and demeaning, arrogant, self-absorbed

- “Love you, Hate you” (Borderline) Personalities
  Overly friendly, sudden mood swings, intense rage

- “You’ll Betray Me” (Paranoid) Personalities
  Suspicious, expects conspiracies, counter-attacks first

- “Con Artists” (Antisocial) Personalities (Sociopaths)
  Breaks rules & laws, deceptive, may enjoy hurting others

- “Always Dramatic” (Histrionic) Personalities
  Superficial, helpless, exaggerates, center of attention

The WEB Method℠ For Identifying Potential PDs

Their WORDS:
All-or-nothing; blaming; unmanaged emotions

Your EMOTIONS:
Feel danger, fear, anger; or extreme like or dislike

Their BEHAVIOR:
Do they do things 90% of people would never do?
Do they give lots of excuses for their bad behavior?
Do you recognize an unchanging dysfunctional pattern?
Four Common Mistakes in Working with Personality Disorders

*Trying to give them insights into their own behavior*
*Focusing on the past too much–emphasize the future*
*Negative feedback and emotional confrontations*
*Telling them you think they have a personality disorder or high-conflict personality*

4 Key Skills: The CARS Method®

1. **CONNECTING** with EAR Statements
2. **ANALYZING** options and dilemmas
3. **RESPONDING** to misinformation
4. **SETTING LIMITS** on behavior

Connecting with EAR Statements

- Example: “I can *understand* your frustration – this is a very important decision in your life. Don’t worry, I will pay full *attention* to your concerns about this issue and any proposals you want to make. I have a lot of *respect* for your commitment to solving this problem, and I look forward to solving it too.

See article: *Calming Upset People with E.A.R.*
### Fears and EARs for HCPs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Their Fear</th>
<th>Your EAR Statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(For any of these)</td>
<td>(Any of these helps)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Being abandoned</td>
<td>• I want to help you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Being seen as inferior</td>
<td>• I respect your efforts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Being ignored</td>
<td>• I’ll pay attention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Being dominated</td>
<td>• I’ll listen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Being taken advantage of</td>
<td>• Its just rules we all have to follow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• I understand this can be frustrating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• I’ll work with you on this</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• I know this can be confusing</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Cautions about E.A.R.

- Avoid believing or agreeing with content.
- Avoid volunteering to “fix it” for them (in an effort to calm down their emotions).
- Be honest about empathy and respect (find something you truly believe)
- Keep an arms-length relationship.
- You don’t have to listen forever.
- You don’t have to use words or these words.

### 2. ANALYZING Options

**(Make a List)**

Emphasize client’s role and abilities to make decisions:

Have client write a list of options

Writing and reading lists activate the brain’s rational thinking skills in deciding which choice to make

(Which side of the brain focuses on writing?)
Give them a Choice

• In high-conflict situations, don’t focus on feelings. You won’t resolve their emotional issues. Just acknowledge their frustrations. Talk to the right brain.

Focus the upset person on a choice:
• The goal is to get the upset person focused on problem-solving, away from his or her emotions.
• This puts responsibility on the person to help solve the problem; puts responsibility on the person for making the choice.
• It gives them some power, when they feel powerless.

Making Proposals

1. Propose: WHO will do WHAT, WHEN and WHERE.
2. Ask questions: The other person then asks questions about the proposal, such as: “What’s your picture of what this would look like, if I agreed to do it?” “What to you see me doing in more detail?” “When would we start doing that, in your proposal?”

And if you say “No,” then you make a new proposal.

3. Responding to Misinformation (Maintain a Healthy Skepticism)

• Remain skeptical of the accuracy of the person’s information. There may be many cognitive distortions.
• Let them know that you will never know the full story. It is possible the extreme statements they are making are true. “You might be right!” And possibly not true.
• But next steps can still be taken and decisions can still be made about the future.
It’s their Dilemma

- Keep the burden of solving problems on the client. No matter how badly they want you to do it.
- Tell them “You have a dilemma. How do YOU want to resolve it?”
- Then, if they can’t think of options, you could suggest several, based on your knowledge.
- Be a role model of comfort with ambivalence.

4. Setting Limits on High Conflict Behavior

- PDs need limits because they can’t stop themselves
- With PDs, focus on external reasons for new behavior (rather than focusing on negative feedback about past behavior):
  - “Our policies require us to …”
  - “The law requires me to …”
  - “It might appear better to ______ if you…”
  - “I understand, but someone else might misunderstand your intentions with that action…”
  - “Let’s take the high road…”
  - “Choose your battles…”

Summary of Key PD Skills

1. CONNECTING: Listen closely (briefly), then respond with Empathy, Attention and/or Respect (EAR)
2. ANALYZING: Get client to make a list, make a choice or make a proposal
3. RESPONDING: Give straight information. Say “You might be right.” “You have a dilemma.”
4. SETTING LIMITS: Don’t make it personal. Give external reasons. Help client deal with policies and procedures.