

## **How to Handle a Disruptive Patient / Client**

**Satellite Conference and Live Webcast  
Monday, March 30, 2015  
1:00 – 3:00 pm Central Time**

**Produced by the Alabama Department of Public Health  
Video Communications and Distance Learning Division**

## **Faculty**

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## **Objectives**

- **Explain ground rules and how to set appropriate boundaries with patients and clients**
- **Identify different communication styles when working with aggressive personalities in private and professional settings**

## **Objectives**

- **Discuss interpersonal skills that are needed when providing services to disruptive groups**
- **Address different types of behaviors that require de-escalation in clinics, social service agencies and disaster settings**

## **What Can Make Someone Disruptive?**

- **FEAR - What is happening to me?**
- **Feeling ignored**
- **Being sick**
- **Being exhausted**
- **Feeling out of control**
- **Being angry**

## **The Elderly**

- **Bad Behavior #1: Rage, Anger, Yelling**
  - **Age and illness can intensify longstanding personality traits in some unpleasant ways**
  - **An irritable person may become enraged, an impatient person demanding and impossible to please**

### **The Elderly**

- Unfortunately, the person taking care of the elderly parent is often the target

### **What To Do**

- Try to identify the cause of the anger
  - In most elderly individuals, behaviors are a symptom of distress

### **What To Do**

- The aging process in and of itself sometimes brings about anger, as seniors vent frustration about getting old, having chronic pain, losing friends, having memory issues, being incontinent
  - All of the undignified things that can happen to us as we age

### **What To Do**

- In addition, Alzheimer's disease and dementia can also cause these behaviors, in which case, your parent doesn't have control

### **Dementia**

- Dementia is a progressive loss of mental function due to certain diseases that affect the brain
- The losses are substantial - Over time, all types of dementia will lead to loss of memory, loss of reasoning and judgment, personality and behavioral changes, physical decline, and death

### **Dementia**

- But the course dementia takes can vary widely from person to person
  - It's influenced by many factors, including age and other conditions a person may have

## Dementia

- 60 - 80% of US dementia cases are caused by Alzheimer's disease
  - That's about 5.3 million people
  - The next most common dementias are vascular dementia, or tiny strokes in the brain, and Lewy Body dementia where alpha - synuclein protein lodges in certain regions of the brain



## Scenario 1

- You have been called out to the home of an elderly patient / client
- The patient is a 75 year old woman that has always been very polite and cordial
- Today things are different, the woman is screaming that her daughter has tried to kill her (mother and daughter have always been very close)

## Scenario 1

- The woman has called the police and is insisting the daughter is to be arrested
- The daughter is upset and crying hysterically
- What can you do to help this situation?

## Scenario 2

- You are trying to do an in-home evaluation and the patient is mumbling and talking to themselves
- The patient is not well groomed (unusual for this patient)
- What could be wrong, and how can you help / make the most of this situation?

## Scenario 3

- You are out on a home visit and the family will not let patient answer questions by themselves
- The family is quick to give explanations about bruises and missing monetary items
- What can be wrong, and what should you do?

### Questions

- What do you need clarified?

### What Can Make a Normal - Healthy Person Aggressive and Unreasonable?

- Some people redirect anger in specific ways:
  - Some people just seem born grumpy and angry, however, there usually is something in their life that drives them in this way

### What Can Make a Normal - Healthy Person Aggressive and Unreasonable?

- Those whose anger problems aren't always aggressive; in fact, passive - aggressive people will only show a few people their bad side

### What Can Make a Normal - Healthy Person Aggressive and Unreasonable?

- You may know someone as one of the kindest persons around, and yet someone else will see just how uncontrollable he or she is or can be
- This is because some people redirect their anger in specific ways or towards specific people

### What Can Make a Normal - Healthy Person Aggressive and Unreasonable?

- Anger may come from genes:
  - It may be genetic or physiological
  - There is evidence that some children are born irritable, touchy, and easily angered, and that these signs are present from a very early age

### What Can Make a Normal - Healthy Person Aggressive and Unreasonable?

- There are babies who are crankier than others
- Teens who are angry may also have a genetic predisposition, or they be modeling their behavior after other family members

### **What Can Make a Normal - Healthy Person Aggressive and Unreasonable?**

- **Anger may be sociocultural:**
  - Anger is often regarded as negative
  - We're taught ways to express anxiety, depression, or other emotions but not anger
  - As a result, we don't learn how to handle it or channel it constructively

### **What Can Make a Normal - Healthy Person Aggressive and Unreasonable?**

- **Family background:**
  - Family background may play a role in anger
  - Typically, people who are easily angered come from families that are disruptive, chaotic, and not skilled at emotional communications

### **What Can Make a Normal - Healthy Person Aggressive and Unreasonable?**

- **Some angry people are manipulative:**
  - They think and behave as if others will change their behavior as a result of their moodiness or tantrums
  - These people have no real sense of control

### **What Can Make a Normal - Healthy Person Aggressive and Unreasonable?**

- They give off the illusion of being in control, but a person with a temper / anger problem can't be motivating or inspiring as anger acts like a block
- Such people are believed to suffer from low self – esteem

### **What Can Make a Normal - Healthy Person Aggressive and Unreasonable?**

- Actually, insecurity is the bottom line
- They are very much aware of the fact that they are mediocre in many aspects of their lives and try to feign control

### **What Can Make a Normal - Healthy Person Aggressive and Unreasonable?**

- They try to hide the truth from themselves
- Feel that they can camouflage their insecurities with tantrums, flare - ups, mood swings, and sulking

**What Can Make a Normal - Healthy Person Aggressive and Unreasonable?**

- **Authoritative nature:**
  - People, who get angry easily, sometimes have a sense of entitlement

**What Can Make a Normal - Healthy Person Aggressive and Unreasonable?**

- They want to be the authority on any matter they bring up and do not expect you to counter anything they have to say
- Sometimes they feel they deserve to be tended to, and not doing so, angers them

**What Can Make a Normal - Healthy Person Aggressive and Unreasonable?**

- **Stress aggravates anger:**
  - Some people have frustrations or problems in their lives which make them react more strongly than the others
  - The pain and discomfort in their life makes them do so

**What Can Make a Normal - Healthy Person Aggressive and Unreasonable?**

- So our personal situation plays a major role in our reactions to various circumstances in life
- The reason we get angry is because it's a way of us trying to avoid the emotional pain that we experience

**What Can Make a Normal - Healthy Person Aggressive and Unreasonable?**

- But primarily we get angry to communicate our thoughts and our feelings

**What Can Make a Normal - Healthy Person Aggressive and Unreasonable?**

- **Some people may suffer from intermittent explosive disorder:**
  - There are people who react to situations with a sudden outburst without thinking about repercussions

### **What Can Make a Normal - Healthy Person Aggressive and Unreasonable?**

- This little - known disorder marked by episodes of unwarranted anger is more common than previously thought
- It affects as many as 7% of adults in their lifetime

### **What Can Make a Normal - Healthy Person Aggressive and Unreasonable?**

- Many people diagnosed with Intermittent Explosive Disorder (IED) appear to have general problems with anger or other impulsive behaviors

### **What Can Make a Normal - Healthy Person Aggressive and Unreasonable?**

- They may experience racing thoughts or a heightened energy level during the aggressive episode, with fatigue and depression developing shortly afterward

### **What Can Make a Normal - Healthy Person Aggressive and Unreasonable?**

- Some report various physical sensations, including tightness in the chest, tingling sensations, tremor, or a feeling of pressure inside the head

### **How to Manage Anger**

- Anger management reduces both the patient's emotional feelings and the physiological arousal that anger causes
- Getting rid of or avoiding the things or the people that enrage the client is not possible, nor can they change them, but you can help them learn to control their reactions

### **How to Manage Anger**

- Anger management skills through a combination of cognitive restructuring, raising endurance levels, and relaxation training looks promising
- Simple relaxation tools, such as deep breathing and relaxing imagery, can help calm down angry feelings

### **How to Manage Anger**

- **Cognitive restructuring i.e. changing the way someone thinks, is another way of calming the patient**
- **Remind the client / patient that getting angry is not going to fix anything, and it won't make you feel any better**

### **How to Handle Disruptive Angry People**

- **Minimize time with them**
  - **Keep your interactions as short as possible**
  - **Minimizing your exposure to pathology goes a long, long way**

### **How to Handle Disruptive Angry People**

- **Keep it logical**
  - **I'm a very verbal, heart - focused person, so I would always try to connect with and reason with these types (and pretty much anyone else) from an emotional or empathic perspective**

### **How to Handle Disruptive Angry People**

- **You know, those "when you do X it makes me feel Y" communication tactics we're taught in relationship books**
- **This type of heart - centered communication only works with reasonable people who care**

### **How to Handle Disruptive Angry People**

- **Unreasonable people usually don't care, and their response (or lack of it) will often only make you more upset**
- **Keep communications fact - based, using minimal details**

### **How to Handle Disruptive Angry People**

- **Focus on them in conversation**
  - **A way to avoid being the target of demeaning comments, manipulation or having your words twisted is to say as little as possible**



### **How to Handle Disruptive Angry People**

- Volunteer minimal information and get them talking about themselves (if you have to be around them or talk to them, that is)
- They are a far safer conversation subject than you are

### **How to Handle Disruptive Angry People**

- Give up the dream that they will one day be the person you wish they would be
  - I see this in coaching clients all the time and in myself too

### **How to Handle Disruptive Angry People**

- There are people in our lives who have moments where they seem to be the parent / partner / spouse / friend (insert whatever's appropriate)
- You have always felt they could be, yet they ultimately always end up hurting or disappointing us significantly

### **How to Handle Disruptive Angry People**

- Amazingly, we fall for it and get our hopes up again the next time they treat us nicely or seem to have turned a new leaf
- Giving up the hope and fully accepting this person for who they really are can be an unbelievable relief after what is sometimes a lifetime of wishing

### **How to Handle Disruptive Angry People**

- Stay away from topics that get you into trouble
  - Before going into an interaction with a difficult person, review in your mind the topics that invite attack and be proactive about avoiding them

### **How to Handle Disruptive Angry People**

- For example, if your in - laws always make cracks about your choice of career, answer neutrally and change the subject immediately (see # 4) if they ask you how work is going

### **How to Handle Disruptive Angry People**

- Don't try to get them to see your point of view
  - Don't try to explain yourself or try to get them to understand you and empathize with your perspective
  - They won't, and you'll just feel worse for trying

### **How to Handle Disruptive Angry People**

- Create a distraction
  - If you absolutely have to spend time with someone who typically upsets you, try to be around them in circumstances that offer some sort of distraction

### **How to Handle Disruptive Angry People**

- Focus on playing with a pet if there's one in the vicinity
- Have the interaction be based around some kind of recreational activity or entertainment, or

### **How to Handle Disruptive Angry People**

- Offer to help in a way that takes you out of the main ring of the Coliseum
  - e.g. offering to chop vegetables in the kitchen before a family dinner

### **How to Handle Disruptive Angry People**

- If you can get them to do something that absorbs their attention (taking it off you), even better

### **How to Handle Disruptive Angry People**

- As I mentioned to a client today, if you master these skills and manage to conduct these interactions while being civil and even friendly, you might manage to save the relationship

### **How to Handle Disruptive Angry People**

– Not that you would necessarily want to, but in some cases if the person is a family member, boss, or some other key fixture in your life who you can't cut out of your life, these tactics may prove to be lifesavers - They certainly have been for me!

### **Physical Placement / Strategies to Minimize Aggression**

- Speak calmly in a reassuring voice
- Have a palms up gesture with hands not moving on your side
- Back up to give patient / client room when they move toward you
- Know when to run
- Remember you never want to physically harm a client / patient

### **What Are the Signs of Being Under the Influence?**

– A mind altered by a substance is not rational

