

MEDIATE THIS !

HIGH-CONFLICT PERSONALITIES: NAVIGATING THE MAZE

BY STEVEN P. DINKIN

When studying the common issues of interpersonal communication during conflict, the National Conflict Resolution Center has recognized a recurring set of characteristics that can be used to classify someone as a “high-conflict personality” or HCP. These personalities make the road to resolution an especially long one and can be difficult to understand. In this week’s column, we have collected some tips to help you identify and handle this personality type.

Your first tool for handling a high-conflict person is to know what to look for. Bill Eddy of the High Conflict Institute, an expert on this topic, characterizes high-conflict personality as “a concept that overlaps with personality disorders or traits. People with HCP tend to initiate and get satisfaction from conflict with others. In fact, they think of conflict as normal and expected in everyday life and approach situations as the ‘victim’ — escalating conversations and chronically blaming others.”

If this description sounds familiar to you, you are not alone. NCRC finds that when we look at many of the disputes we mediate, HCPs are a common thread. Now

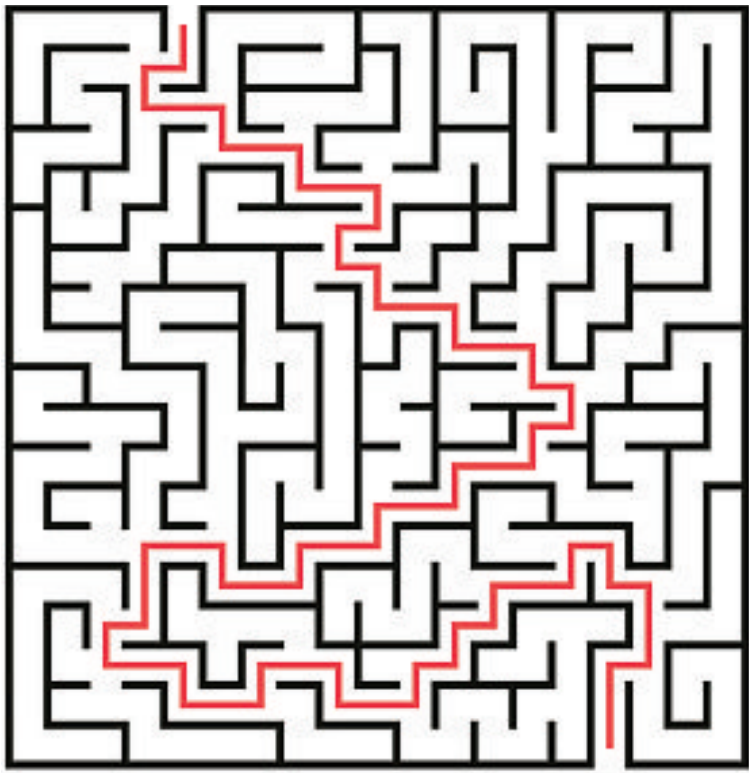
that you can identify an HCP, what can you do to mitigate the damage they can cause?

First, do not attempt to show them how their behavior negatively affects you or anyone else, or try to provide evidence that they are “wrong” in the way they conduct themselves. This type of insight-related feedback will only serve to further damage communication with an HCP, as they will not see things the way that you do. Instead, they will feel as though they have to defend the choices they make and prove that you are, in fact, the one in the wrong.

Secondly, understand that they seek to increase conflict, rather than to solve it. It takes a significant amount of effort to recognize this, since the majority of us do not strive for conflict with those around us. Recognize that when you are dealing with an HCP, you are not dealing with someone who wants resolution. You are dealing with a person who thrives on the conflict itself and can stay in a verbal boxing match for as long as they need to.

Third, know that this personality type is actually very predictable, as they follow an identifiable pattern of thinking and behavior that can be recognized when you know what to look for.

While all HCPs are different,



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the majority display four primary characteristics: all-or-nothing thinking, intense or unmanaged emotions, extreme behavior or threats, and a preoccupation with

blaming others. Once you know the warning signs, you can shift your conflict-resolution strategy when you see these characteristics emerge. It often helps to focus on

future choices (“Let’s look at what we can do now”) rather than the past, and to talk about objective details (“Let’s meet again on Thursday at 3 p.m.”) rather than emotions.

Finally, know that the majority of the time, the issue that you might find yourself battling over with an HCP is likely not the real issue. This personality type will create conflict where it does not exist and pull you into distracting problems. While it is almost never advisable to turn your back on a conflict, in some cases when dealing with HCPs, it is the best option. Sometimes it helps to say, “We’ll have to agree to disagree about that,” and end the conversation.

High-conflict personalities are all around us. When we seek first to understand what’s behind the personality and the motivation of the person involved, the solution may become clear.

Steven P. Dinkin is a professional mediator who has served as president of the San Diego-based National Conflict Resolution Center since 2003. Do you have a conflict that needs a resolution? Share your story with The Mediator via email at mediate@ncrconline.com or as an online submission by visiting www.ncrconline.com/MediateThis. All submissions will be kept anonymous.

NOTEBOOKS

From Union-Tribune reporting staff

WEATHER: ROB KRIER

Series of storms end summer slumber

A series of thunderstorms last week rumbled across the San Diego County backcountry, from Campo to the Riverside County line, while the coast got its first real taste of heat and humidity this year.

After a warm but dry weekend, more monsoonal moisture should be back this week, which could turn up the volume again in the mountains and desert.

Monday afternoon was loud north of Julian. A towering thunderstorm, visible from much of the county, ballooned to 45,000 feet. The storm and another farther north produced more than 75 lightning strikes. Forecasters issued a severe thunderstorm warning after radar showed one storm was capable of 60 mph winds and penny-sized hail.

Storms over the mountains and desert on Wednesday were even more active. The weather service logged 4,040 lightning flashes or strikes in the county, including 145 cloud-to-ground bolts. For the week, 6,807 flashes or strikes were recorded. Winds of 40 to 50 mph were recorded in Harrison Park

near Julian.

Rain fell three straight days in Borrego Springs. A dry creek in nearby Palm Canyon rose to 6 1/2 feet in about an hour Wednesday in what the weather service called a “moderate” flash flood.

Pine Valley got a double whammy: Two separate storms hit Thursday alone.

The backcountry had a quiet first month of summer. Then a ridge of high pressure last week camped over the Four Corners region, which is the classic monsoon setup. With the high in that position, copious moisture from northern Mexico can be steered toward the county.

This weekend, the high has moved over Southern California, which has shut off that moisture flow. The high is expected to move back toward the Four Corners area Monday, which could turn the spigot back on.

San Diego, which had reached 80 degrees only twice all year, hit 80 three straight days last week. The high of 84 degrees Thursday is the high for the year and the hottest the city has been since Nov. 2, when it was 88.

BIOTECH: BRADLEY J. FIKES

Treasure found in cellular trash

Cells constantly emit tiny bags of molecules known as exosomes. These used to be thought of as a cell’s way of taking out the trash. But exosomes are now known as vital messengers, carrying signals between cells.

According to a new study in human cells and mice, exosomes play an important function in brain development. The study, by Scripps Research scientists led by Hollis Cline, was published July 22 in Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

Cline and her colleagues demonstrated in the cell and mouse models that exosomes are necessary for development of neurons and neuronal circuits. They can even restore health to cultures of brain cells with a developmental disease called Rett syndrome.

Cline’s team is now considering how this research might be translated into clinical uses. Measuring exosomes could provide a tool to diagnose disease and monitor the effectiveness of therapies. And exosomes themselves might be directly usable as therapy.

Symphony at Salk approaches

Singer, stage and screen actress Laura Benanti performs with the San Diego Symphony at the Salk Institute on Aug. 24.

Symphony at Salk showcases the arts along with fundraising for science. Tickets cost \$450 each; more information can be found at symphony.salk.edu/tickets.

A reception begins at 5:30 p.m.; supper at 6:30 p.m.; performance at 8 p.m.

Taking cells into 3D

Organoids and other 3D cell constructs more closely resemble whole organs than do 2D collections of cells. This makes them useful for screening potential drugs and possibly for regenerating destroyed tissues. As of this writing, brain organoids from San Diego are aboard the International Space Station to study the effects of micro gravity on neural development.

On Aug. 6, Biocom, the California life science trade group, is holding a talk in La Jolla on how to use organoid technology for these commercial applications.

THE READERS’ REPRESENTATIVE: ADRIAN VORE

Readers sound off on word ‘racist’

Last week’s column that discussed the use of the word “racist” in news stories to describe President Donald Trump’s tweets earlier this month drew a big response from readers.

The issue was whether reporters and editors themselves should use the word vs. attributing the description to sources.

Some news organizations, such as The Washington Post, have chosen to describe the tweets as racist without attribution. The Union-Tribune has chosen to use the word with attribution in news stories.

Several readers emailed that news organizations themselves should not describe the tweets as racist, because, they said, the tweets weren’t. They said the president’s comments directed at four congresswomen of color, three of whom were born in the U.S., were akin to the “love it or leave it” saying from the 1960s.

Another reader who argued the tweets were not racist criticized the readers’ rep column because it did not define racism.

So here here it is now, according to Webster’s New World College Dictionary: “Belief in or doctrine asserting racial differences in character, intelligence, etc. and the superiority of one race over another or others.” The definition also includes, “Feeling or actions of hatred and bigotry toward another person or persons because of their race.”

The reader said Trump’s tweets were an example of “nativism.”

Here’s the definition of nativism: “The practice or policy of favoring native-born citizens against immigrants; the revival or preservation of a native culture.”

One reader said “go back where you came from” is an “ethnic slur, not a racist slur.”

“The President is hardly to be commended for using an ethnic slur rather than a racist slur, but journalists and editors really should recognize the difference between the two,” the reader wrote.

Several said the word racist is overused nowadays. “It would be nice to hear journalists report what was said and let the editorial departments characterize it,” wrote one reader.

Another reader said he believed the tweets were “clearly racist” because the president chose to direct them at four representatives of color.

The U-T will continue to let others in news stories describe the president’s statements using their own words.

This fits with the U-T policy on the use of labels.

Here is the policy: “Labels are useful be-

cause they can summarize a lot of information quickly, but also dangerous because they can oversimplify, stereotype and marginalize. When used, labels must be accurate, contextual and informative. They should never reflect the writer’s biases. A far better approach is to focus on someone’s actions rather than what we perceive to be their beliefs.”

“The policy doesn’t preclude the use of labels,” U-T Editor and Publisher Jeff Light said in an email to the readers’ rep. “But it is based on two premises: 1) The opinions of our journalists do not belong in our news stories. 2) The capacity of our readers to form judgments about their world is equal to our own.”

Deceased writer credited with obituary

An obituary by The Associated Press on actor Rip Torn was published July 11 in the metro edition of the U-T.

Rita Phillips emailed the readers’ rep that day to point out two problems. She noticed the obituary said Torn had appeared in “The Hunt for Red October.” She said the movie is one of her favorites, and she could not remember Torn in the film. That’s because he wasn’t. She Googled the cast; Torn was not among the actors. That was one problem.

She noted the byline of AP writer Bob Thomas and set out to find his email address so she could tell him of the error. That’s when she found the second problem. Thomas died five years ago.

She then emailed the readers’ rep with her discoveries. I looked up the obituary on the AP’s website. Evidently, others had flagged the movie error. The story had been updated with the correction.

The byline, though, remained Bob Thomas. I scrolled to the bottom of the story, which had this note: “Former AP Entertainment Writer Bob Thomas in Los Angeles compiled this report before his death in 2014.” (It’s not uncommon for obituaries on famous people to be prepared in advance of their deaths.)

A look at the story that ran in the U-T showed that the note had been included when it was transmitted to news organizations. But the note appeared with other technical transmission information, and it was inadvertently removed.

I believe the AP should have removed the byline when the obituary was updated and transmitted after Torn’s death. A note could still have been included at the bottom of the story to say Thomas had contributed to the report before his death.

FROM THE ARCHIVES

RECALLING 3 SAN DIEGO OLYMPIANS IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Thirty-five years ago, as the 1984 Summer Olympic Games opened in Los Angeles, San Diego Olympians Mickey Patterson-Tyler, James Leftwich and Jack Davis spoke to Union writer Frank Green about previous Olympics.

From The San Diego Union, Saturday July 28, 1984:

MEDALISTS HERE REMEMBER WHEN

By Frank Green, Staff Writer

When Evelyn Hall-Adams, 82, carried the Olympic torch through a stretch of Carlsbad earlier this week few in the crowd lining the streets understood the significance.

But to the few Olympic Game buffs in the audience, she was remembered as a star.

The silver medalist in the 80-meter hurdle in the 1932 Olympics games, Hall-Adams is a part of San Diego’s rich Olympic legacy. She is one of a number of gold, silver and bronze medal winners from previous Olympics games who are now living in the county.

We recently checked in on three local Olympic medalists: Audrey “Mickey” Tyler, a bronze medal winner in the 200-meter run in 1948; James Leftwich, a bronze medalist in the middleweight boxing category in 1924; and Jack Davis, a silver medalist in the 100-meter hurdles in the 1952 and 1956 games.

At 57, Audrey “Mickey” Tyler still daydreams of getting back into Olympics competition.

The wishful thinking usually starts when

the Southeast San Diego resident — a bronze medal winner in the 200-meter run in 1948 — hears another tale about the financial opportunities open to today’s Olympic contenders.

“Some Olympic stars get \$10,000 every time they show up at a meet. And a few are going to make over a half million dollars this year alone on endorsements for products,” said the retired San Diego school teacher, who spends much of her time these days working on her autobiography and speaking to local groups about her Olympic experiences.

“When I went to the Olympics in London in 1948, they gave us each two dollars for expenses. That’s all I ever made from participating in the games. If I was running today, I’d be a millionaire,” she said. “And unlike today — where conditions for athletes are fairly nice — we had to travel to London by boat, and then we were put up in some dreadful barracks in Southampton that had been used during the war.”



Tyler, who grew up in Georgia, was named Top Woman Athlete in America in 1949, and still looks fit and trim enough for a fast run around the track.

Despite some recent financial setbacks, she hopes to attend some of the Olympic events in the coming weeks.

“I need a sponsor, though. I hope somebody steps forward to help me get to Los Angeles,” she said.

This year, the Olympic medalist celebrates 20 years as the volunteer coach of Mickey’s Missiles, a local track and field team she established to encourage black youngsters to pursue athletic careers.

The group of 40 amateur runners — which changes its composition every few years — still meets weekly for track events at Lincoln High School, but now only occasionally competes in statewide meets.

“It isn’t like it was a few years ago,” laments Tyler. “So many teams in California have disbanded because of financial problems, and because there aren’t enough kids interested in running anymore.”

“That’s one of the things that I hope the Olympics will do — spur talented young athletes to get out to the track. Our stake in future Olympics games depends on cultivating that interest.”

A bronze medal winner in the middleweight boxing category in the 1924 Olympic games, James Leftwich likes to brag that he brought home the gold — “all of it in my teeth,” he says.

In 1922, Leftwich was a struggling University of Virginia student when he decided — against the wishes of his parents — to take up boxing.

After winning all of his initial middleweight bouts, Leftwich was victorious in the South Atlantic championship contests in Baltimore in 1922. A year later, he claimed the Amateur Athletics Union middleweight title, knocking out his opponent in 50 seconds.

This set the stage for his appearance at the 1924 Olympics games in Paris.

“The American boxing team trained about two miles outside of Versailles,” he recalled earlier this week. “We’d get up at 6 every morning and run for 12 miles through the French countryside. It was beautiful and very exhilarating.”

Leftwich, 82, won two bouts and lost one, to a Canadian fighter, which qualified him for a bronze medal.

Upon his return to America, he fought in only about a half dozen bouts to help pay off some personal debts, then quit the sport.

“I was good enough to turn pro, but I had some other plans for my life,” Leftwich said.

HISTORICAL PHOTOS AND ARTICLES FROM THE SAN DIEGO UNION-TRIBUNE ARCHIVES ARE COMPILED BY MERRIE MONTEAGUDO. SEARCH THE U-T HISTORIC ARCHIVES AT NEWSLIBRARY.COM/SITES/SDUB.