

Employees Without Hope: Characteristic types and behavioral responses

The Person of Plenty:

“Here, you look sad/angry/hopeless...have some of my cheerfulness/hope/optimism.”

Common behavioral traits: Has difficulty sitting with pain and/or silence, willing to over-sacrifice self for others, needs crash and burn intervals to recover, perceived as not having good boundaries, tells optimistic stories in response to despair and sadness, often views self as responsible for solutions to group and individual issues, maintains facilitative control in an effort to keep the group “positive,” may be hoping to avoid personal healing through over-giving of self to others.

The Partner in Suffering:

“I feel just as bad as you.”

Common behavioral traits: Emotions gyrate according to needs of others, promotes us-against-them attitude with other groups and administration, often irritable with co-workers, usually finds fault in administrative decisions, notices the discouraged people in a meeting and sides with them, difficulty completing tasks using positive energy, would like attention for own emotional needs but has difficulty being direct.

The Dazed and Confused:

“It’s really chaotic right now, so I hope you understand that I really don’t have time to be a supportive co-worker.”

Common behavioral traits: Continually waiting for “less busy” time to begin working on certain tasks, too busy to adequately plan, doesn’t prioritize plans, over-complicates issues, changes mind frequently, cluttered work environment, forgets timelines and obligations to others, talks about it never getting done, maintains vision of self as a hero amidst the turmoil, does personal and work tasks alternately throughout the day, frames task assignments from others as “the last straw,” talks about tiredness repeatedly, uses chaos as a mechanism to either avoid and over-focus on tasks.

The Hunker Down:

“We’re all just going to try and get through this day.”

Common behavioral traits: Doesn’t talk about long-term vision or strategies, avoids thinking about emotional attachment to the work, frames most things as immediate crisis, focuses on small tasks rather than large projects, views anecdotal stories as waste of valuable work time, list-makers will frequently try and complete all small tasks before starting large tasks on list, micro-manages others, has difficulty investing genuine passion in tasks, sees self as a cog in a big machine, concerned about whether others are “doing enough,” sees completion of tasks as obligation and doesn’t reward self or others, may seek hero status through being seen as “tough enough to take it.”

The Hider:

“You have your job and I have mine. Don’t bother me.”

Common behavioral traits: Doesn’t share what he/she is doing with others, not present at important meetings, door closed often, frequently too busy with own projects to meet with other staff, most comfortable with alone time to work on things, frustrated by questions from co-workers, doesn’t ask others for advice because of reciprocal obligations, hoards resources, suspects others of not performing their duties, sees difficulties in own job performance as externally caused, has very tight personal boundaries. Hiding actions may be driven by worry over collapsing from overload.