Dealing with Negative People & Negaholics® at Work

Cory Dillon
965-5548
cdillon1@asu.edu
Definition by Dr. Cherie Carter-Scott

- Nega = negative
- Holic = addicted
- Negaholic®: One who is addicted to negative thinking. Includes:
  - Verbal negaholics
  - Behavioral negaholics
  - Mental negaholics
  - Attitudinal negaholics

Whether you think you can or can’t, you’re right. Henry Ford
Negaholism®

- So subtle people don’t know what to call it
  - “The critical parent”
  - “The voice in my head”
  - “The itty-bitty sh*tty committee”
- Holds people back and impacts others
Degrees of Negaholism

- **Mild**
  - Reasonable awareness of negativity
  - May know help is needed; may seek it out

- **Moderate**
  - Limited awareness of negativity

- **Extreme**
  - No real awareness of negativity
  - Chronic condition
Why Negaholic at work?

1. Wrong match of person and job
2. Stress and “overwhelm”
   - Ongoing change
3. Low self esteem
   - Old hurts or past resentments
4. “Acting out” to get attention
5. A chemical imbalance
Types of negaholics (VAM-B, rhymes with Bambi)

- Verbal
- Attitudinal
- Mental
- Behavioral
Verbal negaholic

- Focuses only on the negative
- Speak negatively about people, places and situations
- Creates negative self-fulfilling prophecies
- Resists change, feels hopeless and helpless
  - The glass is half empty
- Believes he/she is just being “factual”
Attitudinal negaholic

- Successful, but driven
- Appears to have it all together
- Tormented, never satisfied
- Hides true feelings
Mental negaholic

- Usually unaware of self-inflicted negativity
- Doesn’t know why she/he is “in a funk”
- Flogs self over errors and mistakes
- May internalize or may act out negativity
Behavioral negaholic

- Succeeds in spite of self
- Self sabotages
- Tries hard, so is hard to criticize
- Tends to over-do: TV, exercise, smoking, gambling, etc.
Is your brain Negaholic®?

- Take the assessment and score it
- What you are doing at work that has elements of Negaholism to it?
- Are you mild, moderate or extreme?
- What type of Negaholic might you be?
  - Verbal?
  - Attitudinal?
  - Mental?
  - Behavioral?
Work on me first

- Sometimes, the Negaholic is me!
- Build empathy, compassion and EQ
Action Plan

- Select a “subject” for your action plan
  - Yourself
  - Someone else
  - A team
- Watch for a matching description!
Assess the Negaholic

1. Determine if the syndrome is mild, moderate or extreme

2. Group the Negaholic
   - Verbal?
   - Behavioral?
   - Mental?
   - Attitudinal?

3. Determine what specific form it takes

4. Write coping strategies suggested below
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verbals</th>
<th>Attitudinals</th>
<th>Mentals</th>
<th>Behaviorals</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Garrulous gossip</td>
<td>Workaholic workhorse</td>
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Strategies for Verbals

1. Recognize that this person suffers from a thoroughly negative attitude
2. Try to divert attention away from negative words and actions
3. Help him/her recall positives from the past
4. Help him/her focus on positives in the future
Strategies for Attitudinals

1. Recognize that this person suffers from a self-esteem problem
2. Put a stop to any self diminishment the minute you hear it
3. Validate achievements
4. Focus on positive characteristics
Strategies for Mentals

1. Recognize that this person suffers from a self-esteem problem
2. Put a stop to any self-inflicted negative comments the minute you hear them
3. Validate past achievements
4. Help him/her focus on a positive future
Strategies for Behaviorals

1. Recognize that this person sabotages self by engaging in overindulgent behaviors
2. Bring the overindulgent behavior to his/her attention
3. Suggest a positive step that gets the person out of his/her negative behavior
Cope with Garrulous gossips

- Ask, “Where did you hear this?”
- Ask, “How do you know it’s true?”
- Say, “I’m really surprised to hear that!”
- Ask, “Will you go with me to talk to this person?”
- Ask, “Can I use your name?”
- Say, “Let’s clear up this matter right now!”
Cope with Resigned apathetics

- Be a coach
- Solicit participation
- Listen actively
- Challenge with humor
- Give positive feedback
Cope with Workaholic workhorses

- Develop your assertiveness skills
- Identify their/your tasks and timeframes
- Identify their/your priorities
- Put a limit on their/your work hours
- Sharpen their/your time management skills
- Suggest they/you lighten up on others
- Suggest they/you get a life
- Understand that OK is often good enough
Cope with Consummate controllers

- Create ongoing accountability
- Ask for small concessions
- Suggest, don’t demand
- Focus on results, not methods
- Keep him/her informed
Cope with Political peacemakers

- Ask for specific information
- Get everything in writing
- Follow up religiously
- Offer to do things yourself
- Keep accurate records
Cope with Chronic cynics

- Ignore or deflect sarcastic comments
- Find out what’s needed to complete/succeed
- Challenge negatives with a positive angle
- Ask for specifics: what, when, by whom?
- Encourage “what if” success scenarios

Provide first-level action steps
Set him/her up to succeed with support
Cope with Morose melancholic

- Repeat and exaggerate what he/she says
- Refuse to sink to his/her level
- Turn negatives into positives
- Ignore him/her when you have to
- Show compassion for his/her condition
Cope with Walking wounded

- Require performance standards
- Give him/her lots of encouragement
- Practice simple acts of kindness
- Withhold sympathy but extend compassion
- Refuse to take on his/her issue
- Encourage counseling
Cope with Blatant Back-stabber

* Grill the messenger
* Prepare your case
* Confront him/her
* Challenge and discredit erroneous “facts”
* Shift the focus from you to him/her
Cope with Status quo sustainers

- Ask for small concessions
- Be persistent and patient
- Use the “if…then” approach
- Take only calculated risks
Cope with Solitary succeeders

- Keep your word
- Negotiate pieces of the job
- Ask him/her to teach you
- Promote a team spirit
Team Negaholism®
Types of teams

Negaholic
- Lack of creativity
- Diminished morale
- No ground rules
- Nonattendance
- Unclear roles, purpose and outcomes

Healthy
- Communication
- Competence
- Participation, ownership
- Integrity, trust
- Give and take
Team negaholism* - Does your team...

- Compete rather than collaborate?
- Operate autonomously?
- Have ambiguous relationships?
- Dwell on excuses and blame each other?
- Bicker and quarrel over trivial issues?
- Seem not to trust each other?
- Have communication breakdowns?
- Display inconsistencies?
- Have different or conflicting goals?
- Get pitted against each other by managers?

* “Yes” to any indicates a problem!
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Cope with negaholic teams

1. Make sure people know what is expected
   - Preparation
   - Participation
   - Output
2. Agree on ground rules
   - Call people on violations
3. Bring structure to team activities
   - Agenda with timeframe
   - Define purpose, outcome, who speaks
   - Decide how to decide
   - Train team members
Dealing with negative behavior

- Use exhaustive listening
  - “What else?”
- Follow with selective agreement
  - Agree with their feelings and emotions
  - Agree that they said something without agreeing with what they said
- Collaborate
  - Work together to design a “plan of action”
Dealing with negative behavior

- Question focus
  - “What is most important?”
  - “Help me understand whether you want to change things or you just need to vent?”

- Make-a-wish strategy
  - “What would you like to see happen?”
  - “If you could do something to change this, what would be the end product?”
Action Plan

You can’t change ’em, but you can cope!

- Select 2-3 “subjects” for your action plan
- Identify someone who is a Negaholic®
- Identify type and degree of negaholism
  - Verbal
  - Attitudinal
  - Mental
  - Behavioral
  - Mild
  - Moderate
  - Extreme
- What will you start doing, keep doing, do more of or do differently?
Resources

- Negaholics: How to Overcome Negativity and Turn Your Life Around, Cherie Carter-Scott
- Negaholics® no more, Cherie Carter-Scott
- The Corporate Negaholic: How to Deal Successfully with Negative Colleagues, Managers, and Corporations, Cherie Carter-Scott
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