



NC Department of Environmental Quality

Interacting with Difficult People

rev. 08-2023



5 Types of Difficult People

1. Bully, Demanding, or Aggressive
2. Complainers
3. Confused or Indecisive
4. Impatient
5. Know It All





Bully, Demanding or Aggressive

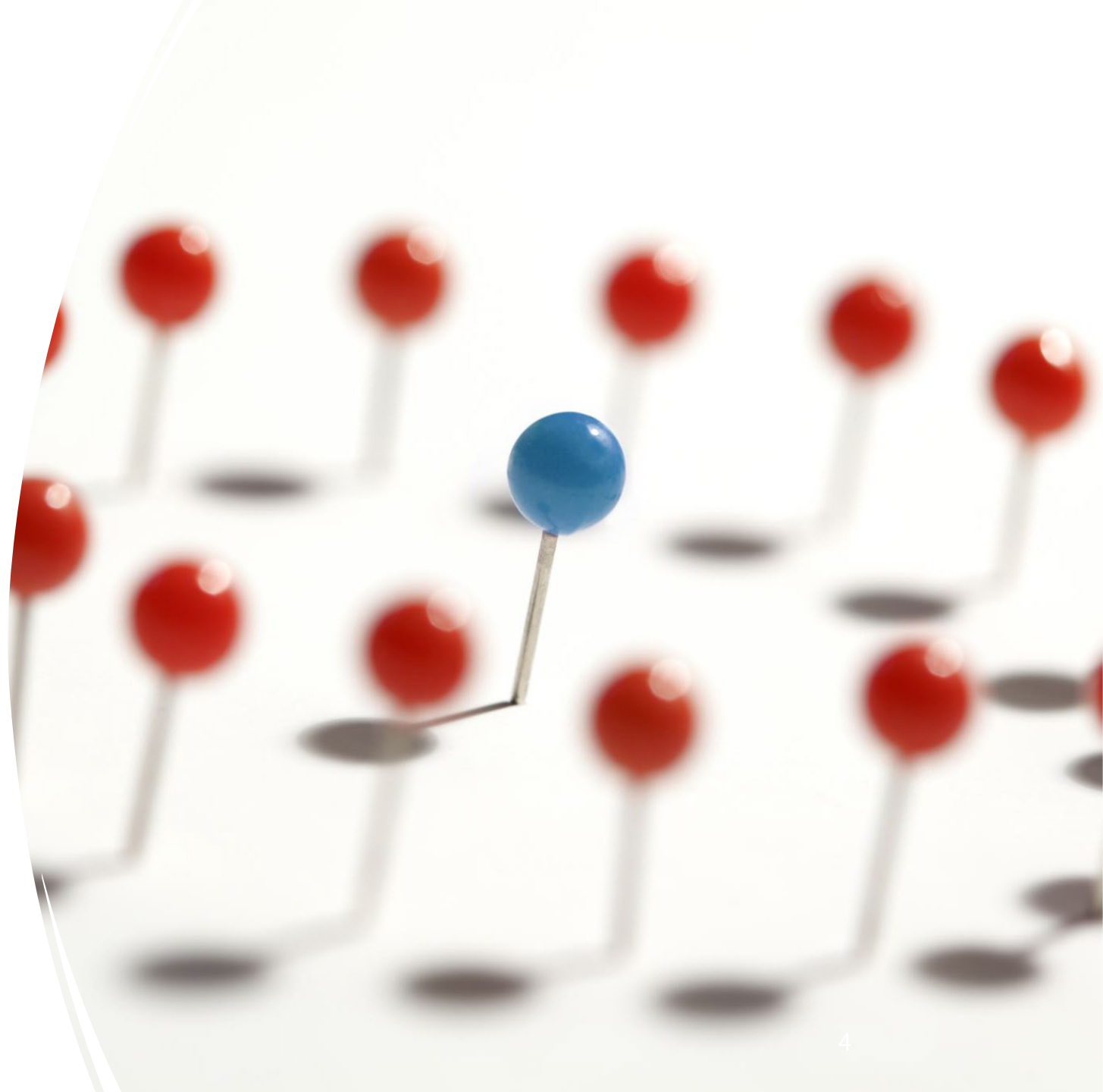
Characteristics:

- Quick to anger
- Overly aggressive
- Highly critical
- Rude
- Arrogant
- Verbally abusive
- Self Centered

Bully, Demanding or Aggressive

Best Responses:

- Do not raise your voice
- Do not take their insults personally
- Try to understand their frustration
- Speak calmly and with confidence
- Wait for them to become calmer
- Apologize and try to offer a solution





Complainers

Characteristics:

- They complain frequently
- They complain about petty things
- They are never satisfied

Complainers

Best Responses:

- Do not let their attitude affect yours
- Give them your full attention while they are speaking
- Respond calmly and try to smile
- Resolve any reasonable complaints if you can



Confused or Indecisive

Characteristics:

- Cannot make decisions or commitments
- Asks many questions
- Afraid of making mistakes



Confused or Indecisive

Best Responses:

- Identify their biggest concern
- Introduce urgency to help “force” a decision
- Be firm with these type people to encourage a commitment



Impatient

Characteristics:

- Want needs met immediately
- May resort to anger
- Makes unreasonable demands





Impatient

Best Responses:

- Calmly explain why you can't meet their requests immediately
- Thank them for their patience
- Explain clearly how you will try to meet their requests



Know It All

Characteristics:

- Knows everything about everything
- Dominates conversations
- Critical and rude

Know It All

Best Responses:

- Massage their ego
- Don't argue with them
- Compliment their knowledge
- Steer the conversation by saying things such as "You're right but I also think....."

