

Eight Myths About Difficult Volunteers

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Let's look at some myths in regard to these very troublesome volunteers. This list and the worksheets at the end of this segment, may help you clarify the depth of problems you face because of difficult volunteers. If you find yourself believing one of the following, you may have to readjust your thinking as you plan your strategy in dealing with identified problems.

The MYTH statements that confound problems & make them worse

- 1. Ignoring a problem will make it go away.**
WRONG. It may go underground and be more difficult to confront, but it will not go away, unless, of course, you plan to simply wait for the person to die, the height of avoidance.
- 2. No one else notices. I'm the only one who is suffering.**
You must be kidding. Others see the problem and can shift their anger or frustration to you, wondering why you don't take control and stop the negative behavior.
- 3. I can fix/change the problem person.**
WRONG. You can't and shouldn't. That's not why you're there. "Fixing" volunteers will drain your energy, time and effectiveness and ignore the 98% of volunteers who are doing a great job. Keep in mind, I am not talking about people who are causing minor problems and simply need to be set straight in talking about real trouble-makers who are dysfunctional.
- 4. There's good in everyone. I just need to give them time to show it.**
WRONG. There are some nasty people. How they got that way is not your problem or challenge. Savior is not in your job description. Time won't fix everyone and in the meantime you'll lose good people and possibly hurt some clients who don't deserve to put up with abuse.
- 5. If I confront them, it will make things worse.**
Not if you do it carefully and calmly. NOT confronting problematic behavior will cause more trouble, however.
- 6. If I confront them they'll leave and the program will die.**
If your program rides on the whim of one individual, you need to look for a new job. That is simply too much control, power and dependence for one person.
- 7. If I'm really the caring and all-accepting person I should be, I can handle them.**
STOP IT! You are beginning to believe your own press clippings. You're a volunteer administrator, not a saint. Don't see other people's dysfunction as somehow a test of your worth. They are the problem, not you.
- 8. If I push them out they will be mad at me.**

Maybe. Maybe not. If they become angry, so be it. You did what was best for the program and the people it serves. Sticks and stones and all of that....

Others may actually be relieved to be out of a situation that was uncomfortable for them,

All of the above are MYTHS. They are WRONG. Eight times wrong. (Well maybe only 7 1/2 times wrong.)

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