

Counterproductive Leadership: *Strategies to Identify, Assess, & Address*





Identify Counterproductive Leadership



Letting Go of the Toxic Label



- Lack of shared understanding about what “toxic” means
- Labels the person rather than the behavior
- Highlights overtly negative, malicious behaviors



Fact vs. Fiction

Only really poor leaders demonstrate these behaviors.

Leaders who demonstrate these behaviors cannot change.

If a leader is getting results, then they are not demonstrating counterproductive leadership.

Aspects of Army culture can make individuals more prone to demonstrating counterproductive leadership.



Counterproductive Leadership Defined

- Counterproductive leadership is “the demonstration of leader behaviors that violate one or more of the Army's core leader competencies or Army Values, preventing a climate conducive to mission accomplishment” (ADP 6-22).
- Army researchers have studied these behaviors and their impacts.





Counterproductive Leadership Defined

- What examples of counterproductive leadership have you witnessed?
- What impacts of have you personally seen in a previous unit?





Categories of Counterproductive Leadership Behaviors





General Indicators of Counterproductive Leadership

- What are some general indicators or warning signs that may suggest that counterproductive leadership is occurring within a unit?





General Indicators of Counterproductive Leadership



Individuals display non-verbal cues that indicate they are uncomfortable around the leader.



The leader surrounds him/herself with “Yes” men or women.



When something goes wrong, the leader blames others.



Identifying Counterproductive Leadership at Different Levels

- In your **subordinates**
- In your **peers**
- In your **superiors**
- In **yourself**





Uncovering Counterproductive Leadership in SUBORDINATES

- What are some methods you could use to help you uncover counterproductive leadership in subordinates?





Uncovering Counterproductive Leadership in SUBORDINATES

- Conduct battlefield circulation
- Advertise your open door policy
- Hold sensing sessions
- Complete command climate surveys



Uncovering Counterproductive Leadership in PEERS

You may be the **ideal person** to intervene because you have:



But you may...



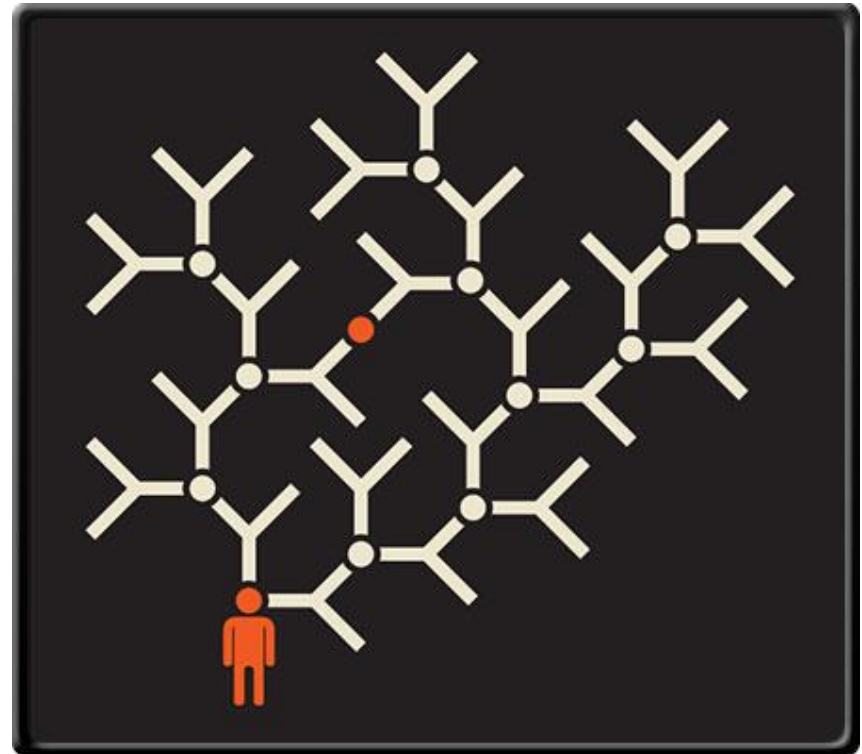
...Think you'll **hurt the relationship** by speaking up.



...**Be tempted to avoid** the situation or leave it to a superior.

Uncovering Counterproductive Leadership in SUPERIORS

- Pay attention to factors that may be contributing to the behavior.
 - "Every time subordinates provide suggestions at a meeting, the leader seems to take offense and belittles them in front of everyone. It is almost like suggestions are a direct threat to his ego and self-concept of a 'strong leader.'" - CPT
 - "When the leader has a tight deadline from HQ, he is short with us and loses his temper if we make mistakes or our pace isn't up to his standards." -MSG



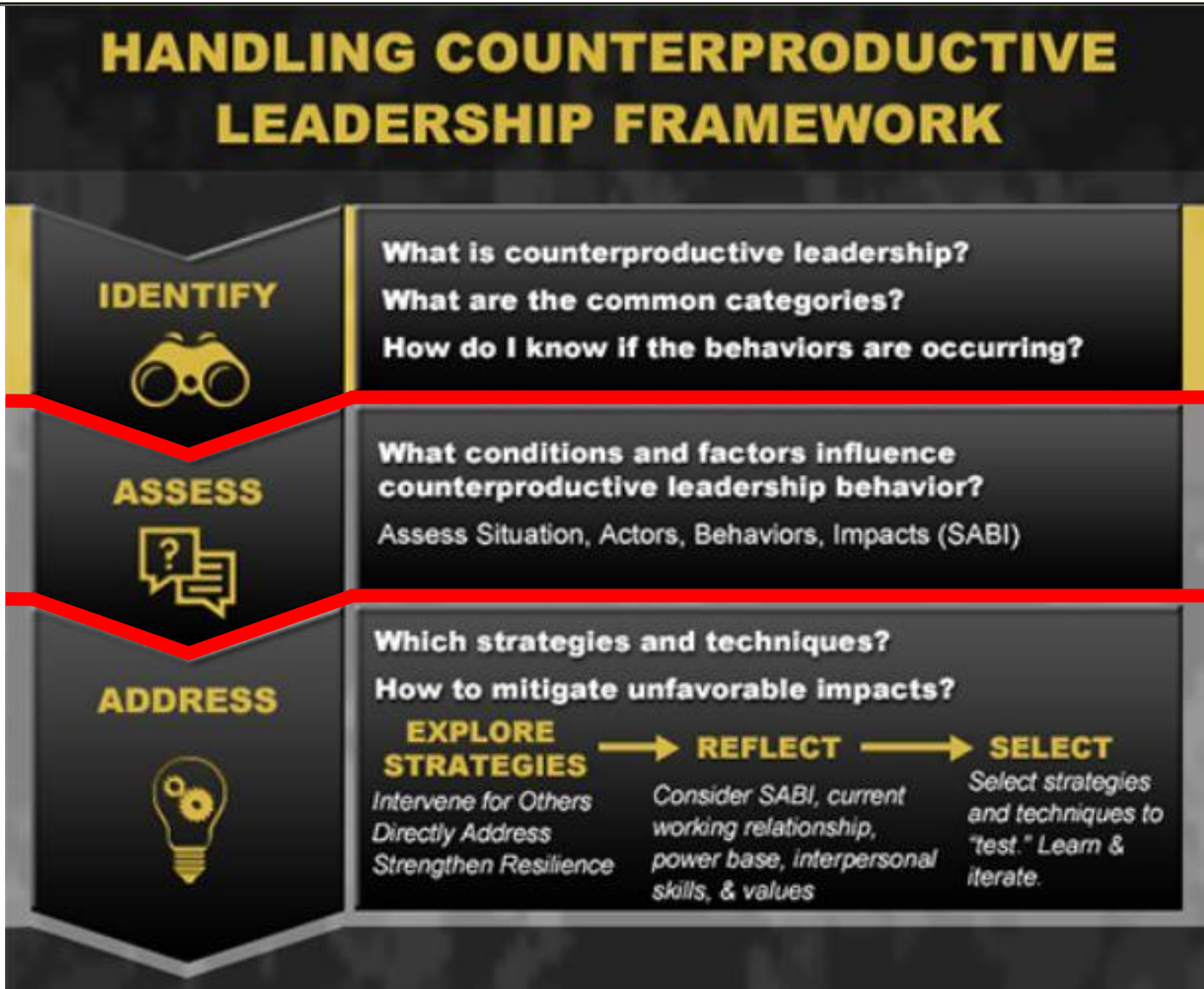


Uncovering Counterproductive Leadership

- What are the biggest barriers to identifying and uncovering counterproductive leadership in your unit?



Assess Counterproductive Leadership





Our Biases

Bias #1

How we interpret **our own** behavior

I arrive late to a meeting.



I hit traffic (situation).

Vs. How we interpret **others'** behavior

CPT Smith arrives late to a meeting.



She must be lazy and disorganized (character).



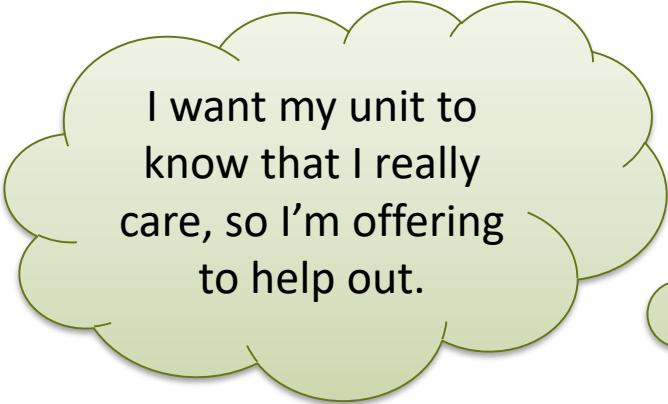
Our Biases

Bias #2

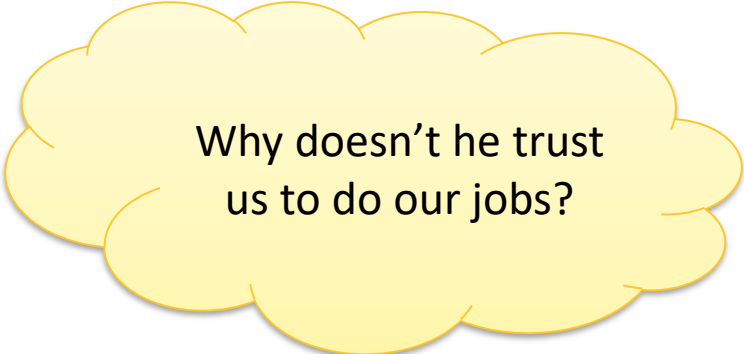
How we **intend** for our behaviors to come across

Vs.

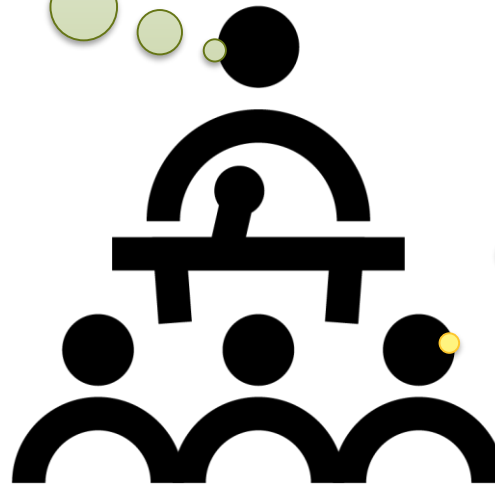
How others **perceive** our behaviors



I want my unit to know that I really care, so I'm offering to help out.



Why doesn't he trust us to do our jobs?





How to Check Our Biases

- Reflect instead of react
- Posture of empathy
 - Empathy allows the leader to anticipate what others are experiencing and to try to envision how decisions or actions affect them.



Factors to Assess

Situation

Actors

Behaviors

Impacts



Factors to Assess: Situation

Army Culture: Striking the Right Balance

- Values mission accomplishment and good work ethic

Self-assured

Charismatic

Physically fit

Decisive

Follow chain of command





Factors to Assess: Situation

- What kinds of common situational factors contribute to counterproductive leadership in any work place?
- How might the Army's values and cultural norms make individuals more prone to demonstrating counterproductive leadership?



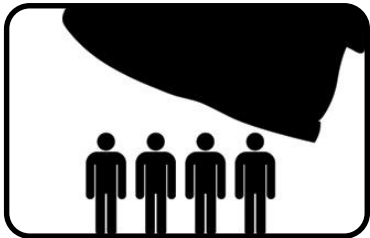


Factors to Assess: Situation

Cultural Values Taken to the Extreme



Achievement of Results Quickly and at Any Cost



Fulfillment of the “Hard Charging” Army Leader Stereotype



Extreme Deference to Authority



Factors to Assess: Actors

Leader Characteristics

- Past history
- Personality
- Adaptability
- Response to feeling threatened



Recipient Characteristics

- Personality
- Cognitive ability
- Competence



Observer Characteristics

- Is in a negative state of mind
- Wants to impress an observer



Factors to Assess: Behaviors

Behaviors – What Are They?

- What specific behaviors are you:
 - Witnessing directly?
 - Hearing about from others?
 - Seeing in command climate survey results (if applicable)?



Categories: Abusive Behaviors, Self-Serving Behaviors

Specific Behaviors Witnessed

- Berating and humiliating Bayne Smith for honest mistakes

Specific Behaviors Shared by 1LT Williams

- The Major creates schedules to fit his needs, never worrying about the hassle it creates for everyone else.

Factors to Assess: Behaviors

Frequency – How Often Do the Behaviors Take Place?

- When assessing frequency:
 - Record how many times you have seen the behavior or heard of the behavior(s) taking place.
 - Record times and dates.



OBSERVATIONS

6 FEB, Weekly Staff Meeting (0800 hours)

- MAJ Rolston berated Bayne Smith, yelling and insulting him, for an honest mistake in a project update

13 FEB, Weekly Staff Meeting (0800 hours)

- 1LT Henry proposed a different approach for a training event than what the Major had presented, but the idea was immediately dismissed by MAJ Rolston, who said it was a stupid waste of time that would never work

13 FEB, In the Major's Office (1300 hours)

- MAJ Rolston was yelling at 1LT Henry for offering a dissenting opinion during the meeting

Factors to Assess: Behaviors

Severity – How Extreme Are the Behaviors?

- Certain behaviors are severe enough to require immediate action:
 - Physical threats
 - Sexual harassment
 - Illegal activities



OBSERVATIONS

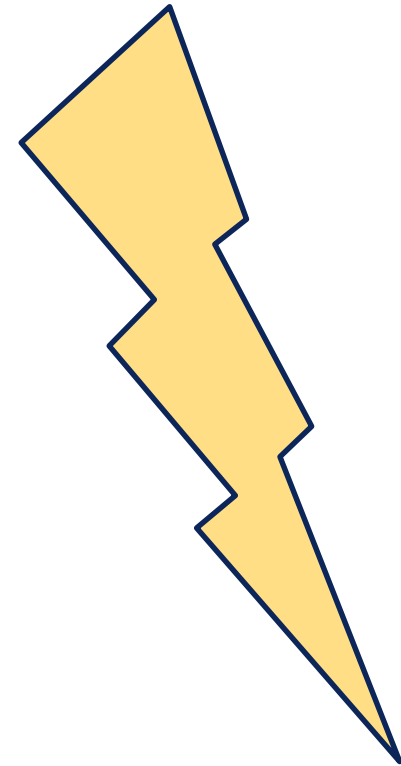
The bullying and intimidation is rude and unprofessional, but the Major never crosses the line into actual harassment or physical threats. After bullying someone, he senses their humiliation and plays it off as if he was just joking around.



Factors to Assess: Behaviors

Triggers

- When do the behaviors occur?
- What conditions provoke the behavior?





Factors to Assess: Behaviors

Triggers

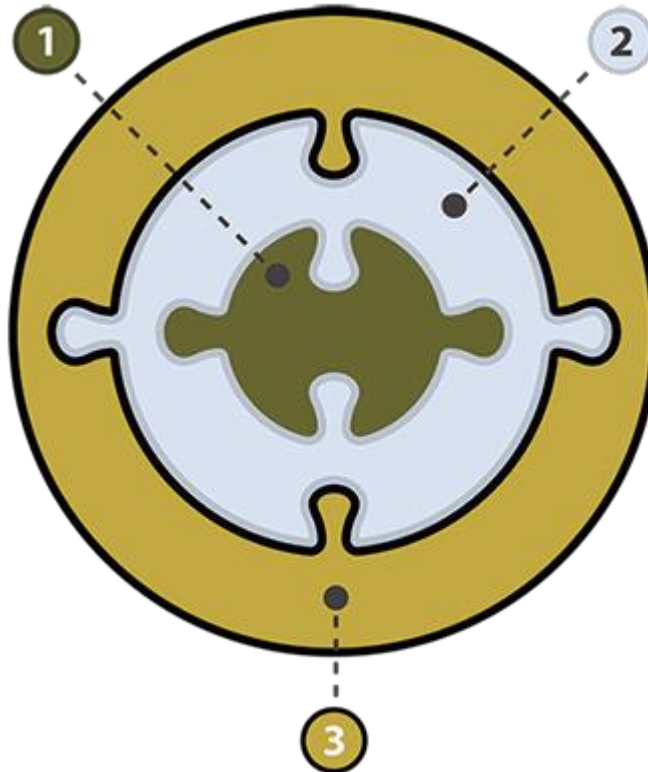
Situation

Does the leader tend to demonstrate these behaviors in public meetings or group settings?

Is the leader under pressure to show results?

Is the leader new to the position and feeling the pressure to make an impact?

Is the leader under high stress?



Actors

Does the leader feel threatened?

Does the recipient of the behavior often disagree with or oppose the leader's ideas?

Is the recipient whining or making errors?

Could the recipient's non-verbal cues be provoking the behavior?

Are certain observers consistently present when the leader demonstrates particular behaviors?

Behaviors

How often and when do the behaviors occur?

How extreme are the behaviors?





Factors to Assess: Impacts

Individuals

- Decreased health and well-being
- Decreased opportunities for development
- Decreased motivation and performance quality

Units

- Lowered unit performance
- Decreased trust and cohesion
- Eroding morale
- Reduced motivation and readiness

Organization

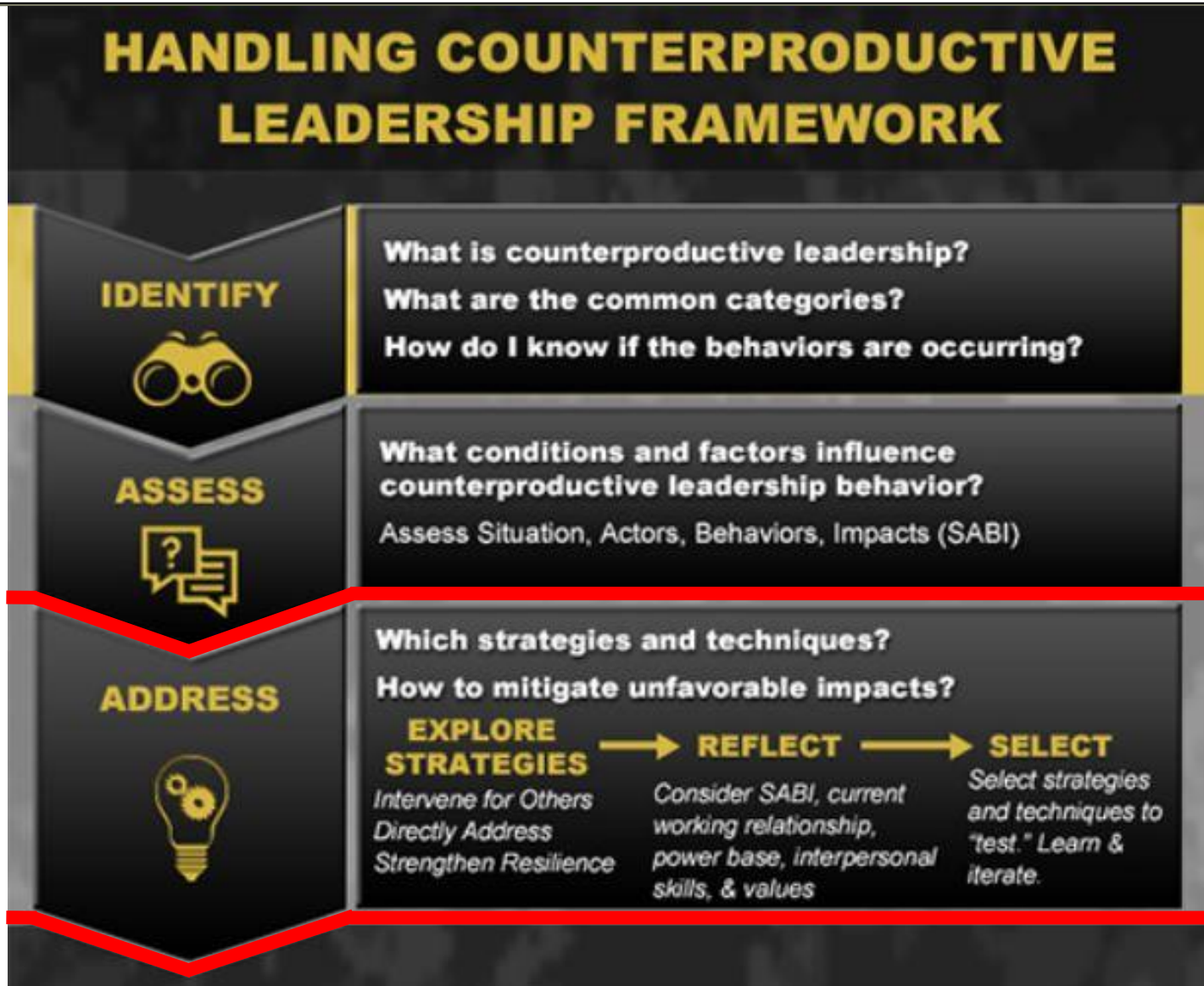
- People leaving the military
- Perpetuating examples of poor leadership



Conduct an Integrated Assessment

Factors	Your Assessment of Situation
<u>Situation</u>	
<u>Actors</u>	
<u>Behaviors</u>	
<u>Impacts</u>	
Integrated Assessment	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Given my analysis of the individual factors within SABI, what hypotheses can I make about what may be going on?</i> 	

Address Counterproductive Leadership





The Case for Taking Action

	Action	Inaction
Possible Pros	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Behaviors stop or lessen. You feel good about standing up for your personal values and modeling the Army value of Courage. You learn. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You <i>may</i> stay "safe" and prevent yourself from becoming a target. You're being loyal. You protect your Army career.
Possible Cons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Behaviors intensify or worsen. You become a target. You face setbacks in your Army career. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You become a target. Behaviors continue or worsen. You violate your personal values and the Army value of Courage by not speaking up, resulting in feelings of inauthenticity, increased anxiety, guilt, loneliness, frustration, burnout, stress, and hypocrisy. If you are a superior of a leader demonstrating these behaviors, inaction may create resentment and resistance among subordinates as well as decrease morale, which negatively impacts readiness and performance and outcomes. Long-term performance and readiness of the unit is impacted.



The Case for Taking Action

- What are the biggest risks to you personally for coming forward to address counterproductive leadership?
- What steps can you take to reduce risk?



Recognize and Manage Risk

- **Explore & Reflect:** Learn about different strategies and techniques. Reflect on how you might use them in your situation.
- **Select & Commit:** Hypothesize which techniques are likely to be effective and commit to testing them in small ways.
- **Test & Learn:** Define each test and what success looks like. Run your test, and be observant. Reflect and learn.





Strategies for Addressing Counterproductive Leadership

Intervene for Others

Directly Address

Strengthen Your Resilience



Intervene for Others Strategy

Refocus or redirect

Buffer or protect others

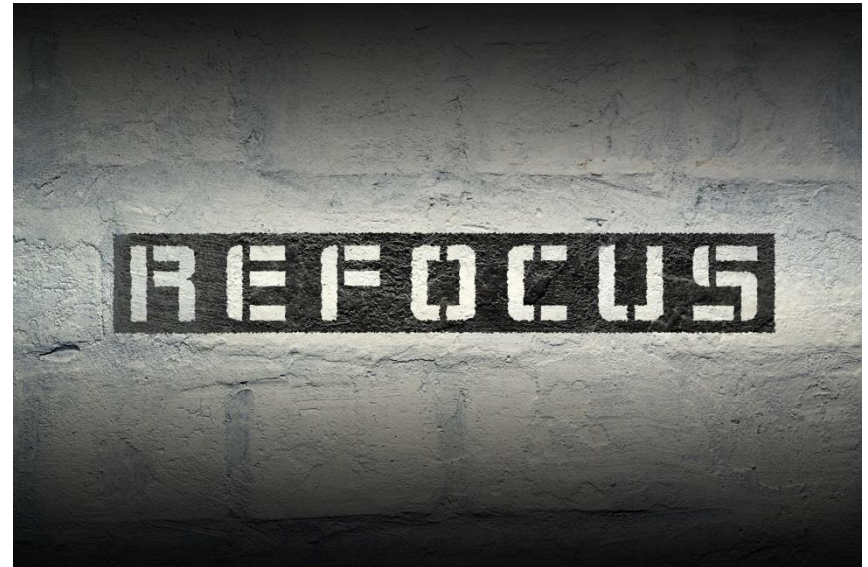
Provide support to affected individuals



Intervene for Others Strategy

Refocus or Redirect

- Move attention away from the counterproductive leadership in the moment
- Provide an exit to help individual escape





Intervene for Others Strategy

Buffer or Protect Others

- Attend or rearrange meetings
- Limit solo interactions or exposure to others
- Shield and protect your staff
- Talk to the leader to help redirect the team's energy on the task or work



Intervene for Others Strategy



Provide Support to Affected Individuals

- Reach out to affected individuals
- Listen and build up their confidence
- Brainstorm ways to handle, cope, and prevent behaviors





Intervene for Others Strategy

- Where have you seen these *Intervene for Others* strategies be used?
- What made them successful?



Directly Address Strategy



Set boundaries

De-escalate a negative exchange

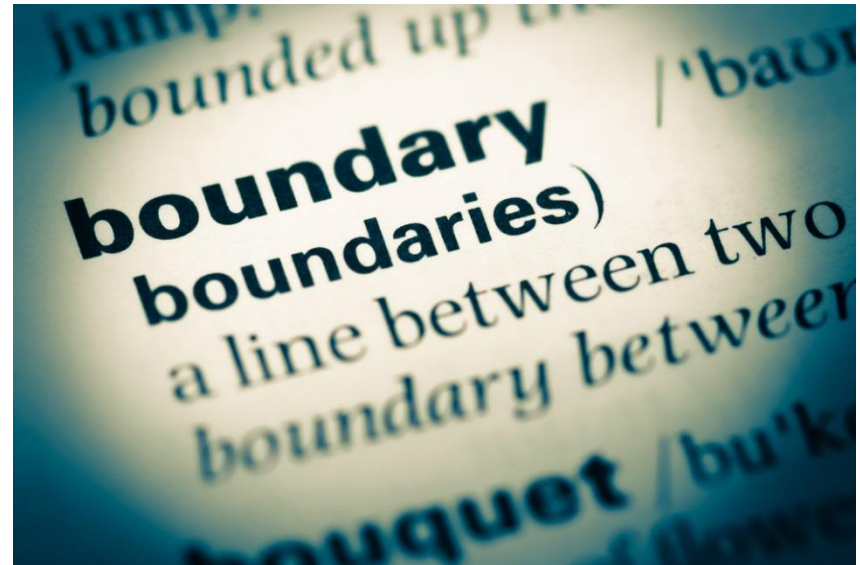
Report to others



Directly Address Strategy

Set Boundaries

- Decide on boundaries
- Decide whether to make boundaries explicit
- Determine how to enforce your boundaries





Directly Address Strategy

De-escalate a Negative Exchange

- Hit the “pause” button
- Use open-ended questions to prompt the leader to reflect





Directly Address Strategy

Report to Others

- Escalate to more senior leaders
- Use formal channels





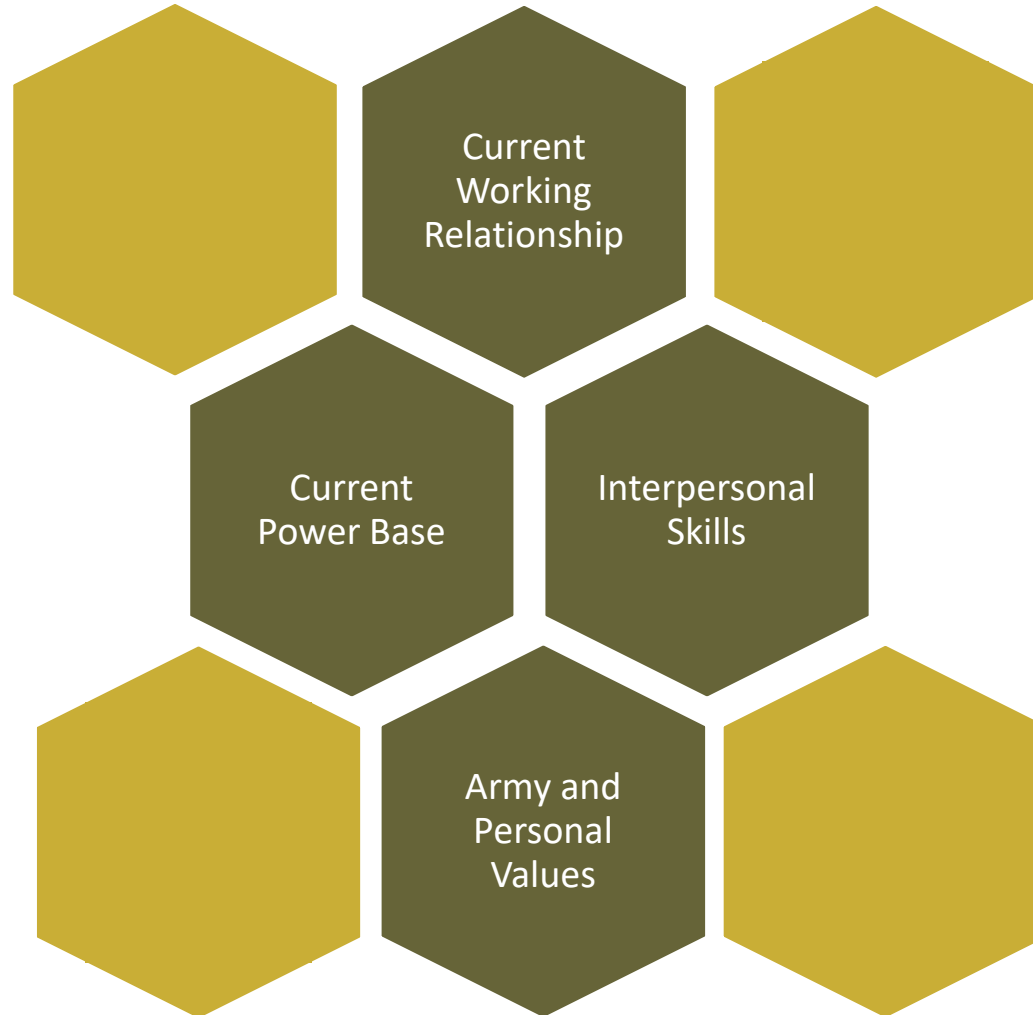
Directly Address Strategy

- What steps would you need to take to prepare yourself to feel confident to directly address a situation with counterproductive leadership?





Informing Your Path Forward





Setting the Stage for a Productive Exchange

Part 1: Defuse the Situation and Establish Mutual Respect and Purpose

Part 2: Address the Situation Respectfully

Part 3: Redirect Rationalizations and Emotions





Setting the Stage for a Productive Exchange

Part 1: Defuse the Situation and Establish Mutual Respect and Purpose

- Manage environmental triggers
- Defuse tense situations
- Establish mutual respect through active listening
- Establish mutual purpose





Setting the Stage for a Productive Exchange

Part 2: Respectfully Address the Situation

- Ask for permission to discuss difficult topics
- Practice facilitation techniques
- Use contrasting language, ideas, and techniques to clarify your intent





Setting the Stage for a Productive Exchange

Part 3: Redirect Rationalizations and Emotions

- Address rationalizations
- Recognize normal emotional reactions to negative feedback
- Remain calm





Setting the Stage for a Productive Exchange

- What are some situations where you can see yourself using one or more of these techniques?



Strengthen Resilience Strategy



Maintain your overall well-being

Protect your contribution to the mission



Strengthen Resilience Strategy

Maintain Your Overall Well-being

- Emotional health
- Mental health
- Physical health
- Spiritual health



Strengthen Resilience Strategy



Protect Your Contribution to the Mission

- Do your duty
- Document your work and exchanges
- Consider confidentiality
- Be honorable in your conduct
- Consider requests from the leader before agreeing





Avoid Tempting but Ineffective Techniques

Retaliate

Flatter

Physically avoid

Do nothing





Handle Retaliation

Military whistleblower reprisal

Ostracism

Maltreatment



Action Planning Reflection

- Get into small groups of 4-5 people
- Work through the Action Planning Reflection handout
 - Individually for 5 minutes
 - Then share with small group
 - Then share out to large group



HANDLING COUNTERPRODUCTIVE LEADERSHIP FRAMEWORK

IDENTIFY



What is counterproductive leadership?
What are the common categories?
How do I know if the behaviors are occurring?

ASSESS



What conditions and factors influence counterproductive leadership behavior?
Assess Situation, Actors, Behaviors, Impacts (SABI)

ADDRESS



Which strategies and techniques?
How to mitigate unfavorable impacts?

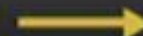
EXPLORE STRATEGIES

*Intervene for Others
Directly Address
Strengthen Resilience*



REFLECT

Consider SABI, current working relationship, power base, interpersonal skills, & values



SELECT

Select strategies and techniques to "test." Learn & iterate.