

**“It’s All Your Fault! 12 Tips for Managing People Who Blame Others for Everything by Bill Eddy, LCSW, Esq.**

**The unlocking the cycle of High Conflict Thinking**

1. M.A.D. - Mistaken Assessment of Danger
2. B.A.D. - Behavior that’s aggressively defensive
3. E.A.R. - Empathy Attention and Respect

**TIP #1 SUMMARY FROM BOOK**

**Don’t take their personal attacks personally!**

- 1.) High Conflict People (HCPs) have a long-term problem of blaming others.
- 2.) HCP’s appear to have Cluster B personality disorders or traits, with chronic unconscious Internal Upsets (ICs) that they mistakenly believe are caused by others - their Targets of Blame (TOBs).
- 3.) HCPs truly want to feel better, so they attack their TOBs in misguided efforts to change or eliminate the danger they feel.
- 4.) HCPs don’t reflect on or change their own inappropriate behavior. Their problems and conflicts continue and often escalate into high-conflict disputes.
- 5.) You know you’re a Target of Blame when you are personally and repeatedly blamed or criticized in an intensely negative way by an HCP.
- 6.) Remind yourself: It’s not all your fault! The personal attack is not about you as a person!
- 7.) Recognize when you feel defensive. See if you need to protect yourself physically or legally. Otherwise, you usually don’t have to do anything - because it’s not about you as a person.

- 8.) Don't tell the HCP, "It's All Your Fault!" Avoid blaming the HCP as a person.
- 9.) If you're engaged in an emotional battle with an HCP, you can disengage at any time. Remember, the HCP had a long-term pattern of blaming others before you will blame others after you. It's not about you, so you don't have to defend yourself verbally to the HCP.
- 10.) When dealing with an HCP, regularly get support from helpful friends and relatives and/or consultation from a therapist or other professional. You're not alone in facing this problem.

**TIP #2 SUMMARY FROM BOOK**  
**Don't Give Them Negative Feedback**

1.) The Cycle of High Conflict Thinking maintains and escalates conflict with three steps:

Step 1: The HCP's Mistaken Assessment of Danger (M.A.D.)

Step 2: The HCP's Behavior that's Aggressively Defensive (B.A.D.)

Step 3: Your Negative Feedback (N.F.)

2.) HCPs' Mistaken Assessment of Danger is based on their frequent high-conflict thinking, which everyone has occasionally. But HCPs believe these thoughts are true and act on them without checking for accuracy, including:

- All-or Nothing Thinking
- Jumping to Conclusions
- Personalization
- Emotional Reasoning
- Mind Reading
- Wishful Thinking
- Tunnel Vision
- Exaggerated Fears
- Projecting
- Splitting

3.) High Conflict People with Cluster B Personality Disorders or Traits appear to have the following chronic Exaggerated Fears, which are the cause of many of their Internal Upsets because they are repeatedly triggered by ordinary events:

Borderlines.....Fear of Being Abandoned  
Narcissists.....Fear of Being Inferior  
Histrionics.....Fear of Being Ignored  
Antisocials.....Fear of Being Dominated/Controlled

**TIP #3 SUMMARY**  
**Don't Bend Boundaries With Borderlines**

**Characteristics**

- 1.) Borderlines are known for their sudden mood swings and intense anger.
- 2.) Borderlines are preoccupied with fear of abandonment.
- 3.) Borderlines often start relationships with charm and sudden urges for intimacy.
- 4.) Borderlines idealize people they like, but then attack those same people for disappointing them.
- 5.) Borderlines have often experienced early childhood abuse, trauma, or parenting disruptions.

**Managing Borderlines HCPs**

- 1.) Have clear boundaries for your amount of contact and level of closeness.
- 2.) Discourage an idealized picture of your talents or personal qualities.
- 3.) Respond matter-of-factly to requests for reassurance.
- 4.) Take threats of violence or spreading rumors seriously.
- 5.) Avoid taking responsibility for fixing his or her problems.

**TIP #4 SUMMARY**  
**Don't Diss The Narcissists**

**Characteristics**

- 1.) Narcissists have an unconscious fear of being seen as inferior.
- 2.) Narcissists are very self-centered and self-absorbed.
- 3.) Narcissists expect special, superior treatment.
- 4.) Narcissists react extremely negatively to any Negative Feedback.
- 5.) Narcissists exhibit frequent disrespect and disdain for others.

**Managing Narcissistic HCPs**

- 1.) Recognize real strengths and accomplishments.
- 2.) Listen with empathy.
- 3.) Keep an arm's length relationship.
- 4.) Use indirect, positive reasons for changing behavior.
- 5.) Explain the consequences of various courses of action.
- 6.) If possible, take action to get the person into some form of treatment to change behavior.
- 7.) Set limits on the relationship. Or carefully terminate it if appropriate.

**TIP #5 SUMMARY**  
**Don't Get Hooked By Histrionics**

**Characteristics**

- 1.) For Histrionics, fear of being ignored is a driving force.
- 2.) Histrionics are very dramatic, theatrical, and superficial.
- 3.) Histrionics have high-intensity, shifting emotions with few facts and little focus.
- 4.) Histrionics exaggerate and sometimes fabricate events.
- 5.) Histrionics have difficulty focusing on tasks or making decisions.

**Managing Histrionic HCPs**

- 1.) Focus discussions on what is most essential, if anything.
- 2.) You can interrupt an intensely emotional person.
- 3.) Empathize with their pain, but don't buy into their stories.
- 4.) Avoid trying to change them or tone down their responses.
- 5.) Suggest realistic small tasks to solve specific problems.
- 6.) Avoid trying to protect the person or those around the person from reality.

**TIP # 6 SUMMARY**  
**Don't Get Conned By Antisocials**

**Characteristics**

- 1.) Antisocials routinely attempt to dominate others because they fear being dominated.
- 2.) Antisocials show a strong disregard for social rules and laws.
- 3.) Antisocials have lots of aggressive energy, high risk-taking, and disregard for others.
- 4.) Antisocials constantly lie and deceive, even when they're easy to discover.
- 5.) Antisocials have an extreme lack of remorse.

**Managing Antisocial HCPs**

- 1.) Be alert for unusual stories that require you to do something.
- 2.) Pay attention to your gut feelings.
- 3.) Be skeptical when anybody tells you someone else is an evil monster.
- 4.) HCPs have distortions much of the time and lie some of the time.
- 5.) Remind yourself every day to maintain a healthy skepticism.

**TIP #7 SUMMARY**  
**Don't Be A Negative Advocate**

- 1.) HCPs constantly seek Negative Advocates to help fight their many battles.
- 2.) HCPs can be Persuasive Blamers and unconsciously persuade others to be their Negative Advocates against their perceived enemies – their Targets of Blame.
- 3.) Negative Advocates reinforce a HCPs negative behavior, emotions, and thoughts.
- 4.) Negative Advocates often have more credibility and fight harder than the HCP.
- 5.) When fully informed. Negative Advocates often abandon or turn against the HCP.

**Managing Negative Advocates**

- 1.) Negative Advocates can be anyone who is “emotionally hooked” by an HCP, including family members, friends, neighbors, co-workers, and even professionals.
- 2.) Remember that most Negative Advocates aren't HCPs themselves, but have been persuaded by the HCPs complaints about you out of loyalty, fear or anger.
- 3.) Don't attack Negative Advocates or assume they're committed to being Negative Advocates. They may be skeptical themselves, but feel pressured to go along temporarily until they become more fully informed – possibly by you.
- 4.) Calmly provide as much accurate information as you can to Negative Advocates.
- 5.) Handle Negative advocates the same way as HCPs, including using your E.A.R. and the other methods in Part II.



**TIP #8 SUMMARY**  
**Connect Using Your E.A.R.**

- 1.) HCPs are desperate for empathy, attention, and respect.
- 2.) Think of something you can empathize with, and honestly show your empathy in words or deeds. However, if you can't feel any empathy for the HCP, then don't do this.
- 3.) Pay full attention to the HCP by listening without interrupting or thinking about something else. Tell the HCP the essence of what you heard, and that you'll pay attention to their problems or concerns. But don't necessarily spend a lot of time listening, unless you have the time available. The most important part is to communicate that you'll pay attention to the HCP and his or her concerns.
- 4.) Think of something that you respect about the person and let the person know that you respect that quality in him or her.
- 5.) Focus on what you can do to connect with the person. Don't place the burden on HCPs by asking lots of questions before you have shown Empathy, Attention, and Respect. Connecting with your E.A.R. is something you give to HCP in order to build a connection.
- 6.) Remember that you will still need to keep your boundaries in using your empathy, attention, and respect. E.A.R. doesn't mean that you agree with the content of what the person is saying – just that you want to help. It doesn't mean that you have to listen for hours, unless you have the time and want to spend it that way. It doesn't mean that you have to be close to the person. You can keep an "arm's length" relationship and still use your E.A.R.
- 7.) If it is not a safe situation and you can get away, focus on getting to a safe place first. If you are safe, try hard to find a way to show empathy, attention, or respect. This reduces

many unmanageable conflicts to a manageable level.  
However, if this just doesn't fit your situation, move on to the next steps.

**TIP #9 SUMMARY**  
**Analyze Your Realistic Options**

High Conflict People will often distress you and influence you to take strong action without thinking. Such actions usually make things worse. Instead, Analyze Your Realistic Options.

**The Analyzing step has three parts:**

**A. Write a list of 3 to 10 options for What To Do about the situation, realistic or not.**

This list can include ideas that are extreme, funny, or unrealistic. The point is to start thinking about the high-conflict situation. Often an unrealistic idea will trigger your creative thinking and you'll come up with new ideas that are realistic.

**B. Check each option for high-conflict thinking – The HCP's and your own.**

When you check for High Conflict Thinking, look at the list of 10 items below, but feel free to add new ones. The point is to think each option through to see if it's a realistic idea. Many ideas feel good until you think them through. Then you realize they're not realistic. The list below will help you screen out bad ideas. Feel free to get help with this step from someone in an objective position.

**C. Check the most realistic option to try first.**

If nothing on your list of options seems realistic enough then write down some more. Once you've decided which one you're going to try, you're well on your way to handling the dispute and the HCP. Remember to learn from whatever you do so that you can keep refining your options as you handle the situation with the HCP.

Here are the 10 common types of High Conflict Thinking for HCPs, and for those trying to deal with them. Make sure to check for High Conflict Thinking that your plans may trigger in the HCP, and for your

own High Conflict Thinking, which may make it unrealistic:

- All-or-nothing thinking
- Jumping to conclusions
- Personalization
- Emotional reasoning
- Mind reading
- Wishful thinking
- Tunnel vision
- Exaggerated fears
- Projecting
- Splitting

The Analyzing step gets easier the more you do it. Don't worry; it doesn't have to be done perfectly to be helpful. I encourage you to write down your own options, but if you don't want to write them down, don't let that stop you. The goal is to improve your response with High Conflict People to manage, or end high-conflict disputes. The more you think these situations through, the more effective you'll be.

**TIP #10 SUMMARY**  
**Respond Quickly to Inaccurate Information**

High Conflict People repeatedly distort information. *They truly see if differently*, and most of these distortions are honestly believed. However, many HCPs lie more than most people because they feel they “have to” in order to cope with their chronic fears.

**A. IS there nay-inaccurate information that needs a response?**

- 1.) Is it just the HCP who has this inaccurate information?
- 2.) If so, then you usually don't need to respond to all. You're not going to change the HCP's mind, especially since you're seed an adversary (a Target of Blame).
- 3.) Has the misinformation gone to potential Negative Advocates or your larger community (workplace, neighborhood, extended family)? If so, then you'll usually want to respond, and as quickly as possible. An exception to this would be responding to committed Negative Advocates. They're unlikely to change their opinion. With information that has gone out to a community, be careful to take a balance approach that reassures the community it's not a civil war between you and the HCP.

**B. How can I best present my accurate information?**

1. Always show empathy and respect for the HCP in public.
2. Depending on the situation, provide a detailed response or a general statement of disagreement.
3. Say you care for the community and won't be distracted.
4. In general, be Brief, Informative, Friendly, and Firm (B.I.F.F.).

**C. If I'm responding, who should I provide with my accurate information?**

1. Potential Negative Advocates are usually the most important.
2. Committed Negative Advocates are optional unless you're legally required to respond to them, such as to their attorneys.
3. The general community should be included, through the same means that the HCP has communicated, such as emails, bulletin boards, newspapers, and in-office memos.
4. Usually include the HCP, so that the HCP doesn't find out another way.

## **TIP #11 SUMMARY –** **Set Limits on Misbehavior**

**The process of setting limits has two simple steps:**

Step #1: You establish the rules (policies, procedures, laws).

Step #2: You provide logical consequences if the rules are Violated.

**With HCPs, however, there are difficult issues that also need to be considered:**

**1. HCPs don't respond with ordinary logic or realistic self-interest!**

Their focus is on their chronic, personality-based preoccupations with relationship fears: Fear of Abandonment, Fear of Being Belittled, Fear of Being Ignored, and/or Fear of Being Dominated.

**2. What is your goal?**

The primary goal is containment of HCP misbehavior. In cases of ongoing relationships (family or workplace) a secondary goal may be cognitive and behavioral treatment.

**3. Set Personal Limits: Use the Power You Have.**

- Limit contact.
- Limit the subjects you will discuss.
- Terminate the relationship (very carefully).
- Leave the community: workplace, neighborhood, or family.

**4. Set Community Limits: Use the Power Structure You Have.**

- Mediation
- Ombudsperson
- Collaborative Law
- Arbitration
- Litigation
- Law Enforcement

**5. Use a Highly Assertive Approach to Setting Limits.**

- An aggressive approach backfires.
- A passive approach backfires.
- Match the HCP's level of aggressive energy, but do it assertively.

**6. Establish an Assertive Culture of Conflict in Your Community.**

- Use empathy, attention, and respect, even while setting limits.
- Regularly create or revise rules with community input.
- Regularly impose consequences that fit the violation of rules.
- Contain the aggressive misbehavior of everyone, including the HCPs.
- Welcome the creativity of everyone, including HCPs.



**TIP #12 SUMMARY**  
**Choose Your Battles**

1. **CONNECT** using Your Empathy, Attention, and Respect
2. **ANALYZE** your Realistic Options
3. **RESPOND** to Misinformation
4. **SET LIMITS** on Misbehavior

**Don't be the Target of Blame**

1. Lower your expectations so that you don't attack the HCP because of wishful thinking that he or she will change lifetime personality patterns.
2. Don't be Aggressive – the HCP's Negative Advocates and your Community will be easily convinced that you're a problem and should be treated as a Target of Blame.
3. Don't be Passive – HCPs will walk all over you, as they can't stop themselves.
4. Take an Assertive Approach, being as assertive as the HCP is aggressive.
5. Practice writing out C.A.R.S Method worksheets so that it becomes automatic when you're under pressure. This way, you won't slop into being aggrieved or passive and become a Target of Blame.
6. Get assistance from Positive Advocates, Avoid Negative Advocates.
7. Make your own decisions. They are tools, not rules.