

Balint Group Process in Difficult Business Relationships

Assumptions:

- Everyone has worked with someone who is/was difficult to work with for one reason or another! (Raise your hand when you have that person in mind)
- Bottom line - we, ourselves, hold the key to solving this problem. No one truly knows the problem the way(s) we do, and we can't totally communicate all the nuances of the problem and all the buttons it pushes in us (often we don't even consciously know them ourselves).
- If we could solve this problem situation alone, we would! Therefore, we must involve other people.

However, no one can solve this for us - Someone else's solution to our problem will never be sufficient. Using brainstorming becomes a form of 20 questions (How about this?), the ideas that people come up with are purely guess work, the process never helps us see our blind spot, it's a purely intellectual (thinking) effort, it becomes a 'clever' contest, not everyone participates, and it becomes somewhat competitive - among other drawbacks.

In addition, we understand (at an intellectual level, but not emotionally) all the messages from Myers Briggs about how different people have different styles, but we really don't use it! We also 'know' about Emotional Intelligence, but where is the application when we need it?

One useful approach is a group process called Balint groups! There are a number of unique characteristics of Balint groups that make them useful and productive:

- We talk about the problem at the level of emotions
- participants are asked to talk about what gets stirred up inside themselves when they hear the dilemma
- empathy is a prime skill that gets used and developed
- the presenter gets to truly listen to and hear different perspectives and possibilities about their dilemma
- there is no competition because divergent thinking is what gets rewarded
- Everyone participates through discussion, questions, and being introduced to a new process and way of looking at problem relationships.

In this program, Dr. Sternlieb will briefly describe the Balint process, explain its origins and then conduct a Balint group. Following this, he will process the experience with participants and answer questions about applications.