

Your Style Under Stress Test

What kind of a self-monitor are you? One good way to increase your self-awareness is to explore your Style Under Stress. What do you do when talking turns tough? To find out, fill out the survey on the following pages. It'll help you see what tactics you typically revert to when caught in the midst of a crucial conversation.

Instructions: The following questions explore how you typically respond when you're in the middle of a crucial conversation. Before you begin answering, **pick a specific relationship at work**. Then answer the items as **True or False** while thinking about how you typically approach risky conversations in that relationship.

1. ____ At times I avoid situations that might bring me into contact with people I'm having problems with.
2. ____ I have put off returning phone calls or emails because I simply didn't want to deal with the person who sent them.
3. ____ Sometimes when people bring up a touch or awkward issue, I try to change the subject.
4. ____ When it comes to dealing with awkward or stressful subjects, sometimes I hold back rather than give m full and candid opinion.
5. ____ Rather than tell people exactly what I think, sometimes I rely on jokes, sarcasm, or snide remarks to let them know I'm frustrated.
6. ____ When I've got something tough to bring up, sometimes I offer weak or insincere compliments to soften the blow.
7. ____ In order to get m point across, I sometimes exaggerate my side of the argument.
8. ____ If I seem to be losing control of a conversation, I might cut people off or change the subject in order to bring it back to where I think it should be.
9. ____ When others make points that seem stupid to me, I sometimes let them know it without holding back at all.

10. ___ When I'm stunned by a comment, sometimes I say things that others might take as forceful or attacking—comments such as "Give me a break!" or "That's ridiculous!"
11. ___ Sometimes when things get heated, I move from arguing against others' points to saying things that might hurt them personally.
12. ___ If I get into a heated conversation, I've been known to be tough on the other person. In fact, the person might feel a bit insulted or hurt.
13. ___ When I'm discussing an important topic with others, sometimes I move from trying to make my points to trying to win the battle.
14. ___ In the middle of a tough conversation, I often get so caught up in arguments that I don't see how I'm coming across to others.
15. ___ When talking gets tough and I do something hurtful, I'm quick to apologize for mistakes.
16. ___ When I think about a conversation that took a bad turn, I tend to focus on what I did that was wrong rather than focus on others' mistakes.
17. ___ I'm pretty good at persuading others by helping them understand the reasoning behind my views.
18. ___ I can tell very quickly when others are holding back or feeling defensive in a conversation.
19. ___ Sometimes I decide that it's better not to give harsh feedback because I know that it's bound to cause real problems.
20. ___ When conversations aren't working, I step back from the fray, think about what's happening, and take steps to make it better.
21. ___ When others defensive because they misunderstand me. I quickly get us back on track by clarifying what I do and don't mean.
22. ___ There are some people I'm rough on because, to be honest, *in the moment* I feel like that need or deserve what I give them.

23. ___ I sometimes make absolute statements like "The fact is..." or "It's obvious that..." to be sure I get my point across.
24. ___ If others hesitate to share their views, I sincerely invite them to say what's on their mind, no matter what it is.
25. ___ I sometimes feel so frustrated or put down that I come across pretty aggressively toward the other person.
26. ___ Even when things get tense, I'm good at finding out why people are upset and getting to the root cause of the problem.
27. ___ When I find that I'm at a cross-purpose with someone, I often keep trying to win my way rather than looking for common ground.
28. ___ When things don't go well, in the heat of the moment I'm inclined to think the other person is more at fault than I am.
29. ___ After I share strong opinions, I go out of my way to invite others to share their views, particularly opposing ones.
30. ___ When others hesitate to share their views, I listen even more attentively and show more interest in their view.
31. ___ I often have problems with people failing to do what we agreed to and then the burden is on me to bring it up again.
32. ___ After conversations, I have additional problems because I have different recollections of what was discussed or agreed to.
33. ___ When trying to work out problems with others, I find we either disagree or have violated expectations about who has the final say on some issues.

Style Under Stress Score

Please fill out the score sheets in Figures 1 and 2 below. Each domain contains two or three questions. Next to the question number is either a (T) or an (F). For example, under “Masking,” question 5 on Figure 1, you’ll find a (T). This means that if you answered it true, check the box. With question 13 on Figure 2, on the other hand, you’ll find an (F). Only check that box if you answered the question false—and so on. Total the points for each category for ONLY the boxes you checked. Your Style Under Stress score (Figure 1) will show you which forms of silence or violence you turn to most often. Your Dialogue Skills score (Figure 2) is organized by concept from the resource, *Crucial Conversations*.

Silence or Violence Conversation Strategy Tendency Figure 1

Silence ☐	Violence ☐
Masking ☐ 5 (T) ☐ 6 (T)	Controlling ☐ 7 (T) ☐ 8 (T)
Avoiding ☐ 3(T) ☐ 4 (T)	Labeling ☐ 9 (T) ☐ 10 (T)
Withdrawing ☐ 1 (T) ☐ 2 (T)	Attacking ☐ 11 (T) ☐ 12 (T)

Seven Domains Figure 2

Start with Heart ☐ ☐ 13 (F) ☐ 19 (F) ☐ 25 (F)	STATE My Path ☐ ☐ 17 (T) ☐ 23 (F) ☐ 29 (T)
Learn to Look ☐ ☐ 14(F) ☐ 20 (T) ☐ 26 (T)	Explore Others' Paths ☐ ☐ 18 (T) ☐ 24 (T) ☐ 30 (T)
Make it Safe ☐ ☐ 15 (T) ☐ 21 (T) ☐ 27 (F)	Move to Action ☐ ☐ 31 (F) ☐ 32 (F) ☐ 33 (F)
Master my Stories ☐ ☐ 16 (T) ☐ 22 (F) ☐ 28 (F)	

What Your Score Means

Your silence and violence scores give you a measure of how frequently you fall into these less-than-perfect strategies. It's actually possible to score high in both. A high score (one or two checked boxes per domain) means you use this technique fairly often. It also means you're human. Most people toggle between holding back and becoming too forceful.

The seven domains in figure 2 reflect your skills in each of the corresponding seven skill chapters. If you score high (two or three boxes) in one of these domains, you're already quite skilled in this area. If you score low (zero or one), you may want to pay special attention to these chapters.

Since these scores represent how you typically behave during stressful or crucial conversations, they can change. Your score doesn't represent an inalterable character trait or a genetic propensity. It's merely a measure of your behavior—and you can change that. In fact, people who take this book seriously will practice the skills contained in each chapter and eventually they will change. And when they do, so will their lives.

Reference: Patterson, K., Grenny, J., McMillan, R., Switzler, A. (2012). Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When Stakes are High, 2nd ed. New York, NY: McGraw Hill.