

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 tough and crucial conversation.

Instructions: The following questions explore how you typically respond when you're in the middle of a tough and crucial conversation. Before you begin answering, **think of a challenging relationship you have at work.** Then **place a check mark in the statement if it applies** when thinking about how you typically approach risky conversations in that relationship. Don't answer what with what you wish you would do - be honest and reflective.

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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.

Style Under Stress Score

Please fill out the score sheet below. Each domain contains a couple of critical questions. Next to the question number is a box. For example, under "Masking," question 5 (T). - If you checked question 5 in the assessment, then check the box here. Your Style Under Stress score is the total in each column, enter that in the box next to Silence or Violence. The column with the higher number shows which forms of communication you turn to most often, when under stress.

Silence or Violence Conversation Strategy Tendency

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

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.

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. I

Reference: Patterson, K., Grenny, J., McMillan, R., Switzler, A. (2023). Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When Stakes are High, 2nd ed. New York, NY: McGraw Hill.