Dealing with Conflict

Based on DISC personality styles developed by William Marston

(These four dimensions can be grouped in a grid with D and I sharing the top row and representing extroverted aspects of the personality, and C and S below representing introverted aspects. D and C then share the left column and represent task-focused aspects, and I and S share the right column and represent social aspects.)

1. DISC personality Types

* A. Dominance:

Results-oriented, “get it done” approach

Set high goals and love to accomplish them

Focus on immediate goals; may overlook long-term effects

Decisive almost to a fault; will go with an idea if only 55 percent sure

Efficient, purposeful, direct; good at time management

Fast talkers, factual; may appear pushy regarding their own agenda

* B. Influence:

Most flamboyant personality type; bold, dramatic visionaries

High-energy; can easily overpower others

Animated and vocal in social interactions

Enjoy contact via phone, email, or in person

Assertive and impulsive

Advocate more than inquire, talk more than listen

* C. Steadiness:

Easy going and people-oriented; like to work with others

Generous with their time and encouraging to others

Unpretentious; prefer to work behind the scenes

Like stability, structure, and routine

Indecisive; uncomfortable with risk-taking and being in charge

May withhold opinions to avoid disapproval or confrontation

1. Conscientiousness:

Perfectionists, often to the point of being critical

Well-organized, love data

Task-oriented; prefer to work alone or in a small group

Look for certainty when making decisions and tend to procrastinate

Like to think before speaking; offer indirect opinions

Analyze all sides of a situation; decision making is slower and decisions are often qualified

1. When approaching each personality type in a conflict:
2. Dominance: Approach issue head on

Confrontation, when handled respectively, is something that D personalities typically respond very positively towards.

D personalities would prefer to bring conflicts out into the open so you can get them out of the way

1. Influence:

**Conflict with I personalities is best handled with a light touch.**

there is one thing that I personalities cannot stand Rejection.

Tackle a discussion about any problems you have with an I personality only after you’ve approached them in a positive way.

c. Steadiness:

**When you have a conflict with an S personality, try working together to find common ground.**

When you talk to an S personality about a problem, start by focusing on things you agree on, not where you disagree. Offer a good compromise, and it will get you far.

1. Conscientiousness:

**If you have a conflict with a C personality, attack the problem, not the person.**

The best way to approach it is to focus on parts of the problem largely out of the C personality’s control, or aspects of the problem they might not have considered.  Make it clear that you appreciate all of their efforts, and that you’re bringing something to their attention because it’s a variable that they need to have in the equation in the future.

1. How each personality type functions under stress:

Every personality has areas of struggle. When we’re stressed by work demands, lack of sleep, or even hunger, we often display behaviors we aren’t proud of. When we feel threatened, we often call upon behaviors that are reactionary and don’t often help the situation. We’re going to look at those. Without understanding these behaviors, we can’t ask for support in changing them or learn how to recognize them before we’re fully committed to their action.

1. The D-style personality

The D-style often seems completely in control and confident, but this isn’t always true. He has a great need to be in control and has a hard time when he isn’t.

You can drive a D nuts by being emotional, needy, challenging, or by asking her to follow strict rules with no allowance for individual accomplishment. She will also feel stressed if you put her in a vulnerable position. She may have a hard time with being bed-ridden, for example.

When challenged or put under stress, a D can lack empathy (it’s inefficient, in his mind) and can be hurtful. He can ignore doubts that would inform him better about risks. He can also have a hard time letting someone else take center stage.

Core belief: I’m valuable if I’m producing or on top.

**How those of us with other styles can help**  
D-style people are looking for rewards in their environment, so you can help her structure that environment to promote her own successes and increase her autonomy. Be sure she can assume this autonomy safely and responsibly. Help her assess risk. Help her understand the possible outcomes of shortcuts she might want to take.

He can use help identifying when he is starting to railroad a decision or monopolize a conversation. Be direct. But remember that he needs to know that when you point out something, it’s not to challenge his authority, but rather it’s to help him achieve a goal. Make sure he sees the bigger picture and bottom-line.

b.  The i-style personality

What struggles can such a fun personality have? Give them a few routine tasks and a deadline and find out. The i-style can struggle with detailed analysis, doing repetitive tasks or not being able to express themselves.

If you really want to drive an i batty, put him alone in a windowless room and ask him to file historical documents related to something in which he has no interest. Periodically pressure him to work faster.

When under a lot of pressure, the i-style can become histrionic. If the person leans towards the D, then he can also become narcissistic.

Core belief: I’m valuable if I can attract people.

**How those of us with other styles can help**  
We can encourage the return of an i’s natural upbeat and positive attitude by allowing her to express herself. Give her some positive attention. If you’re on a team, be sure she understands and shares the team’s goals; then allow her to rally everyone behind them. Show enthusiasm for whatever she’s working on. If she has to do all that filing, be sure she gets lots of breaks, can decorate the room she’s working in, and ask her for suggestions on how to make the task less dull. Even better, join her in the task and put on some good music. The i-personality believes life should be pleasant, fun and lively, so try to help her make it that way.

c.  The S-style personality

The S-style is so pleasant that it’s hard to think of them struggling with their behaviors while under stress, but they do. If you wonder what an S-style looks like under stress, tell him that he has to confront someone else about their poor performance or disruptive attitude. Make him immediately change the operating procedure he’s been following and provide no justification for the change and no time to practice. Next, have him convince someone he’s never met that he supports this new procedure.

The S seeks out harmony and is attentive to the needs of others. This means that you might not notice that she is feeling fear, not taking care of her own needs, and is getting very quiet and passive because of a high level of stress.

The S can be passive-aggressive. The S can also over-commit if he feels he has to take on responsibilities because no one else will. The S can inhibit innovation out of discomfort with change.

Core belief: I’m valuable if I’m accepted, if I can please.

**How those of us with other styles can help**  
Encourage the S to speak up. The S might not promote herself or call attention to her own success or abilities. Be sure that you are not mistaking her agreeable, low-key behaviors for a lack of passion, experience or knowledge.

It can be tempting to try to take advantage of someone with this style. You can misread them and assume that they are aligned with your point of view or your actions. They might not be. Ask them. And if you really care about their answers, give them time to consider how they want to present their viewpoint, and be sure that you’re showing that you care.

1. The C-style personality

Opposite the i-style on the DiSC circle is the C. What upsets the i might be just what the C longs for.  
If you want to make the C-style stress out, put him in a room with lots of emotional and erratic people. Make him mingle without making introductions. Or give him a poorly defined goal to reach, few resources and a short time frame. And tell him he’ll be graded. Or just ask him to learn a new skill in front of others.

A C under stress wants to display self-control, unlike the i who is all about putting it all out there. Emotions can be hard because they are so hard to anticipate and manage. Being with lots of people is hard for a C because he can’t pay attention to his own thoughts and behaviors. He wants to be socially appropriate, but might not know what the social rules are.

Under stress the C can be avoidant, disagreeable and even hostile. They can get their backs up and become very resistant.

Core belief: I’m valuable if I’m competent.

**How those of us with other styles can help**  
Be clear about expectations. Let her know how she will be judged, because she’s always judging herself and doesn’t want to be wrong or inappropriate. She really doesn’t want to be the cause of any emotional outbursts.

If a C has done something wrong and becomes defensive, allow him time to run a self-diagnostic of the situation. He needs to know how and why he screwed up (and he needs to be able to decide if he agrees that he screwed up.) Express confidence in his ability to learn from a mistake. Deflect his attention from the error, and move it towards how he can make amends, fix it, or continue towards his goal. Assure him that you still see him as competent.

A C will have a hard time asking for help. If you ask a C if she needs help, it’s likely that she will take that as questioning her competence or she’ll worry that you see her as weak. Ask anyway. As long as you do it with respect, the C might really appreciate it. It’s very important to take the time to build trust with this style