EVERYTHING DiSC PRODUCTIVE CONFLICT

Productive Conflict Profile

Ruby Prescott

Wednesday, January 15, 2020

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Introduction

WHAT IS CONFLICT?

Ruby, when you think of workplace conflict, what comes to mind? Arguing? Compromise? Finding solutions? Do you think of gossiping and hurt feelings? Or colleagues taking ownership for mistakes?

Whatever you think of, conflict comes down to **a difference of opinions involving strong emotions.** It can range from brief, explosive disputes to subtle, long-lasting issues. Either way, conflict triggers different behaviors in each of us, from destructive to productive responses. And while conflict can be very uncomfortable, it is a natural and inevitable part of relationships.

Because conflict will look different depending on the people and situations involved, there is no one-size-fits-all answer to making it productive. Instead the solution starts with you.

Everything DiSC® Productive Conflict is designed to improve self-awareness around conflict behaviors. It isn't about conflict resolution; rather, it's focused on helping you curb destructive thoughts and behaviors so that conflict can become more productive, improving your workplace results and relationships.

CORNERSTONE PRINCIPLES

- Conflict is an **inevitable** part of workplace relationships, and it can also be **productive**.
- Your conflict interactions may be influenced by **other factors**: hierarchy, culture (organizational or social), business atmosphere, personal experiences, etc.
- Your response to conflict situations is **in your own control**. You cannot control how others respond to conflict.
- Learning about other people's DiSC® styles can help you **understand their conflict behaviors** and how they may differ from your own.
- You can have **productive conflict** by using DiSC to more effectively engage with others.

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OVERVIEW OF THE DiSC® MODEL

Dominance

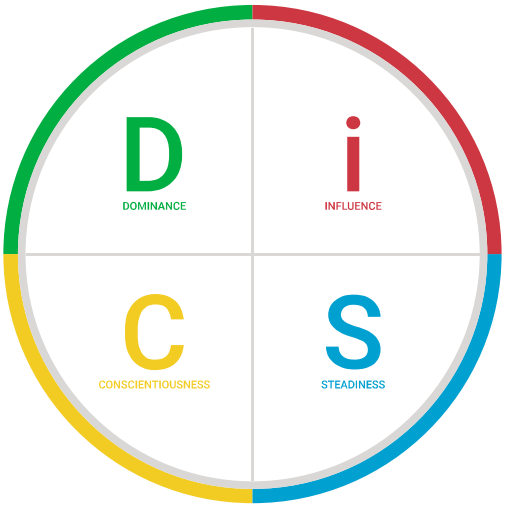
- Direct
- Tough-minded
- Strong-willed
- Forceful
- Firm

In conflict, focuses on:
logic and victory

Conscientiousness

- Analytical
- Reserved
- Precise
- Private
- Systematic

In conflict, focuses on:
justice and logic



influence

- Outgoing
- Enthusiastic
- Optimistic
- Lively
- High-Spirited

In conflict, focuses on:
expression and feelings

Steadiness

- Even-tempered
- Accommodating
- Patient
- Tactful
- Humble

In conflict, focuses on:
feelings and consensus

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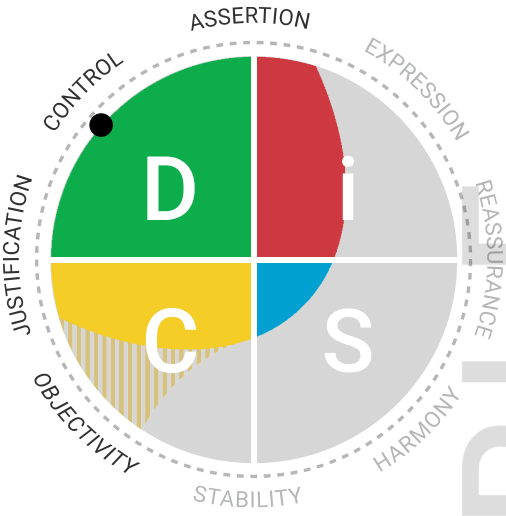
1 Part One

Your DiSC® Style in Conflict

Your DiSC Style: D

Ruby, your dot and shading say a lot about how you respond in conflict. Because your dot is located in the middle of the D region, you have a D style. Your shading indicates your priorities and where you focus your energy. During conflict, you prioritize control, assertion, justification, and objectivity.



Your dot location is near the edge of the circle, so you probably relate well to the characteristics associated with the D style.

As someone with the D style, because you have a strong vision of how things should be, you likely have a desire to take **control** of conflict situations. Therefore, to prevent others from influencing your agenda, you may take charge of the conversation and do what needs to be done to stay in the driver's seat. Your candid and focused approach can help minimize any misunderstandings and help direct others to focus on the task at hand. At the same time, some people may withdraw or become defensive when you're perceived as dominating, impatient, or overly blunt. These reactions could ultimately stall progress, which is counter to your intent.

Most likely, you want to be seen as projecting strength and as someone of authority. Therefore, when there is a difference of opinions, your instinct may be to try to influence others by **asserting** your views in a forceful, dominant way. While this approach is likely due to the confidence you have in your ideas, others may feel overpowered or disregarded by this behavior at times.

Similar to others with a D style, you may have little self-doubt, and, as such, you tend to **justify** your side of the story while challenging or dismissing others' misgivings. In fact, you may handle differences with people in a competitive way, viewing the situation as a personal challenge that you want to win by finding ways to support your opinions. At times, this could lead to some destructive arguments where you may say things just to get the upper hand and uphold your position. However, your natural inclination to say exactly what's on your mind and challenge others can get people to not only focus on what needs to be done but also to acknowledge the tough issues, both of which can be very productive.

You tend to take an **objective** approach when engaging with others. You likely analyze things carefully so you can make precise, logical decisions. During conflict, you are probably good at separating emotions from facts. However, when this is taken too far, you may appear unsympathetic. And, because you don't like to be wrong, your instinct will often be to use your prowess with logic to justify your position, overpower others with facts, or disregard other points of view that you believe to be unsound.

While conflict can be uncomfortable and unwanted, it can help solve problems, as long as everyone feels heard and issues are resolved in a healthy way. When used constructively, your willingness to take control and be assertive with your ideas as well as your ability to challenge others and justify your point of view can be great assets in resolving conflict.

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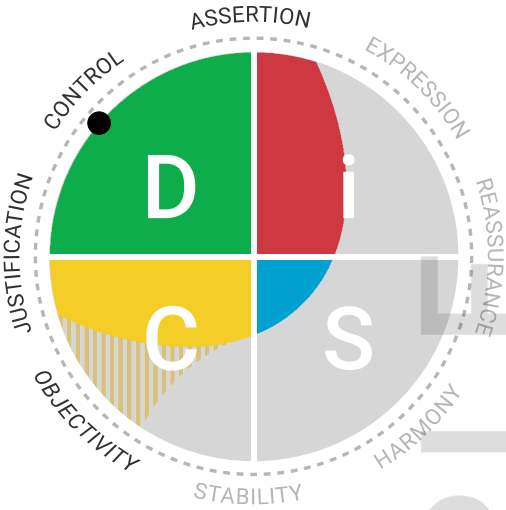
1 Part One

Your DiSC® Style in Conflict

WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO YOU DURING CONFLICT?



Different people find different aspects of conflict to be most significant. For instance, like other people with the D style, you probably feel it's important to take charge of discussions and have some level of control. You also want your opponent to justify their position, as you tend to do, in a convincing way. And, since you're prepared to hear it like it is, you also want the freedom to assert your opinions directly. Finally, you may also place more weight on arguments that are logical and objective, which is less typical of the D style.

You may value many of the following approaches during conflict:

- Standing up for your point of view
- Appearing confident or self-assured
- Having authority
- Calling it like you see it
- Convincing others
- Winning arguments
- Using sharp, critical-thinking skills
- Emphasizing objectivity and precision
- Using logic to solve problems

WHAT DRAINS YOUR ENERGY DURING CONFLICT?

Then there are also those aspects of conflict that are particularly stressful for you. Because you tend to focus on the end result and achieving your goals, you may find it particularly frustrating when your authority is challenged or you feel you don't have control over the situation. In addition, you probably get irritated when you have to take time to deal with misunderstandings or people's hypersensitivity. At the same time, unlike others with the D style, you have a strong appreciation for objectivity during conflict. And so, when emotions die down, you may find it frustrating when people are still unwilling to separate feelings from facts.

Many of the following approaches or behaviors may be stressful for you during conflict:

- Feeling like you have to censor everything you say
- Being unable to interrupt or defend yourself
- Lacking control over situations
- Keeping opinions and skepticism to yourself
- Feeling like the argument keeps going around in circles
- Having your ideas or authority challenged
- Dealing with people who aren't straightforward
- Dealing with illogical arguments
- Being wrong or unprepared

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1 Part One

Overview of DiSC® in Conflict

Just like DiSC® can help you understand how you handle conflict, it can also help you understand others. The overview below shows the destructive and productive conflict tendencies that are typical for each DiSC style.

Dominance

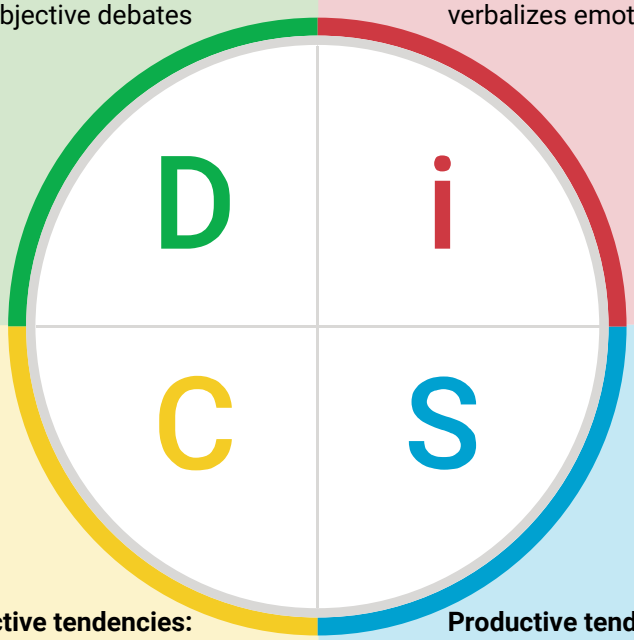
Destructive tendencies
insensitivity, impatience, creates win-lose situations, refuses to bend, overpowers others

Productive tendencies:
straightforward with opinions,acknowledges tough issues, willingness to have objective debates

influence

Destructive tendencies
becomes overly emotional, talks over others, impulsiveness, glosses over tension, makes personal attacks

Productive tendencies:
communicates empathy, encourages open dialogue, provides reassurance, verbalizes emotions



Productive tendencies:
finds the root cause of the problem, sorts out all the issues, gives people space, focuses on the facts

Productive tendencies:
shows flexibility, looks out for people's feelings, communicates tactfully, listens to others, finds compromises

Destructive tendencies
defensiveness, uses passive-aggressive tactics, becomes overly critical, isolates self, overanalyzes the situation

Conscientiousness

Destructive tendencies
withdraws, gives in to please others, ignores problems, lets issues simmer beneath the surface, avoids tension

Steadiness

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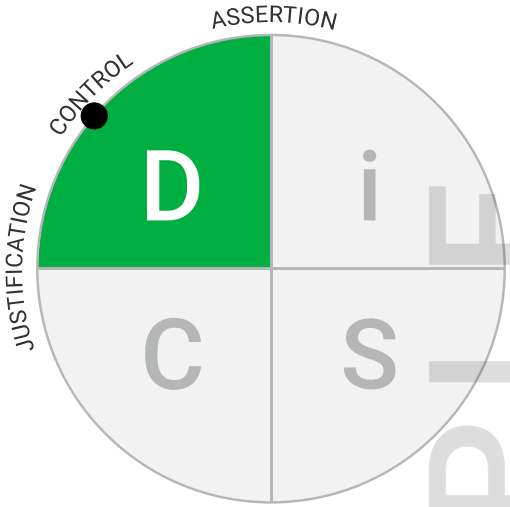
1 Part One

Conflict with the D Style

WHAT DRIVES THE D STYLE IN CONFLICT?

Imagine you're entangled in a conflict with someone who has the D style and shares your priority of having **control**. She cuts right to the chase and pushes really strongly for her opinions. While you may appreciate her straightforward, no-nonsense approach, the two of you may compete to take charge of the conversation.



Like you, this individual tends to **assert** herself during conflict. When she sees a problem, she's not afraid to tackle it head-on. She doesn't spend a lot of time hemming and hawing over what should be said or done—she just takes care of it. It's the same way with you, which is probably something you can appreciate about each other.

Furthermore, you may appreciate that she doesn't take things at face value. Her tendency to come up with airtight **justification** for her side of the story matches your own tendency to offer a rationale for your argument. Similarly, she will often dissect and counter your position, which you will likely find fair and reciprocate.

COMPARED TO YOU

Compared to you, people with the D style tend to be:

- Just as likely to address issues head-on
- Equally direct or blunt
- Similarly prone to control the discussion
- Equally focused on getting to the point
- Just as likely to question others' conclusions
- Similarly interested in compelling arguments

HOW CAN YOU HAVE PRODUCTIVE CONFLICT WITH THE D STYLE?

Like you, your "D" coworkers tend to be very direct and opinionated, often saying exactly what's on their minds. In fact, you both may be so focused on your own message that you don't stop to consider the other's point of view. Therefore, to have productive conflict with the D style, consider the following:

- Refrain from getting into a power struggle.
- Reflect on the situation and be willing to compromise.
- Take turns speaking, and avoid talking over each other.

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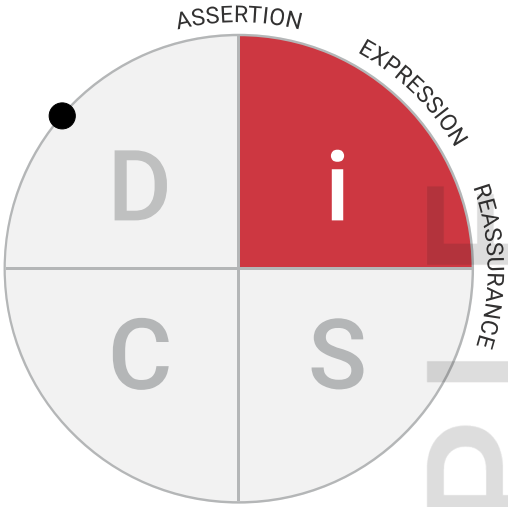
1 Part One

Conflict with the i Style

WHAT DRIVES THE i STYLE IN CONFLICT?



Now, imagine you are in a conflict with someone who has an i style. He does his best to keep things friendly and upbeat. However, it's also important to him to be able to **express** his honest thoughts and feelings, while you prefer to keep emotions out of it. He may insist on being heard in confrontations and you may argue forcefully for your opinion, which could escalate the situation.

Whereas you may have a little bit of a skeptical or tough side, you'll probably notice that he comes across as more accepting and warm. Because being on good terms and well-liked is important to him, he'll want **reassurance** during or after the conflict that your relationship is still okay. Since you tend to let go and move on from conflicts quickly, providing this comfort probably doesn't seem necessary to you.

Like you, this individual tends to easily **assert** his opinions during disagreements. He is usually confident and optimistic about his perspectives and willing to share what's on his mind. In this way, the two of you are likely to be up-front about tough issues. However, in your mutual desire to address problems, you may not encourage each other to take a step back and reflect on the disagreement.

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COMPARED TO YOU

Compared to you, people with the i style tend to be:

- More likely to verbalize feelings and emotions
- More worried about interpersonal turmoil
- Just as likely to speak up with opinions
- Similarly likely to let frustration show
- Less focused on winning
- Less blunt or aggressive

HOW CAN YOU HAVE PRODUCTIVE CONFLICT WITH THE i STYLE?

People with the i style may find it natural to openly express their feelings and opinions during conflict. They may appreciate that you say what's on your mind, but they also want to avoid tension and keep things chummy. Therefore, to have productive conflict with the i style, consider the following:

- Approach them informally and keep the dialogue light.
- Let them verbalize their thoughts and feelings.
- Don't focus so intently on your goal that they feel ignored or disrespected.

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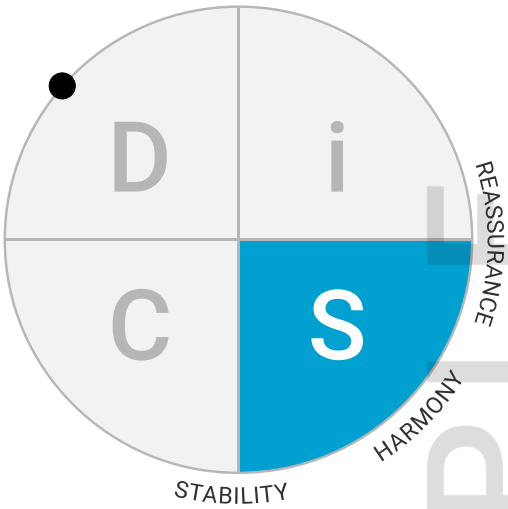
1 Part One

Conflict with the S Style

WHAT DRIVES THE S STYLE IN CONFLICT?

Now, imagine you're in conflict with someone who has the S style. He prioritizes **harmony**, so there is probably nothing he wishes more than to *not be* in a disagreement with you. While you tend to address problems directly, he'd rather turn the other cheek. Therefore, when you confront him, he will likely cave in quickly, even if he doesn't really agree with what you say.



You probably notice that he makes attempts to smooth things over with you during and after conflict. This is because providing and receiving **reassurance** is important to him. While you tend to move past disagreements quickly, he tends to hang on to hurt feelings and may worry that your relationship has been irreparably damaged.

Furthermore, he prioritizes **stability**, so when tension arises, he may want to return things to normal as soon as possible. He isn't comfortable with the unknowns inherent in conflict—both in the exchange itself and the outcomes it brings. On the other hand, change and chaos do little to unnerve you, so you may handle disagreements with much more confidence than he does.

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COMPARED TO YOU

Compared to you, people with the S style tend to be:

- More concerned about hurting people's feelings
- More likely to spend more time listening than talking
- More focused on remaining calm
- Less likely to initiate a tense discussion
- Less concerned about proving they're right
- Less skeptical of people

HOW CAN YOU HAVE PRODUCTIVE CONFLICT WITH THE S STYLE?

People with the S style want to be agreeable and cooperative. They choose their words carefully, which is contrary to your straightforward approach, and their tiptoeing around issues may baffle or even irritate you. Therefore, to have productive conflict with the S style, consider the following:

- Convince them of the value of differing opinions.
- Communicate calmly and with sincerity.
- Don't overpower them or dominate the discussion.

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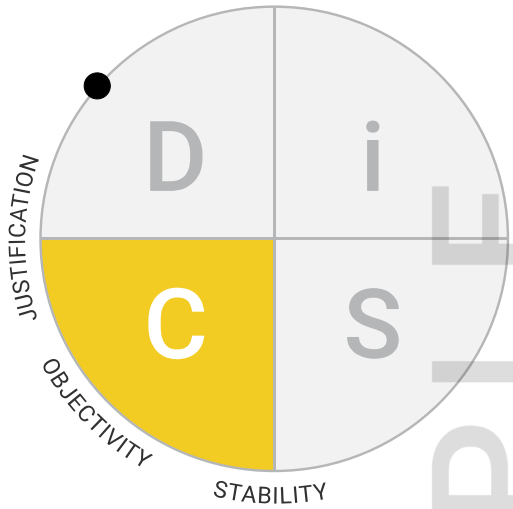
1 Part One

Conflict with the C Style

WHAT DRIVES THE C STYLE IN CONFLICT?

Finally, imagine you're in conflict with someone who has the C style and shares your priority of staying **objective**, which is not typical for someone who has the D style. You may appreciate that she keeps emotions out of the discussion and tends to stick to the facts instead. She will engage in a logical debate with you, but if you get angry and the situation escalates, she may put up a wall and refuse to engage further.



At the same time, like you, this individual tends to **justify** her claims and dig for answers rather than just accept other people's arguments at face value. She prides herself on her critical-thinking skills, so she may respond negatively if you contradict her. However, she probably appreciates that you answer her questions in a straightforward way.

This individual also prizes **stability**, so she does her best to avoid the unpredictability of conflict. During a disagreement, she may concede, even if she doesn't think she's wrong in her way of thinking, simply to calm the waters. This is especially likely to happen if you raise your voice or forcefully push for your views.

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COMPARED TO YOU

Compared to you, people with the C style tend to be:

- More self-controlled and restrained
- Similarly analytical and logic-focused
- Just as good at breaking down irrational arguments
- Just as likely to question others' motives
- Less interested in controlling outcomes
- Less forthright and forceful

HOW CAN YOU HAVE PRODUCTIVE CONFLICT WITH THE C STYLE?

In conflict, people with the C style prefer to tell their side of the story in a clear and logical way, which you may appreciate. However, if you are too overpowering, they may become prickly and rigid, or withdraw completely while clinging to resentment. Therefore, to have productive conflict with the C style, consider the following:

- Use logic rather than force to make your points.
- Give them time and space to double-check their misgivings.
- Be prepared for their discomfort with ambiguity.

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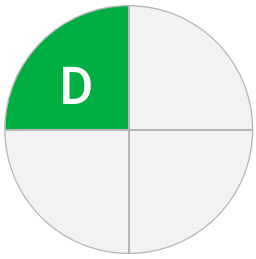
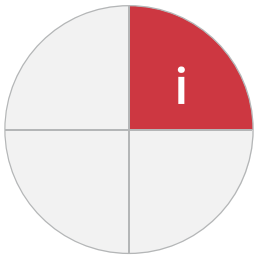
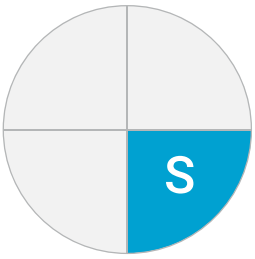
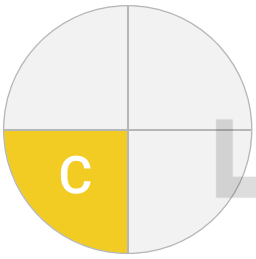
1 Part One

Summary of DiSC® in Conflict

D style in conflict	i style in conflict	S style in conflict	C style in conflict
			
Goals: Victory, results, personal accomplishment	**Goals:** Approval, understanding, openness	**Goals:** Agreement, acceptance, peace	**Goals:** Fairness, rational decisions, accuracy
Overuses: The need to win, impatience, bluntness	**Overuses:** Passion, impulsivity, outspokenness	**Overuses:** Passive resistance, compromise	**Overuses:** Restraint, analysis, rigidness
Fears: Being taken advantage of, appearing weak	**Fears:** Rejection, not being heard, disapproval	**Fears:** Letting people down, facing aggression	**Fears:** Being wrong, strong displays of emotion
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REFLECTION

Think of a conflict situation you were in that you wish you would have handled better. Briefly describe it below.

What impact do you think your DiSC® style had on the situation?

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2 Part Two

Destructive Responses

Now that you know more about DiSC® and conflict, let's look at why we sometimes respond destructively instead of productively to conflict. For most of us, conflict situations are threatening, and it's our instinct to protect ourselves. We may react so quickly that we don't even think about what we're doing. But beneath the surface, there's a process playing out: a conflict event triggers an automatic thought, which in turn triggers a destructive response.

Conflict → Automatic thought → Destructive response

WHAT ARE SOME COMMON DESTRUCTIVE RESPONSES?

To change our responses in conflict, we need to recognize both the automatic thoughts that lead to the behaviors and the responses themselves. Let's start by looking at typical destructive behaviors.

- First, put a **checkmark in the circle** next to the three behaviors **others** do that bother you the most in conflict.
- Then, put a **star** next to the three behaviors that **you do most often** in conflict.

Note: You can learn more about these destructive responses on pages 12–18.

Arguing	○	○	Gossiping/complaining about someone
Belittling	○	○	Becoming hypercritical
Caving in	○	○	Overpowering
Defensiveness	○	○	Passive-aggression
Dismissing others' opinions	○	○	Revenge/looking to even the score
Becoming overly dramatic	○	○	Sabotage/introducing obstacles
Exaggerating the problem	○	○	Sarcasm
Exclusion/leaving people out	○	○	Stonewalling/becoming non-receptive
Finger-pointing/blaming/scapegoating	○	○	Withdrawing

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2 Part Two

Why Do I Do This?

Destructive responses can range from immediate reactions in the heat of the moment to delayed or drawn-out responses that prolong the conflict. The following descriptions provide information about what's behind the behaviors listed on page 11, as well as some common automatic thoughts that might lead to each response.

ARGUING

Exchanging differing points of view in a heated or tense way

Like others with the D style, you may sometimes have so much confidence in your vision that it's frustrating when others can't or won't see what's so obvious to you. As that frustration grows, you may defend your position more and more aggressively, especially if you believe that pushing hard enough will make people back down. If that doesn't happen, it may intensify your need to assert yourself. The result may be an unhealthy exchange that centers more on winning than finding the best solution. At this point, it may actually be about protecting your ego, putting others in their place, and giving up as little ground as possible. And as things grow heated, it becomes less likely that you'll be able to step back and evaluate the other person's ideas or emotions objectively.

Automatic thoughts that may lead to this response:

- There's no way I'm backing down
- I don't get it/you; I'm obviously right

BELITTLING

Making someone or something feel unimportant

By belittling others, we create a demeaning, one-dimensional caricature of them that sums up all of the negative attributes we want to call out. Not only does this make it easier to dismiss their opinions, but it can be satisfying to channel our frustration in this way. Belittling may seem like a powerful tool to gain the upper hand in a tense situation. When a heated debate isn't going your way, belittling may be tempting because it can shut a person down, put you on top, and let you steer things back to your vision. Even if you know belittling crosses the line, it may be hard to resist when you're caught up in frustration and the urge to assert yourself.

Automatic thoughts that may lead to this response:

- I'm going to make you look like a fool
- I'm going to show you that your idea doesn't matter

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2 Part Two

Why Do I Do This?

CAVING IN

Giving in to something after originally opposing it

Caving in can be particularly tempting because it often feels like the absolute quickest path to ending a disagreement. Even though it typically means sacrificing our legitimate rights, the pain of being in a conflict can be so excruciating that we take immediate shelter in this option. Of course, this short-term gain is often at the expense of long-term satisfaction and can eventually create very unbalanced, unhealthy power dynamics within a relationship. Given your assertive and strong-willed D style, caving in may not be the norm for you. Nevertheless, there are times for all of us when we simply want the quickest way to escape an emotional, chaotic, or just plain messy situation.

Automatic thoughts that may lead to this response:

- I don't want to upset anyone
- Putting up a fight just isn't worth it

DEFENSIVENESS

Becoming anxious or protective in the face of criticism

When we trust that things will be okay no matter what the outcome of the conflict, there's no reason to be defensive. We can be open to different opinions. On the other hand, at the heart of defensiveness is insecurity. We don't want to admit failure or shortcomings. When our brain is telling us that the stakes are incredibly high, we cover up any vulnerabilities or weaknesses. As someone with the D style, you may sometimes see conflict as a win-lose situation and, so, may find yourself getting defensive when you sense another person is gaining the upper hand. Even when you do recognize your defensiveness, it can still be difficult to ask yourself what, beneath it all, you're really afraid of.

Automatic thoughts that may lead to this response:

- I shouldn't be blamed for this
- This isn't my fault

DISMISSING OPINIONS

Treating other people's views as unworthy or unimportant

Like others with the D style, in some conflict situations you may be prone to dismissing others' opinions to ensure that the outcome swings in your favor. That's what dismissing opinions is—a blocking strategy to win an argument. But it's also a common way to protect our ego. We do this when we're scared of the thoughts or views expressed by another person. We are afraid to give them space to paint a picture that we don't like. And because we feel challenged, insecure, or fearful, we adopt the strategy of overriding the other person. We exude absolute certainty in our position and effectively relieve ourselves of any obligation to hear the other side of the story. And by making the conversation as one-sided as possible, we feel empowered and righteous.

Automatic thoughts that may lead to this response:

- Nothing that anyone says will change my mind
- There's really no other way to think about this

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2 Part Two

Why Do I Do This?

DRAMA

Displaying an over-the-top reaction to a situation

People with the D style typically have a strong instinct to control their environment, and in the heat of conflict, sometimes it can feel like a grand gesture of anger or impatience will give us that control. In essence, when we create drama, we are drawing attention to a situation that is troubling for us. This attention validates that the dilemma is, in fact, extremely important and that the injustice that's been done to us is, in fact, extremely unjust. Creating drama can also produce a feeling of control in a situation where we otherwise feel powerless.

Automatic thoughts that may lead to this response:

- Everyone hates me!
- This situation is awful/hopeless

EXAGGERATING

Representing something as being worse than it really is

Sometimes a minor offense can still make us extremely upset. In fact, sometimes it's tough to justify the intensity of our emotions given the actual situation. Exaggeration is a way of making a situation sound as bad as it feels. Exaggeration is also empowering. It makes our case seem that much more powerful and defensible because it makes the other person's behavior seem that much more awful. Since people with the D style often see conflict as a win-lose situation, you may use exaggeration as a tool to "win," even if that means that you have to bend the truth a bit.

Automatic thoughts that may lead to this response:

- I need to get your attention
- This needs to sound as bad as it feels

EXCLUSION

Deliberately leaving someone out

During a conflict, it's not uncommon to exclude someone because we simply don't want to spend time with them. But even if we don't want to admit it, exclusion is also a means to emotionally hurt the other person and an attempt to damage their connection to other people in the group. Given your D style, you may use exclusion in conflict to control your surroundings and assert yourself within the relationship. By disrupting another person's standing in the group, you likely gain support for your side of the story by shaping how people perceive the conflict. We're most likely to use this strategy if we have greater social status than the other person.

Automatic thoughts that may lead to this response:

- Maybe you'll get the message if I don't invite you
- Leaving you out will prove that everyone's on *my* side

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2 Part Two

Why Do I Do This?

FINGER-POINTING

Blaming someone for a particular situation or issue

As someone with the D style, in the heat of conflict you want to be right and, so, pointing the finger or blaming is a way to make sure others know they are in the wrong. Finger-pointing feels like a very aggressive behavior, but it usually stems from defensiveness. We're diverting attention away from our own shortcoming or failure by pointing it out in someone else. Often, we'll home in on one particular action of the other person that contributed to a problem. The goal is to make this action seem as awful as possible, to make it seem like this action is, in fact, the *heart* of the problem. As a result, our contributions don't seem nearly as bad. By shifting the blame, we've saved our reputation in the short term, but may have also unwittingly damaged our integrity.

Automatic thoughts that may lead to this response:

- I shouldn't get in trouble for this…it's all their fault
- This is because of you, not me

GOSSIPING

Engaging in idle talk about someone else's private affairs

Gossiping can feel good for a lot of reasons. First of all, venting our frustrations can be cathartic. And because we tend to gossip with people we trust, they usually validate our opinion. Not to mention, it can be deeply satisfying to tear down someone who has hurt us. But gossip can also be about power, and since you have the D style, you may be tempted to gossip during conflict as a way to guarantee that your side of the story is heard early on. Gossiping can help rally people to your side by getting your perspective out into the world first and most convincingly. For people who are insecure about their status in the organization, gossiping can also create a perceived sense of authority as coworkers turn to them for inside knowledge.

Automatic thoughts that may lead to this response:

- I'm going to tell everyone what so-and-so did to me
- I probably shouldn't say anything, but they deserve it

HYPERCRITICISM

Becoming overly judgmental about someone else's work or actions

Hypercriticism is an attempt to undermine someone by objecting to as much as possible about them: shooting down their suggestions, finding holes in their logic, scrutinizing their output for mistakes. Because conflict likely tends to bring out your competitive instincts, you and others with the D style may resort to this strategy when you're in "attack mode." You may go on the offensive, preventing the other person from scoring a point while also scanning for any weaknesses or opportunities to take them down a peg. Not only does this help you gain control over a debate, but it also serves as a way to vent anger.

Automatic thoughts that may lead to this response:

- I need to knock you down a peg or two
- I need to look like the smartest one here

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2 Part Two

Why Do I Do This?

OVERPOWERING

Overwhelming others with superior force

Overpowering involves drawing on all the sources of power at our disposal to defeat someone during a conflict. Sometimes that power is social status or organizational authority, but sometimes it's simply using the force of a strong, vocal personality. Overpowering deliberately keeps others off balance and attempts to eliminate the possibility of a fair, even-handed discussion. Because you, like others with the D style, may be inclined to view conflict as a win-lose situation, this can be a tempting strategy. If other people's opinions feel like a distraction from your views or, worse, a challenge to your ideas or authority, you may feel justified in using this strategy to take control and drive the debate where you want it to go.

Automatic thoughts that may lead to this response:

- I won't quit until I win; I don't care what it takes
- I'll use intimidation to get my way

PASSIVE-AGGRESSION

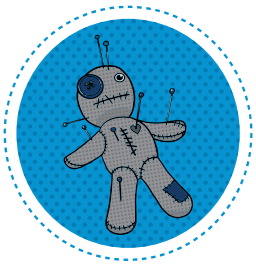
Expressing negative feelings in a subtle or indirect way

We can all think of occasions when we desperately wanted to express anger at someone, but didn't want to be direct about it. Passive-aggression can feel like the perfect solution. We get to subtly punish someone—enough that they notice, but not so much that they can call us on it. Its many forms (e.g., ignoring, eye-rolling, nit-picking) make it endlessly flexible, and it often gives us more satisfaction than we care to admit. Sometimes, the goal is to bother someone enough that they initiate the confrontation, at which point we have invitation to let loose on them. In fact, since you, like others with the D style, don't generally shy away from direct confrontation, you may turn to passive-aggression to bring others into a contentious situation so that you have a chance to assert yourself.

Automatic thoughts that may lead to this response:

- I'm going to make my point without looking like the bad guy
- I don't want to talk about it, but I can't act like nothing happened

REVENGE



Looking to even the score or get retribution for a wrongdoing

Revenge in the workplace is usually fairly subtle, but we do it to restore justice and/or reassert ourselves. And even though taking revenge is technically an external action, it's usually the end result of some pretty deep internal rumination. We stew over being hurt or mistreated, and fantasizing about getting even can feel good—even if we don't like to admit it. Of course, acting on those fantasies takes things to a whole different level. Most of us recognize that overt revenge won't be tolerated, but this still leaves plenty of creative, backhanded, and petty ways to inflict damage on someone. Of course, given that people with the D style typically want to deal with issues head-on, you may only be tempted toward revenge when all of your other options have been cut off.

Automatic thoughts that may lead to this response:

- I need to get even
- You're going to regret what you did to me

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2 Part Two

Why Do I Do This?

SABOTAGE

Deliberately obstructing or destroying someone's work

Sabotage is about making sure someone else fails. It can be social in nature (e.g., lying, spreading rumors) or can actually involve physical tampering. Sometimes we choose this extreme path when we lack the power to truly confront the other person and sometimes it's simply because we want to express our anger without a direct clash. Either way, there is usually a satisfaction in seeing the other person fail. Ultimately, sabotage usually requires us to suspend our normal understanding of right and wrong so that we can rationalize a behavior that, under normal circumstances, we would find reprehensible. While sabotage is an atypical response for people with the D style, when used, it likely stems from your competitive drive to ultimately win a conflict.

Automatic thoughts that may lead to this response:

- You should be punished for what you did to me
- I have to regain the upper hand

SARCASM

Ridiculing someone using mockery or derision

In conflict, sarcasm is a close cousin to passive-aggression. It allows us to take a shot at someone or express our hostility without being too obvious about our real motivations. It's for when we're not quite committed enough to yell at someone, but still want to take them down a peg or two. And sarcasm is such a tempting tool in the midst of conflict because we can always claim that "I'm just joking…seriously, lighten up." Like others with the D style, you may actually see sarcasm as a useful way to soften the blow after you've been overly assertive during conflict. In particular, you may feel like the "just kidding" excuse gives you immunity after subtly attacking or demeaning someone.

Automatic thoughts that may lead to this response:

- That idea is obviously ridiculous
- Why would anyone say something so stupid?

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2 Part Two

Why Do I Do This?

STONEWALLING

Refusing to answer, show emotion, or respond to someone

As someone with the D style, you may be tempted to stonewall only after you've burned through your initial flare of anger and passion in an argument. When we stonewall, we make it clear to the other person that communication is completely shut down. We deliberately let them know that their behavior is so unacceptable that we are unwilling to compromise or even discuss a resolution. And although we may hate to admit it, stonewalling can be gratifying. We get to punish the other person while telling ourselves that our behavior is strong and dignified. This can become a self-preservation strategy when we feel overwhelmed by a swirl of uncomfortable emotions.

Automatic thoughts that may lead to this response:

- You don't get to know what I'm feeling
- I'm not responding to this

WITHDRAWING

Drawing back or removing oneself from a situation

Not many people actually enjoy conflict, but it is much more painful to some of us than others. We may not even know why conflict is so uncomfortable. It just feels like a whirling jumble of anxiety, anger, insecurity, and danger. Every instinct is urging us to return to stability and safety. Withdrawing or clamming up can provide immediate relief by simply shutting out the turmoil. Of course, given your assertive D style, retreating may not be your first instinct. For certain people with this style, however, the chaos and emotional messiness of conflict can be exhausting. Not to mention, the chaos diverts attention away from other important projects. Withdrawing is a way of signaling "I don't have time for this." It not only calms the nerves, but it can feel more efficient in the moment.

Automatic thoughts that may lead to this response:

- This needs to end as soon as possible
- I'm just going to stay quiet until this thing is over

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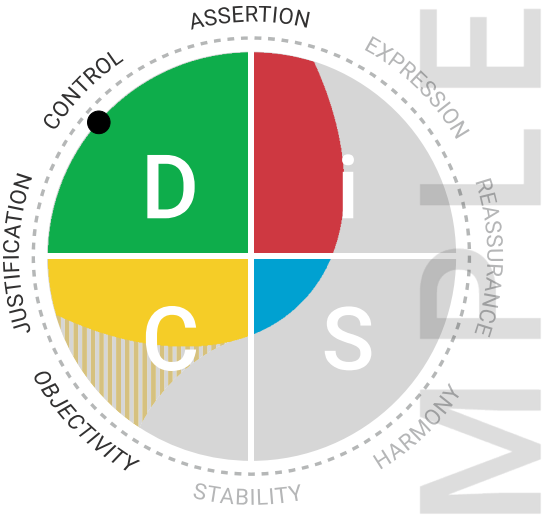
2 Part Two

Recognizing Automatic Thoughts

YOUR D STYLE AND AUTOMATIC THOUGHTS

Ruby, like others with the D style, you may find some common themes shaping your automatic thoughts, such as projecting strength, being respected, and having control. Take a look at the list below. When you find yourself tempted toward a destructive reaction, which (if any) of the following automatic thoughts do you sometimes find going through your head?

- I need to come out on top.
- Why don't you get that I'm right?
- If you push me, I'll push back harder.
- You're being completely unreasonable.
- You're not in charge of me.
- You have no idea what you're talking about.
- I can use intimidation to win.
- You're showing me no respect.
- You're not hearing a word I'm saying.
- How dare you challenge me?
- I need to get control of this again.



REFLECTION

Think back to the conflict situation you described on page 10. What were some automatic thoughts you had?

What was your response to the situation? How did your automatic thoughts influence that response?

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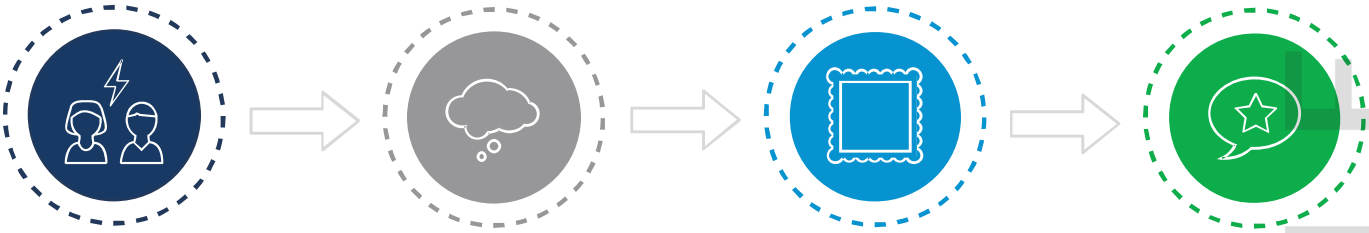
3 Part Three

Changing Your Response

If automatic thoughts can lead to knee-jerk responses, how do we change our behaviors? As shown in the diagram below, the trick is to disrupt this process—to stop our automatic thoughts before they push us toward a destructive response. If we can **step back** from the automatic thought and the emotions around it, we can then **reframe** it. Doing so will put us back in control, so we can choose a more productive path forward.



Conflict → Automatic thought → First, step back, then, reframe → Productive response

STEPPING BACK FROM YOUR EMOTIONS

It's tough to step back in the midst of a conflict, but it becomes easier if we first acknowledge our emotions and how they might influence our judgment. During conflict, our emotions can sometimes cloud our perspective and hinder our ability to make choices that are healthy and in our long-term best interests. Many of the emotions at play during conflict fall into two broad categories: **anger** and **anxiety.** Ruby, your D style can give some key insights into how these two emotions may affect you.

Anger and your D style

Anger: frustration, resentment, outrage, aggression

Anger is a normal emotion that compels us to stick up for our rights. But in its unhealthy form, it tempts us to punish or strike back at the person who we think has wronged us. With your D style, it may be particularly hard for you to resist this temptation because you have such a strong need for control. Stepping away from anger can feel like giving in to the other person and letting them have their way at the expense of your rights. "I shouldn't have to let it go! They're the one who should change!" As a result, you might feel entitled to your anger, and stepping back from it may require a great deal of willpower.

Anxiety and your D style

Anxiety: fear, panic, worry, upheaval, disorientation

For people with the D style, anxiety can be subtle, often covered up by the more potent, outward feeling of anger. Even if it's only in the background, however, anxiety often compels us to avoid a topic or person. And so, when you find yourself tempted to do this, you can actually take it as a sign that there might be an undercurrent of fear or worry beneath the more overt feelings of frustration or resentment. Using this insight can help you better identify your automatic thoughts.

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3 Part Three

Changing Your Response

ARE YOU SURE?

Once we're able to step back from any anger or anxiety that may be driving our automatic thoughts, the next step is to **reframe**—to change the way we think about the situation. The following questions can help us in this process.

1. Is this thought actually valid/true?
2. Am I overreacting or exaggerating the problem?
3. Is there another way I could look at the situation?

REFRAMING YOUR AUTOMATIC THOUGHTS

Ruby, because you have the D style, you tend to be very straightforward when relating your thoughts and opinions about problems. However, since you tend to be so fast-paced and self-assured, you may not always stop to consider other angles, especially in the heat of the moment. So once you've stepped back, you'll need to consciously challenge yourself to re-evaluate the situation. Below are two **examples** of automatic thoughts that are common for your D style and ways to reframe them.

Automatic thought: They have no idea what they're talking about.

Reframed thought: They're coming at this from a completely different angle than me.

Thinking about your own experiences, **choose two automatic thoughts** that resonate with you. (For reference, you may want to look back at the "Why Do I Do This?" section on pages 12–18 or the list of automatic thoughts and the Reflection activity on page 19.) Like in the examples above, come up with a way to reframe each automatic thought. Is there another way you could think about it?

Automatic thought:

Reframed thought:

Automatic thought:

Reframed thought:

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3 Part Three

Choosing Productive Responses

Once you have reframed your automatic thought, you can choose to respond in a more productive way. There are many different ways to respond productively to conflict, and some behaviors are probably easier for you than others. Given your D style, you may find, for example, that revisiting unresolved issues comes more naturally to you than giving reassurance. Take a moment to rate how easy each behavior listed below is for you. This can help you identify behaviors you'd like to work on as well as productive responses you can call on during future conflicts.

On each continuum, plot how easy or difficult each productive response is for you.

	Easy		*Difficult*
Apologizing			
Determining the root of the problem			
Stepping back to reflect			
Taking ownership of your part in the situation			
Giving people time and space			
Acknowledging others' feelings			
Seeking active resolution			
Giving reassurance			

	Easy		*Difficult*
Finding compromises			
Communicating openly and honestly			
Separating emotions from facts			
Showing flexibility			
Revisiting unresolved issues			
Communicating respectfully			
Introspecting/being aware of your feelings			
Listening			

SAMPLE

REFLECTION

Think back again to your conflict situation from page 10 and the automatic response you described on page 19. How could you reframe your automatic thought(s)?

With your new way of thinking, what productive response might you have chosen? (Refer to the list above or choose a different productive response.) How would that response have changed the conflict?

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Hey! You're not done yet.

It may be tempting to ignore this page, but getting better at productive conflict takes time and continuous practice. Use this page to log and reflect on the next conflicts you have. Learning to step back and reframe your thoughts will ultimately help you have more productive conflict in the workplace.

1. Briefly describe your conflict situation.

2. What were your automatic thoughts? What was your response?

3. How did you reframe your automatic thoughts? Could you have done better?

SAMPLE

1. Briefly describe your conflict situation.

2. What were your automatic thoughts? What was your response?

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