

FLEXING YOUR STYLE ... to better communicate with “opposite” styles

Objectives: Participants will:

- 1) understand it is their responsibility to flex their style to work better with others.
- 2) learn behavioral examples of how they can personally flex their style to better communicate with opposite styles.

Part 5 Flexing to communicate better with people having opposite styles.

Communicating with people having opposite styles.
When people have opposite styles, misunderstandings and conflicts may arise not over what is said, but how it is said. Learn to flex your style so you communicate with other people in a manner they are most receptive to.
Review the guidelines below and place a check (✓) beside those you would like to practice more often when communicating with someone having an opposite style.

<p>For an INDIRECT to communicate better with a DIRECT:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Present your ideas and opinions more assertively and forcefully. Directs respect conviction and confidence. — Stand your ground and be prepared to debate your position. Directs like to challenge and confront differences. — Don't use hesitant eye contact, sensitive body language, or too soft a voice. Directs may read this as insecurity or disinterest. 	<p>For a DIRECT to communicate better with an INDIRECT:</p> <p>A</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Avoid coming on too forcefully. Indirects may perceive this as pressure and find ways to avoid or end discussions. — Try not to come across too self-assured and overly confident. Indirects may perceive this as arrogant. — Watch your body language: don't overpower Indirects with excessive eye contact, a loud voice, or close body space.
<p>For a RESERVED to communicate better with an OUTGOING:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Display more animation and enthusiasm than you normally might. Outgoing people like energy and excitement. — Spend time getting to know Outgoing individuals personally. Open up and share more about yourself. — Use expressive mannerisms, smiling, and gestures. Outgoing people trust openness and look for body language to read. 	<p>For an OUTGOING to communicate better with a RESERVED:</p> <p>B</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Listen carefully and encourage Reserved people to talk. Don't talk too much or take their quiet style personally. — Draw Reserveds out using open-ended questions. If you ask a yes or no question, you'll get a one-word answer. — Don't come across overly friendly, particularly if a relationship isn't established; this may be read as superficial.
<p>For an URGENT to communicate better with a STEADY:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Hold back some of your snap decisions. Steady people may read your decisions as impulsiveness or recklessness. — Don't pressure Steady individuals into making quick decisions; give them plenty of time to think things over. — Try not to react too emotionally to setbacks and mistakes or say critical things when delayed. Winds can burn. 	<p>For a STEADY to communicate better with an URGENT:</p> <p>C</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Present your ideas succinctly. Use fast speech and quick gestures. Urgent people like to get to key points quickly. — Be ready to change topics and move ahead when Urgents show signs of restlessness. Don't get on and on. — Offer to take on aspects of joint projects that make use of your patience, cooperation, and concentration.
<p>For an UNSTRUCTURED to communicate better with a PRECISE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Be on time and be as organized as possible. Precise individuals value timeliness and order. — Get your facts and details together before trying to persuade. Precise people use notes and refer to them if necessary. — Don't be follow-up and details fall between the cracks. Precises see this as being unreliable. 	<p>For a PRECISE to communicate better with an UNSTRUCTURED:</p> <p>D</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Stick to the big picture and don't bring up too many small points. Unstructured people often tune out the details. — Stay open to unproven, vague, and innovative ideas; otherwise, you'll be seen as closed-minded or set in your ways. — Avoid being a perfectionist. Don't try to enforce too many rules. Unstructureds often see this as being nit-picky.

so what!



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Training Suggestions:

This is perhaps the most important section in the INSIGHT program. It answers the “So What?” question.

Most personality style programs seriously overlook this area. It is mistakenly assumed that if individuals learn more about their personalities, they will automatically flex their styles in appropriate situations. Not so! Some people will even take the opposite approach, “Now that the others know my style, they’ll know how to adjust to me!”

Flexing

Flexing your style means to temporarily change your preferred style to the most comfortable style for the other person with whom you are communicating.

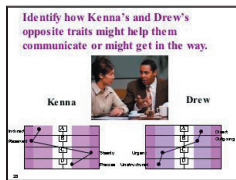
Why Flex?

Psychology research has demonstrated that people attribute positive characteristics to others who seem similar. Differences are initially perceived as obstacles to overcome in communication and, early in the relationship, negative characteristics are often attributed to the opposite personality style.

Therefore, it is important to develop skill at flexing your’s style to move (at least temporarily) in the direction of the other person when communicating with an opposite style.



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Teaching Note:

As you instruct, keep in mind that the first table on flexing deals with communicating with “opposite” styles in contrast to the table on the following page which focuses on communicating with the “similar” styles. Point this out as you begin so participants will understand that communication problems can occur between people with similar styles as well as with people who have opposite styles.

Most people want to develop skills at changing and flexing their styles but sometimes don't know where to start. The answer is *simple*. Start with simple behavior. To develop skill at flexing, start making small changes in behavior. The guidelines in the participant's booklet provide lists of specific behaviors and flexing strategies for each trait preference to use when communicating with the opposite extreme.

Examples:

An INDIRECT person should try to come across more assured and forceful when communicating with a DIRECT who already naturally displays strong opinions and a more controlling personality.

On the other hand, the DIRECT person should soften his/her bluntness and power when dealing with an INDIRECT and use more tact and diplomacy which is the preferred style of the INDIRECT.

Activity

Identifying behaviors to use to be more effective with opposite types.

Have participants work alone and take 5-10 minutes and go through the flexing guidelines and place a check mark by the behaviors that they would like to develop more skill practicing when dealing with someone having an opposite style. Ask them to be selective and pick the behaviors that they most want to work on. Next, have participants share their flexing goals, why flexing is difficult to do, and what they see as the positive payoffs.

Video/DVD

The video provides a vignette of an individual communicating with her supervisor and being ineffective. A second version of this same scene shows her flexing her style and communicating more effectively.

Group Activity



Video/DVD



The following information can also be used to introduce the concept of flexing.

Consider opening the section on style flexing by identifying 3 points of change. When problems and conflicts occur between people, the following three options are available:

The conflict can be resolved by changing either:

- a) **the system**
- b) **the other person**
- c) **yourself**

1. Changing the system is one way to end conflict. For example:

- *If you didn't have to review your budget with the finance committee, you wouldn't have to deal with Mr. Jones.*
- *If the company would do things differently, you wouldn't have all these problems with customers.*
- *If you weren't on this team, you wouldn't have to work alongside Cara Brinks, etc.*

Ask participants if they have ever tried to change a system. Usually the bigger or older the system, the harder it is to change. In addition, the lower you are in the system hierarchy, the more difficult it is to change it. Systems can be changed, and they often need to be, but change of a system is usually slow and ultimately this is the point where you have the least amount of control.

2. Ask participants, "How easy it is to change another person?"

- *If I could only get her to be more patient ...*
- *If he would only make decisions more quickly ...*
- *If I could get her to plan ahead and organize better ...*

Again, it is very difficult to change another person. (You can elicit some laughter by asking the group "How many of you have made a second career out of trying to change your spouse?") Change can be accomplished, but again it takes time and a lot of effort - and the other person must be open to being changed!

3. Changing yourself. The only person you have 100% control over is yourself. Ask participants "Even with 100% control, is it easy to change yourself?" "Ever try to go on a diet?" "Ever try to start a new exercise program?" It's a challenge to change oneself. However, it can be done, and it is something that is under your complete control.

points of
change

change the
system

change the
other person

change
yourself



A key point to teach regarding style flexing is that people can change their communication patterns, increase their influence skills, and decrease conflicts by flexing their style. This means changing themselves!

Discussion Activity

Group Activity

Ask participants to identify specific examples from their own work (or personal) experiences where they flexed their style to deal with another person.

Good examples can come from dealing with:

- past bosses or co-workers
- customers
- family members
- sales representatives
- mechanics, doctors, home repair contractors, etc.

collect some
good examples

Participants can share these examples in small groups or you can ask for volunteers when presenting to a large audience.