

The Di Style – An Everything DiSC® Podcast

Narrator: The following podcast by Dr. Mark Scullard describes the Di style. It is an Everything DiSC® production brought to you by Wiley.

Dr. Mark Scullard: All right, so we're going to spend some time talking about the Di style. And if you have a Di style, I think one of the things that you're going to find is that, eh, roughly maybe 70, 80 percent of what we're going to talk about will kind of fit for you here. You know, maybe, maybe less, maybe more. You know, some will be spot on. And then there's going to be, you know, parts that feel a little bit like, well, you know—you know, that's not really me. There might also be some parts where, you're like, well, that was me when I was younger. But I think the value here is more about listening for those insights that really help you make sense of your past experiences or really help you see your thought processes and habits in a new light.

OK, but if we take, you know, kind of a broad look at all of these different characteristics that we'll talk about within the Di style, you know, things like being bold or, um, dynamic or outspoken, they're kind of a few underlying needs that really tie all of them together. And the first one is this really kind of strong need for stimulation, you know, especially relative to the average person.

And so for people with this style, their brains are particularly tuned in to the rewards within the environment. You know, two people can walk into the same exact social gathering, and one sees all of the things that could go wrong, you know, the potential threats for embarrassment, you know, the potential for awkwardness. And then the other person, they see all of the potential rewards that they could get out of doing things right. And someone with the Di style, they fall in this second group, you know, they're focused on all of the potential upsides in a given situation or given opportunity.

There's also this kind of strong need in this style for what psychologists call personal agency. And personal agency, it's this kind of drive to control my own fate or to have power—the power to shape my environment, you know, to move around freely under my own volition and to be free to initiate new projects or to jump on new opportunities as I see fit, rather than being constrained by the rules or the external forces. And you can think of personal agency as having the freedom and power to act. And the need for agency is particularly pronounced with people with the Di style. And, you know, we'll talk about this in a little bit more depth later on.

And then a final need that I want to mention is one that, you know, it—it might be a little less easy to swallow. Um, it's not something that we—most of us—really want to readily admit. But let me just kind of throw it out there. And if you have a Di style, just, you know, kind of try to reserve judgment and we'll talk about this one a little bit more later on. But the need basically—it's a need to be important, to be significant or extraordinary. You know, that is extraordinary. And of course, this isn't necessarily a socially desirable thing to say about oneself, but let's kind of put it to the side for a second and we'll get back to it later on.

The need I'll start with is stimulation. And the Di style, generally speaking, it has a pretty high activity level and are very energetic and there's, you know, there's probably a pretty big biological component to this. But on a behavioral level, people with this style, you know, they tend to be very quick thinkers and very quick talkers. Often other people actually have trouble keeping up, you know, especially in logical arguments. You know, this style has kind of a strong bias towards action. They're great at maintaining forward momentum either for themselves individually or even for a group.

And one of the major assets they actually bring to the table in this area is this propensity to initiate, to be the agent of change. You know, they have a—kind of a rare, self starting capability. And this, this really does—it ties back to this strong need for stimulation, for change, for growth, for something different. You know, there's a little bit of a restlessness in scanning the environment for stimulation and recognizing an

opportunity that others would let slide unnoticed. In fact, compared to other people, there probably a lot more interested in starting a new project than finishing an old one. You know, old projects, well, they're simply not as stimulating.

There's this perspective in that Di style that says, "Where can I go next?" You know, they don't have to consciously tell themselves to be on the lookout. They just—they just are. And so when you combine this opportunity seeking with a passion for persuading and with and, you know, overwhelming confidence in their eventual success, which are characteristics of this style, we see a person who really gets projects movin. Like I mentioned before, you know, kind of a change agent. And we'll get back to these areas of persuasion and confidence in just a little bit.

But I still want to flesh out this need for stimulation, because if you have this style, I think it's really easy to underestimate just how different other people can be from you in this regard. And we do have some reason to believe that, you know, there are certain hormonal or structural differences in our brain that actually do make some people more focused on potential rewards in a given situation rather than the potential dangers or threats in that situation. And, of course, you know, some people are more wired to avoid threats at all costs, and they pay very little attention to the benefits of acting. You know, these people put more of a premium on stability in their lives. You know, routine isn't such a bad thing for them.

On the other hand, if I have a Di style, I probably have a more constant need for variety. I get bored with the same old, same old. There isn't as much satisfaction in making steady, slow progress compared to the prospect of, you know, a nice big score, you know, making a big, sudden advance. I like to see immediate progress in whatever I'm doing. And, you know, of course, everybody likes to see progress, but I probably have a stronger need for that immediate gratification, you know, if I'm going to feel like my time and my energy is being well spent. And so, I'm going to lean towards tasks that give me that immediate gratification. This is where you're going to see my passion.

But, you know, there is still that other stuff, you know, the stuff that doesn't return immediate gratification, which is, for the most part—you know, for the average person with this style—is probably going to be less appealing. You know, for instance, take analysis. You know, heavy, in-depth analysis. You know, this is the process of really digging down into a topic, looking at it, you know, to really, thoroughly understand an issue. You know, even when the answers don't come that easily. You know, even through the frustration of not understanding, you know, feeling lost and confused and, you know, your brain is telling you to quit because, you know, it's like, "There has to be something, you know, anything that could be more fun that I could be doing with my time than doing this analysis."

You know, it's when the, kind of, bursts of gratification are the opposite of immediate. The gains are really slow and painfully earned, which, you know, really aren't all that appealing if you're have—if you're someone that has a really high need for quick rewards. Now, to be clear, this style definitely does have a great deal of internal drive, but that drive is usually much more geared towards, kind of, the new, and novel, and exciting, compared to goals that involve, you know, more slow, thankless work. You know, the goals that require keeping up that resolve and tenacity to keep pushing, you know, even slogging through when the task is inherently not that enjoyable.

And, you know, there are other people that actually don't have as much trouble with this stuff because their focus isn't on reward or stimulation. It's more on stability. It's on securing their world. And so the absence of immediate gratification—it's not as much of a deterrent.

But back to the Di style, you know, if this is your style, you may very well have a little trouble, you know, tending to the details or focusing on maintenance compared to progress. And by maintenance, I mean, uh, making sure that the old stuff is working the way it's supposed to, you know, doing the routine updates, organizing records, documenting things, uh, fixing stuff that's worn out. Uh, maintenance stuff, it's not sexy. You know, in fact, the—the people who actually do enjoy this kind of stuff, you know,

they're oftentimes the people who really crave stability, you know, maintaining ensures that things continue to run smoothly. And so there's some satisfaction in getting it done, but for the Di style, progress is what's exciting. New is what's exciting.

Now, I want to take this a little bit further and get at what drives this need for stimulation, you know, also along with what drives the needs for personal agency and for importance. And one of the things that I think people find useful in DiSC[®] is understanding some of the underlying belief systems that are sometimes associated with different DiSC styles. For instance, um, for people with the S, which is the steadiness style, there's often this underlying belief that, "I have to keep other people happy." Uh, for people with the C style, uh, sometimes you see this kind of unconscious belief that says, "If I can't do something perfectly, I shouldn't do it at all."

And—and you can imagine if someone has that underlying belief system, it can have a really powerful impact on how they live their lives. And for the Di style, as you might imagine, the beliefs, you know, they're going to be quite a bit different. You know, here you have a more—we're just going to call it kind of an expansionist mindset. The belief, the assumption is that I should always be expanding and growing, thriving, you know, upwards and outwards. And if I'm not doing these things, if I'm stagnated or if I'm staying in the same place, I'm doing something wrong. I'm—I'm squandering my time, my—my chances and, you know, my opportunities.

There can be this kind of unspoken assumption that I should be making progress at all times. You know, again, there's a restlessness. When confronted with quiet, the brain is telling me, "You're wasting time if you're not accomplishing something." Then it might not necessarily be obvious to me that other people don't share this constant sense of pressure that I'm putting on myself.

And this feeds into one of kind of those fundamental needs that we talked about at the beginning: the need for agency. The Di style, has a really, kind of, strong dislike for being constrained. You know, they—they need and they prize their freedom. They tend

to see kind of a big, wide open world in comparison to other people who, you know— Other people, they're probably much more likely to put these artificial psychological constraints on what they can or can't do. For the style we're talking about here, though, the act of exploring the world—that is central to their enjoyment of life.

And so if you have someone who has this really high need for stimulation, and you combine it with someone who has, you know, really high level of self-confidence, what you're going to have is someone who's pretty spontaneous. There's a belief that they're going to be able to kind of competently adapt to any emerging situations that come up. They're willing to improvise on the spot.

It's a, you know, kind of a mental outlook that's much more focused on the rewards of success than it is on, you know, the consequences and the shame that's associated with failure. Whereas for the majority of people don't want to be put in a position where they're going to have to improvise, the Di style—not all of them, but oftentimes people with this style—they see as an opportunity. And it's definitely a cliché, but there really is kind of this instinctive ability to look at problems as opportunities.

And this is really an absolute gift for them. You know, especially in the workplace. There's an awful lot of pressure in almost any work setting to not take too many risks. But at the same time, when we look at, you know, our own research, at the feedback that people give to leaders in organizations, the number one piece of feedback that we find that people give is for them to be more active about pushing boundaries. You know, people actually, they sense the strong need for boldness in their leaders at work.

And routinely the Di and the iD styles, they're the ones who kind of get the highest marks for doing this. You know, these folks actually are much more willing to take risks on tasks, but also on, kind of, social risks. You know, putting themselves out there, um, exposing themselves to criticism or failure—much more so than the average person. And again, a big part of this is really about being more attentive to the rewards than it is to the threats. So leaders with this style, they often are willing to take those big risks.

But, you know, on the other hand, an area where they tend to get lower marks is about being attentive to their followers needs, you know, particularly the need for security. They don't always recognize when other people are having difficulty with rapid change. These leaders may often, you know, change direction really easily as they see fit, as they see the need arise, and often enjoying the excitement that comes along with this. But for other people, people who are following them, oftentimes, they can find this really disconcerting and stressful and, you know, not really what they're after in a job.

I mean, there are genuinely lots and lots of really good, valuable people who care much more about security and stability than they care about adventure. The Di style also has a much less negative reaction to external pressure than the average person. Not to say they don't feel any pressure, but less pressure. You know, a lot of people, for instance, they'll structure their day and put in a lot of preemptive effort because they want to avoid finding themselves in high pressure situations. But the Di or iD styles actually perceive pressure and challenge, kind of, in a lot of respects, as, kind of, positive, as stimulating, as exciting.

And so if I'm someone who's really attentive to rewards, I probably want to get those rewards as quickly as possible. And, you know, one of the ways to do that is through shortcuts and looking at the, you know, the normal rules and, uh, processes and, kind of, sometimes kind of seeing myself as an exception, kind of almost seeing myself as exempt from those. Not officially exempt, but, you know, I know what I'm doing, and it's all for the best. So we can kind of skip this step and, you know, not really slow ourselves down with all this formal stuff. Really kind of looking at the loosest possible interpretation of the rules to allow me to do what I want.

And oftentimes, you know, I get away with it because I deliver results. And—and to be honest, in some cases, that ability to kind of cut through red tape and that exemption from the normal rules on a psychological level, you know, if I'm honest with myself, that can kind of add a sense of—of power and control. You know, maybe even a little bit of a boost for the old ego.

And generally speaking, people with the Di style, you know, more so than others, they really are more likely to kind of trust their instinct, their—*their* judgment to make the right decision when the time comes. To sense that, you know, they have a general feel for the big picture at all times, that they have a general sense of where things should go, a gut instinct of how things should move. And so...they're willing to kind of step in and intervene when they see something out of line with their vision. You know, they're fine playing it by ear, keeping track of things in their heads and—and jumping in to address problems, oftentimes with kind of this expert self-assurance, even if they haven't necessarily, kind of, taken the time to explore the complexity of the problem.

You know, it's not entirely uncommon to see an overconfidence in their ability to handle otherwise sophisticated problems without necessarily doing a whole lot of homework and analysis beforehand. There can kind of be...almost kind of a belief in a certain kind of, um, specialness about myself that allows me to glance at a problem and immediately see the solution that's evaded others. And because I want to move fast, you know, I—I want an immediate reward, I might gloss over the details that, well, that don't necessarily fit with my hypothesis, with how I want to see the world.

And once I've brushed off the contradicting details out of the picture, the solution I've come up with, it feels spot on. It seems like it's a perfect fit, you know, almost extremely elegant because, again, the intricacies that don't necessarily fit within my vision—well, you know, I've kind of pushed those to the side. But of course, there is also a—kind of a real advantage to this general quickness, uh, kind of a mental quickness. And one of those is being a really quick read on people, because this style really is a blend of a strong goal focus and a strong people focus.

And so when you combine these two, what you get is someone who's really kind of tuned in to other people's motives and needs and almost kind of instinctively recognizes what other people want out of a situation, and then can use that information to connect with those other people and persuade them. To show someone from their own perspective why they should believe in my goal or my opinion or my vision. And at the

extreme, you can sometimes even see the ability to create needs in other people. Kind of awakening people to possibilities, maybe a cool opportunity or a promotion or, uh, you know, recognition. This is part of the art of persuasion. And that challenge of bringing someone along and getting them excited and invested, you know, that's—that's really enjoyable to a lot of people with this style.

OK, but there is a flip side to this. If I've got this Di style, and I get people enthused about some goal or opportunity, people are going to feel used if they sensed that they were really just kind of a means to an end for me. If I engage with this person and show interest for the sake of bringing them along with my vision, and then, you know, my interest kind of drops off a cliff when the other person's on board, or when the goal has been accomplished, or when something else captures my interest instead, they're—they're going to feel a little bit manipulated. You know, they're going to wonder if I'm, you know, not quite as sincere as I initially came across, because I may very well have the skills to connect with someone and understand their motives, or needs, or interests. But if it becomes clear that I was only interested in my goal or my vision all along, well, understandably, there's going to be some resentment there.

Now, this is most likely to be a danger if I'm in a position of influence, oftentimes, you know, a leadership position. And...I think one of the things it ties back to is this tendency to be expedient, wanting to move things quickly, wanting to see results, and focusing a lot more on the ends rather than the means. And I think in a leadership position, the Di leader can sometimes overlook the fact that for a lot of people, their enjoyment out of work—that actually does come from the means, or it comes from the process of doing the work as much as it comes from the end results. You know, for instance, for a lot of people, their enjoyment in their jobs is about perfecting their work, um, you know, getting closure on a job well done—dotting the i's and whatnot.

And so if the leader has this very expedient approach to the work that a team is doing, if they have kind of this "good enough" perspective, these other people aren't really going to feel like they're getting their needs met. They're going to wonder if their contributions

even really matter. And even more than that, if I've got this appetite for constant progress and, you know, relatively little interest in maintenance, there's a good chance that our processes are going to get ignored as a group and that I'm not going to take the time to optimize our processes and systems because, you know, that—that work can kind of feel dull. And so you get a lot of inefficiencies here.

And that really can be demoralizing for people, particularly for the type of people I was just describing. You know, if they see that a high percentage of their efforts are going to waste or being squandered, what you're going to get is, you're going to get a lot more burnout. The lack of a, you know, a tight organization—that really does have an effect on the culture and the morale. Particularly the people who care about quality, they're going to stop taking as much pride in their work. Their purpose for doing a good job, it fades. And so, whereas in the mind of the Di leader, the purpose is to just keep moving forward at lightning speed, for others, it can feel like they're just kind of putting in more meaningless work.

OK, but enough about leadership for right now. And, you know, there really are a lot of amazing skills that the Di style brings to that role. But I'll—I will touch on that later. I do want to kind of touch on a topic, though, that's often associated with leadership, which is confidence. It's very much related to this idea of personal agency that I introduced at the beginning. The Di style tends to have very high sense of self efficacy, and this is a term of art in psychology. It means an underlying belief that I can shape my world. If someone has high self efficacy, they look at a difficult task as a challenge, as something they can master, versus seeing it as, you know, a danger that needs to be avoided.

You can contrast that to someone who has, for instance, low self efficacy. You know, when they're faced with a difficult task, they tend to focus on what they lack or on, you know, all the different ways that they could fail. And so—and so as a result, there tends to be less ambition, you know, more of a willingness to give up. Basically, the Di style really tends to give themselves the benefit of the doubt, to believe that they can do it.

You know, they also often report having a strong vision of how things should be done. You know, they feel like they see things very clearly in their heads.

But again, sometimes this does involve unknowingly, kind of, glossing over all the, kind of, you know, in quotes, you know, small, insignificant stuff. And as a result, they can, you know, sometimes have a false sense of how smoothly things are planned out. They think things are planned out really well, but in reality, they aren't planned out quite that well. And this kind of absolves them from the need to, kind of, go in and work out the specific processes.

That is, you know, because things seem so clear, they don't really feel that nagging sense that more structure and more processes are needed before they move forward. You know, things feel kind of tightened up even when other people—outside people—might describe them as being very loose and undefined. And you'll also kind of sometimes see, uh, some exaggeration. You know, it's not necessarily intentional exaggeration. More often than not they've really bought into what they're describing, and they can replay their passionate interpretation of reality to themselves and become overly confident in their abilities or in their chances of success.

The danger of this confidence and selective attention, of course, though, is that they grow unresponsive to the warning signs or to any feedback that might be contrary to their vision. You know, and they might believe that others simply, oh, well, they just can't see it as clearly as—as I can. And, you know, and if it's possible, I'll work and kind of bring other people along. But really, I'm just going to pursue my vision either way because it feels very clear and because also, you know, I have this high sense of self efficacy.

I think a perfect example of this, albeit, you know, a very extreme example is Steve Jobs. His coworkers have famously described him as having this reality distortion field. I think it comes from Star Trek. Um, that is, you know, that he could be so passionate, and charismatic, and articulate that he could convince people to let go of all of their

assumptions, and, you know, basically what they knew to be true about the real world, to let go of these things and get sucked into his vision of the future. And, you know, the focus became so vividly focused on things that would work that other considerations got pushed to the background.

And, you know, this reality distortion field was a bit of a mixed bag because on the one hand, he got people to believe in things and push themselves towards goals that anyone else would have considered to be impossible. You know, his intractable vision and force of personality—it really did, kind of, make seemingly impossible things possible. On the other hand, when he was wrong, you know, he was also immovable.

An unfortunate example of this is his, uh, his cancer. He described toward the end of his battle that he had convinced himself of a whole variety of alternative, unproven techniques for treatment and had rejected a lot of the more established methods. And, you know, of course, it's impossible to know if it would have made a difference. But he did say that, you know, he had wished he had been more open to the established stuff. You know, maybe it would've changed things.

And—and the point I'm making isn't about the effectiveness of alternative or established medicine. It's—it's more about our ability to be so confident in our belief systems that we automatically shut out data that don't fit them, regardless of which type of medicine you believe in. And this is one of the heightened dangers of being very self-assured.

Now, again, you know, this is a pretty extreme example. And the average person with a Di style is probably a little bit more respectful of reality than this example would suggest. But as we talked about, sometimes even on a more subtle level, there is this unspoken belief that the normal rules don't really apply to me or that, you know, I'm special and I see things that other people don't. And so it's easy to feel like things that, you know, things are bound to work out for me, even though they haven't worked out for other people necessarily. You know, because they didn't have my specialness. And lack of respect for rules, of course, it's not all bad. It really can—it can lead to some very

unconventional approaches, you know, to buck conformity, to achieve some really amazing, previously unthinkable things, you know, like the iPhone, for instance.

Now, at this point, I want to pull back a little and introduce this idea of driving assumptions. And these are assumptions that really each of us has. They're beliefs that, you know, are actually usually well outside of our awareness, but they're assumptions that we have about how the world works. And because they're assumptions, and because they're unconscious, we don't necessarily question them—we often can't question them. We kind of just assume they're true. So, for instance, for this style, one of the assumptions often is, "I'm wasting my time if I'm not accomplishing something."

And I'll call this a driving assumption because this little belief, you know, a belief that we, well, we probably came up with it when we were six or seven years old—it drives a huge amount of our behavior. And these assumptions also drive a huge amount of how we interpret the events in our lives. So for the rest of the talk, I want to discuss some of these assumptions. And if you have this style, you might find yourself a little—a little bit torn. You know, you might find yourself saying, "Well, you know this...On the one hand, this—this assumption is kind of just plain stupid. You know, I really—I'd be embarrassed to admit that I believed something like that." And at the same time, there might also be some part of you that kind of actually does believe it. You know, you don't really want to admit it, but you kind of know that it's there.

And I think a thing that you should know, though, is that this is really true for everyone. We all have these unspoken belief systems about the world that on the surface...they really kind of look ridiculous or even embarrassing. You know, if you examine them in the light of day, it's almost like, well this is how a child sees the world, not, you know, not an adult. But to the degree that these assumptions are legitimately there, and to the degree that they are going on in the background, and that we go on not owning them or refusing to acknowledge them, they really have that much more power to shape our lives and to guide us towards decisions that aren't necessarily always in our best long-term interest.

All right. So here's another driving assumption. And if you do have this style, you know, give it a try. Try it on. Ask yourself if there's some part of you that believes it, even in a small way. You know, maybe—maybe, maybe not. All right. So here it is: "If I don't stand out, I'm not valuable." And, you know, it's a—it's a very simple statement, but it can have a—you know, a really powerful influence on behavior.

And the statement, it can take a lot of different forms, um, things like, "I must never be ordinary." Or, "If I'm not special, I'm nobody." Or, "I'm valuable if I'm socially important." Or, "I must be uniquely talented." You know, but the basic theme here is being important in some way—being extraordinary relative to the average person. And again, if you have this style, this might not be an assumption you have, or maybe it's kind of just to some small degree, or maybe it's kind of to a larger degree.

But—but let's just think about, for a second, all of the different ways that this belief system would affect someone's behavior if they really, really had incorporated into their worldview. So one of the implications is, you know, about wanting to be in the spotlight, you know, being celebrated by the group. Or similarly, you know, wanting to be in the center of the action. You know, and not just for the—the sake of activity or for action, but really being drawn to people who are in the inner circle, who are in kind of the in crowd or, you know, uh, maybe being really practiced at self promotion. Which, you know, it's not necessarily a bad thing. People who are bad at self promotion, you know, are—they're much more likely to have their contributions overlooked. You know, they get fewer opportunities. But compared to other styles, the Di style, they are actually much more likely to kind of step up and fill in a power vacuum when it shows itself.

Now, if you do have this style, as I go through some of the consequences of an assumption like this, you know, just consider to the degree to which any of this might fit you, you know, if at all. Right, this is about generating hypotheses, this whole podcast. And so if being important is a must for me, then, you know, it's actually understandable that an insecurity would be being a nobody—you know, being kind of an average drone. That would kind of be a devastating realization to have one morning.

And so one way to protect against this is to shut out evidence that says I'm not uniquely special or important. And let me—and let me unpack this for a little bit, because it sounds a little jarring. It actually is the norm for us as humans to believe that we're more important or impactful than the objective evidence would suggest. You know, as a little bit of an aside, psychologists actually repeatedly find that, you know, in a lot of ways depressed people have a stronger grasp on reality than non-depressed people. And it's actually counterintuitive, but it's a pretty consistent finding.

And so, um, for instance, if I were to ask someone how much time that other people in their lives spend thinking about them, you know, a depressed person is probably going to give a more accurate answer. Or if I ask someone to estimate the size of their contribution in a meeting they just attended, you know, a depressed person is probably going to be closer to what an outside observer would say. But to a certain extent, there actually is something adaptive about exaggerating our importance or influence. You know, it gives us the will to kind of keep going and to keep pushing. It's just that you're more likely to see this kind of exaggeration at the top of the Everything DiSC® circle, like in the Di or iD regions compared to other regions.

You know, and—and there are good things and bad things that come with this. So as I mentioned earlier, there's a desire to be kind of at the center of the action and to hate the idea of really being marginalized or pushed to the side. And even though this style tends to relate very well to a wide variety of people, there's kind of sometimes this tendency to show more interest in the people who are bigger than life or, you know, people who have positions of respect or positions of power—kind of, you know, the cool kids, right? Being around those who have the promise to create more exciting opportunities or adventures. And there can be this internal mechanism telling the Di that they always have to be on the move, on the upward climb—you know, getting into more and more important roles.

You know, in fact, when we look at the data, there is actually one occupation that is most correlated with the Di style, and that occupation is executive. And executives are

actually more likely to have a Di or iD style than any other style. And that's not to say that this is the only style executives have. But repeatedly, we see that it's more likely. And I think there are a number of reasons for that. But one of them is aspiring to more powerful, influential positions in the organization. So there can be this tendency to kind of look upwards and understand the needs of the people above them and really adjust quite well to those needs.

However, they may have less interest in—in catering to the needs of those who are below them. Or more to the point, they may have really little interest in even figuring out what those needs are. You know, part of the satisfaction of being important is that you really don't have to worry as much about such things, or at least it can feel like that. And again, this is a very, very, very normal part of human nature. We see in study after study, when someone is made to feel more powerful, they tend to experience less empathy for the other people around them.

And you can even see this in a laboratory setting. You know, one of the unspoken perks of being in power or being important is that you don't have to really spend as much mental energy thinking about the needs of the people around you. You know, think about it. Do you spend more time thinking about your boss's mood or does your boss spend more time thinking about your mood? You know, it's probably the former because your boss really doesn't need your goodwill as much as you need your boss's goodwill.

So suffice to say, when people find themselves being really regarded as important, a typical, kind of, normal response is to take advantage of the perks that that has to offer. One of which is that, you know, people cater to my needs, and I don't necessarily have to reciprocate, at least not as much. And again, I want to stress, you know, this trend is true of all people, but it can be particularly true of people at the top of the circle with kind of the Di or iD styles.

In fact, when leaders of these styles get feedback from other people, they actually do tend to get lower ratings on things like, um, being open to input, or to showing

diplomacy, or to facilitating dialogue. And so if you do have this style, you know, this may or may not be you, but it's at least worth considering if this is one of kind of the negative side effects for you of being more ambitious or at least being more focused on expanding and making progress.

Now, another one of the positive aspects of the Di style involves persuasion. And of course, you know, this is very useful for leaders, but it's something that's—I mean, you know, it's really just nice to have in general, as you go through life. People with this style, they're much more likely than others to be identified as magnetic, or charismatic, or stimulating, you know, dynamic, engaging. Um, part of this is really kind of capturing people's attention and holding it. But there's another part of it that's about getting people to see things from our perspective.

And for a lot of people with this style, you know, just the art of convincing people can be really gratifying. You know, kind of a fun challenge. There's a lot of finesse and craftsmanship that goes into influencing people. And there's also a lot of skill in charming people, you know, impressing people with our—our wit, or our cleverness, or our sharpness. And the ability to charm, you know, that makes life, you know, a bit easier. It's a good way to open doors for us that we might not otherwise have access to. And, you know, this can really, you know, feel particularly good to the Di style on a very fundamental, raw level because it's really direct, immediate evidence that we're important, that we're special. And the Di is, in fact, often really, really good at charming—you know, eliciting that response from other people.

And I think there's a number of reasons for this. Part of it is the confidence that they have in their vision and their willingness to put all of this weight behind it and just throw themselves all in. You know, people respond to that kind of energy and commitment. But another thing that I think people with this style often do that's so powerful is...They not only display this passion and charisma and self-assurance, but they invite other people to come into their world with them.

It's kind of like being invited into kind of the VIP lounge. You know, this really engaging, fun, dynamic world that the Di style projects. You know, people are honored by the invitation of getting that attention. Like we talked about before, though, it actually can feel all the more like a betrayal, though, if that Di person's attention shifts suddenly, once they no longer have a use for the other person or when something more exciting comes along. You know, that other person is really going to, kind of, doubt our sincerity in the future if this happens too many times.

And like we talked about before, this style has a really strong sense of agency, of high self efficacy. You know, there's a particularly strong expectation within them that they're going to be able to get their way, and that they should be able to get their way. And to be sure, there are some really clear benefits of having this expectation throughout life. But on the other hand, if I have this expectation and there's pushback or resistance, I can be tempted to kind of use my influence or my force of personality in ways that may be a little less than healthy.

You know, for instance, uh, using my power to control the resisting person, you know, giving hints of intimidation. You know, subtle but, you know, hints of force to continue to pressure the other person. You know, making it clear that I've got an awful lot of stamina and an awful lot of energy that I'm willing to put into this fight, you know, knowing that the other person may just fold because they see how tough I'm going to make things on them.

And, you know, that's not always necessarily a conscious decision, uh, but people with this style often know how to use their power to get their way. And they'll try to use the carrot first, but they'll resort to the stick if they have to. And their interpersonal awareness, their—their emotional intelligence—that really does help them know just how far to push the stick without necessarily doing, kind of, irreversible damage.

And once they've gotten compliance out of the other person, there is oftentimes this kind of nice, slow flow back into a collegial relationship. So it's not a purely domineering

approach by any means. On the other hand, though, because it is a more subtle use of power, people actually can sometimes feel it's—it's underhanded, um, that, you know, I'm exerting control, but I'm trying to look like I'm being collaborative. And to the degree that actually is the case, you know, understandably, it can spark some resentment.

But for most people with this style, I would guess that, you know, they—they would probably rather people think that they're too forceful than have people believe that they're kind of, you know, too soft or ineffectual. You know, we talked about these driving assumptions before, like, you know, this unspoken, you know, often unconscious assumption that I need to be important. In another related assumption that I think is worth trying on, if you do have this style, is—is this is that, you know, "People must think highly of me." You know, "I must always be respected." That is to say, it's unacceptable if someone doesn't respect what I bring to the table as a person.

So, you know, I'm not talking about having other people respect my basic human rights. You know, it's about people recognizing my prominence or authority. And this may or may not be an assumption that's going on the back of your head, you know, if you have this style. But, you know, a question, you know, I might be able to ask myself is, to what degree does it bother me if someone in my organization doesn't acknowledge my prominence? We all know that we're not supposed to care about status, but to what degree is it annoying if someone isn't mindful of the status that I think that I've obtained?

You know, how much are my instincts telling me that I need to correct this person's misconception, you know, me being marginalized in this other person's head, versus just genuinely accepting that status and perception of status—they don't really matter as long as I can do my work the way I see fit. Again, it's certainly not considered socially acceptable to care about status. You know, we all know we're not supposed to care about that kind of thing, but that doesn't make it a non-issue. And it's been an important topic for well, you know, basically all of human history, right? And it's going to continue to be.

So let's kind of step back and think about how a belief like this, um a belief, you know, "people must think highly of me"—how might that affect a person's behavior? And there—I think there are some really like immature manifestations of this, like, um, like bragging or, you know, a constant need for attention or for showing off. But, you know, let's also assume that, you know, this is a fairly well-adjusted person that we're talking about and—and look at kind of maybe more subtle manifestations of this.

They're probably going to be more attracted to kind of high profile roles. You know, they might avoid taking on roles or projects that don't get a lot of attention in the organization or, you know, are behind the scenes. Um, they might spend energy really managing their reputation, or at least it might really be top of mind for them. Um, they'll probably kind of make sure that they never look weak, um, you know, and probably push back pretty strongly if they're challenged. And they make sure that their opinions stand out and that they get noticed among all of the other opinions that are out there.

And all of these are certainly very normal behaviors, but they do reflect a certain underlying belief system. And to the degree, I think, that we can understand and own our unspoken belief systems, we can actually kind of be a lot more deliberate about sorting through what our real motivations are and deciding how we want to respond to a given situation and deciding the behaviors in our life that we want to change.

And I do want to keep repeating that there really are a number of very positive qualities that come from having this Di perspective on the world. A huge number of entrepreneurs have this style, for instance. You know, and it makes absolute sense when you have someone who has a very high need for stimulation, and a high need for personal agency and, you know, a strong need for importance or prominence. You're going to end up with a disposition that's very attracted to opportunities to strike out on their own and to—to take some big chances, to try to achieve something that's really great, you know, something that will get a lot of attention.

And maybe it's not strictly entrepreneurial. Maybe it's something inside the organization. There's a tremendous value to having someone who sees a vision very clearly, who has the confidence to put their weight behind it, and who has the energy and ambition to get things off the ground.

You know, and at the same time, though, to the degree that, you know, we're focused on personal stimulation or personal agency, you know, personal importance, there can be a danger that comes along with that, of being wrapped up in our own plans and goals and, you know, not having as much interest in other people's worlds or other people's experiences—you know, outside of their direct connection to us. And I touched on a related topic earlier, but the most common way that this can be a problem for people with this style is in the area of listening.

Because really good listening—it does require us to kind of, in a sense, surrender our passions for the moment, and give up on communicating the point that we want to make, and to really throw ourselves fully into the other person's world. It's a much more passive role than oftentimes this style is used to, you know, and because they, well, they have a lot of opinions and again, a very strong need for agency, a strong need to—to shape the environment, to exert control. And so it—it certainly makes perfect sense that letting go of all of my stuff is—it's kind of painful. You know, there's minimal agency, there's—there's minimal stimulation, there's minimal importance.

And so, you know, even when listening, it's really tempting to be, you know, shaping in our heads what the other person should do, or should want, or what they should feel rather than focusing on what they actually want or what they actually feel. Truly understanding that stuff can really just kind of require too much patience, you know, too much receiving with too little giving. And on top of this, for people with this style, the act of expressing our opinions, that's inherently gratifying itself. You know, the pleasure centers of the brain really just light up when we have a chance to verbalize something and to capture someone's attention.

And, you know, and it's not always obvious, but for people on the other side of the Everything DiSC® circle, you know, the opposite is more likely to be true. For them, expressing their internal thoughts—it can be work. You know, it can be kind of a chore. Expressing myself is a burden that I need to do so other people know what's going on inside my head. But, you know, it's not something I really enjoy. And so, for instance, a Di style and a C style can—in one sense, they can be really compatible. But it can also feel to the C style that their opinions or their needs or—are irrelevant in the relationship, or that the the Di person is a little self-absorbed or egocentric.

And so if you have this, you know, a Di or an iD style, it—you know, it's something to be mindful of. To the degree that you do work with kind of more soft spoken or reserved people, how often do you really slow down and stay quiet enough for them to really feel like they have an opening or even an invitation to really express their concerns? You know, concerns that might not even be on your radar, and you'd never think to ask about, and you'd really only learn about if you took some time to explore their world. You know, given that you have a strong personality, it might be incumbent upon you to actively create that space rather than waiting for them to kind of push for it or to be outspoken about their needs.

OK, and then there's one last area that I want to cover before wrapping up, and that's conflict, how we act in a disagreement or a fight. And so we've talked a lot about the different characteristics of this style. And these really do have an impact on how we fight. So, for instance, if you have this style, you know, here are some characteristics you probably have a lot more of, compared to other people: being very passionate and expressive, being very assertive, being very self-assured, wanting to have control, being competitive, having a bias towards action, having a very clear vision of how things should be.

Each and every one of these traits—they probably each have an impact on how you handle conflict. So, for instance, having a bias towards action, you know, when there's tension, the—the Di's instinct is to do something about that, to act on their impulses

rather than repress them. And, you know, and this can certainly be good at times—it can be a healthy response. But it can also mean saying things that, you know, maybe, maybe are better left unsaid.

And a big part of this is because the person isn't used to holding back. They're—they're not practiced in it. You know, it feels unnatural and almost as if they're betraying themselves by restraining. You know, the same thing with being passionate. People with the Di style tend to feel their emotions very powerfully in the moment. And a lot of their past success has actually come from embracing their passions. So they sometimes let loose, even though it's not necessarily the best long-term choice in this particular situation, in the conflict situation.

Another characteristic is assertiveness. You know, they're used to pushing for their own point of view, not caving in, you know, not withdrawing to just maintain harmony. Again, it feels like a betrayal to themselves to bury their real feelings or needs. And there are times that assertiveness, you know, it crosses over into aggression, which can certainly be intimidating on the receiving end. You know, not to mention, of course, that in the short term, being intimidating, it can kind of feel like an asset. You know, even if I'm reluctant to admit it, you know, it helps me get what I want.

And, you know, and it's also a bit of a boost to the ego. It feels powerful and it comes with status. But in terms of long-term relationships and aggressiveness in conflict, it really can be toxic. You know, there's no doubt about it. It can—it can really decay, trust. It—it keeps people from approaching me directly with issues that might evoke an anger response from me. And, you know, and then, you know, people find subtle ways to work around me. And this really starts to kill communication, and efficiency, and a whole bunch of other things.

And I also mentioned that this style has a tendency to have a very clear vision of how things should be and to be, you know, very self-assured about that vision. And like I mentioned, there's a lot of positives that come with this. But one of the downsides is that

if I'm fully entrenched in my belief, you know, my perspective, all of my energy is going to be focused on convincing the other person. Very little energy is going to be focused on understanding their perspective.

When I have zero self doubt, the idea that I should do anything other than push, you know, it just feels illogical. It's just a waste of time. And this can also bleed into competitiveness. You know, a desire to really win for the sake of winning. Or actually probably more accurately, I want to win because losing feels excruciating, you know, especially if I've already emotionally committed to the argument. And if I become too focused on winning, and I'm really worked up well, having, you know, my own personal arguments that are powerful can be much more important than having arguments that are accurate. That is, you know, maybe my statements that I'm going to make in the conflict, eh, maybe they only need to be roughly true before I can use them to make my point.

And even more, you know, I can be so wrapped up in winning that I ignore the warning signs from other parts of my brain that are telling me to slow down or to avoid crossing a certain line. And—and when you add on top of that my need for agency, you know, my expectation that I should be able to kind of fully control the outcome of a conflict, I'm even more likely to push forward with every weapon at my disposal in the conflict.

Alright. Now, I do want to say, you know, to be fair and, you know, this is all negative stuff. And considering the negative stuff, you know, it is often more enlightening than focusing on the positive. But this style really does also have a number of very healthy instincts when it comes to conflict. And one of the biggest, I think, is addressing issues head on. Particularly in organizations, there's a tendency to really just kind of sweep problems under the rug until they fester and they brew resentment.

And this style is really good about putting things out on the table and saying, you know, listen, we shouldn't ignore this. You know, they're OK disrupting harmony in the short term so that the problem can be fixed in the long term. They're also direct with their

opinions. They're much less likely to bury things and be resentful or, you know, leave people guessing. You know, they put it out there. And—and that can be really refreshing, you know, particularly in an organization.

Alright. So there's a lot of information here, a lot of different dimensions we talked about. And so, you know, how do you make sense of it, or rather, how do you put it to use? Well, I'll make one broad suggestion. And it's about these driving assumptions. And I think a practice that can actually be really powerful in terms of our growth as people is to simply monitor our behavior and our thoughts, and start to notice when these assumptions are playing out in the background. And so let me give you a reminder of some of these assumptions.

There are things like, "I'm wasting my time if I'm not accomplishing something." "If I don't stand out, I'm not valuable." "I want people to think very highly of me." And—and maybe, you know, it's not any of these that fit for you, maybe it's kind of a cousin of one of these statements. But really, the whole exercise is about becoming more aware of when these assumptions are driving our behavior, our thoughts, our emotions. And sometimes they are realistic, you know, but sometimes they're not. But the first step is really just about becoming consciously aware of them so that I can make my decisions and choices in a more deliberate fashion.

And if the assumption is realistic, you know, great, I run with it. But if it's not realistic, then I learn to challenge it and replace it with a statement that is more accurate. You know, that's more fitting for the circumstances, that reflects reality better. And, you know, absolutely, this takes some time, and it takes deliberate effort. But ultimately, what I end up with is having more control over how I see the world and really how I interact with it.

Alright. Well, thank you all for your time.

Narrator: This podcast is a copyrighted production of John Wiley and Sons.

