

## The SC Style – An Everything DiSC® Podcast

**Narrator:** The following podcast by Dr. Mark Scullard describes the SC 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 SC style, and if you have an SC style, I think what you'll find is that, you know, roughly, you know, 70, 80 percent of what we're going to talk about here will probably fit for you, you know. Some—some of it will be spot on, and then, you know, there'll be parts that feel like, you know, that's not really me or maybe even some parts that are like, oh, well, that used to be me when I was younger. But I think the value here is more about listening for those insights that can really help you make sense of your past experiences or help you see your thought processes or your habits in a new light.

So we're going to take a look at all these different characteristics associated with the SC style, uh, things like being modest and patient and soft-spoken. And there are really kind of two underlying themes that really tie them all together. And actually, I would—I would kind of call them, um, like, psychological needs, core psychological needs, like, um, some people have, you know, other people, have a really strong need to be in charge or a really strong need to get attention or to demonstrate their competence. Uh, for the SC style, it's a—it's a different set of needs.

And so one of the major ones is a really strong need for stability: to have their world maintaining a—a steady, even pace, where things are settled, where there's, you know, minimal surprises, where I can feel like, you know, that I have things under control, that—I feel like I know what to expect in terms of the problems that might come up on a given day and that, you know, on the interpersonal side, that things feel harmonious, that there's this need for harmony in our relationships and in our world. You know, everybody's happy with each other. We're all on good terms. And—and I'm not suggesting that the SC style doesn't like any excitement in their lives, but in general,

stability is not only their preferred state of affairs, but when things aren't stable, uh, it feels like things are wrong, like I need to get things back to the state as quickly as possible.

All right. And then a second core need, which arguably is kind of an offshoot of the first kind of stability you need, is a need to minimize my exposure, basically kind of minimize my exposure to threats, you know, social threats, for instance, like being embarrassed or humiliated, or threats to my lifestyle, um, threats to my position. And, you know, realistically, you know, no one is crazy about any of these kind of threats, you know. No one wants to be embarrassed, for instance. But for some people, these threats feel—they feel much more looming or they feel much more likely to happen or the potential of them happening feels much more awful, right, than—than other people might feel.

And so, naturally, if I'm more aware of these threats and if they feel more harmful to me, then I'm going to put a lot more energy into avoiding them compared to the average person. I'm going to minimize my exposure. And so I'll develop this idea a little more throughout the podcast and hopefully you'll be able to see some of the—kind of the—the potential implications. One of the implications for both of these needs, stability and low exposure, is a—a very natural instinct to set up a comfort zone around myself, um, you know, a situation with very predictable routines and relationships.

And a lot of my energy then might go into securing this zone and making it safe, spending my energy, putting out fires or building structures or systems that can preemptively protect me against, you know, future problems or interruptions to this—this zone. And so it might be particularly stressful when I sense that something might disturb it, you know, even if that threat is pretty abstract or pretty distant. Or it's stressful when my space is invaded by someone and, you know, I'm forced to be on, right, to make conversation or to make things go smoothly.

And, you know, and the stress, really, it—it can be subtle, but it means I can't really feel like I'm truly myself. Like I can't let my guard down when someone else is in my zone.

And then, of course, you know, there's not just the stress of people coming into my space, but there's also oftentimes even more stress associated with me going outside of that comfort zone. And I think, uh, the picture is actually even a little bit more potent, you know, by comparison, when you compare it to people who are on the opposite side of the Everything DiSC® circle. Um, you know, on that side, you've got people who have this very, like, this strong internal restlessness spurring them towards more and more stimulation, you know.

These folks don't spend a lot of time creating a comfortable home base that's as resistant as possible to incoming problems and pressure. Their instinct is much more geared towards exploration and expansion than it is towards minimizing exposure. And so, uh, you know, there are some good things that come with this mentality, right? I think particularly in America, this more dynamic mindset is—it's really celebrated and rewarded. But there are some—also some real virtues that come with the SC style that often don't get the same kind of fanfare, uh, that you necessarily see going on at the top of the DiSC® circle. So, for instance, leaders with the SC style, they're much more likely to be rated higher on things like being receptive to other people's needs or, um, you know, maintaining their composure during stress or being diplomatic, right.

There are always these kind of trade offs that come in human nature. Uh, you know, for instance, I think the SC style both benefits from inertia and suffers from it. So inertia, it's this principle in physics, right, that, you know, objects in motion tend to stay in motion, objects at rest tend to stay at rest. So, uh, with the SC style, there's this tendency when I'm already in motion, you know, I tend to continue moving steadily along that path. It's—it's consistent, reliable, hard work, you know, follow through on things. There's a comfort in that. I'm, you know, I'm used to it. And, you know, even if it gets a little routine, unlike a lot of people, I'm inclined to stick with it. And so, you know, that's certainly an upside of inertia.

A downside, though, I think, is when it comes to initiating change, you know. If there's an outside force that comes in, you know, that might change my direction, but I'm much

less likely to kind of muster up a lot of that internal energy that's necessary to kind of really push for a significant change on my own, you know. Even if I see a problem or if I see a really good opportunity, I might wait for other people to initiate it. And instead, you know, I'll just stick to kind of dealing with what's already on my plate.

And this is one of the reasons why people with this SC style often have very long tenure at their jobs, you know. They—they tend to stick around. And for an employer, that's a really good thing. For the employee, you know, and sometimes it's a good thing, you know, but also, you know, sometimes it can be a bad thing. And—and bad in the sense that sometimes they'll stick around in jobs that, you know, aren't necessarily very fulfilling for them or otherwise, you know, aren't great fits for them. And it's because it's really tough to overcome that inertia. You know, if it's a choice between the devil they know and the one they don't, they—they'll often stick with the familiar, even if it's less than ideal, because that sort of big change, really any time you make a big change, in—in a sense, you're really exposing yourself, you know. There are unknown elements, you know, that represents risk.

Even within my current job, there's more of a tendency to kind of avoid the tasks where there's a reasonable chance of failure, you know. I'll refrain from doing something that might possibly be beyond my skills and I'll inhibit any internal and temptations that I have to kind of say or do something that might be unconventional or criticizable. Again, minimizing exposure. One of the strong instincts then is, uh, you know, no matter what, to remain free of blame, you know, to—to not be the cause of trouble, you know. I may even find myself worrying about kind of vague, undefined, or really nonspecific mistakes that I may have made, kind of, uh, you know, checking over in my mind if—if I'm currently free of blame, you know, and maybe even to kind of the point of, you know, checking and re-checking something just to really ensure, kind of cement, that, you know, I'll have less to worry about.

And so in this context, you know, adherence to rules—that can really be a safeguard against blame. You know, if I follow the norm or if I follow the expectation and things go

wrong, well, at least I have a solid defense. And so following rules, that's a good strategy to minimize exposure. Another strategy, another good one, is keeping a low profile, um, not being too ostentatious, for instance. And legitimately, I think part of keeping a low profile is, for a lot of people is, you know, is because it feels classier. Right. You know, bragging or tooting my own horn, you know, it feels a little garish, right, and it feels a little tasteless, you know.

And on top of this, I think there's often, you know, genuinely little desire to kind of be the center of attention. You know, getting attention isn't necessarily a motivator for this style, the way it is for, say, uh, someone falling at the top of the Everything DiSC<sup>®</sup> circle, um. For people with the SC style, for instance, instead, they tend to describe themselves as more soft-spoken or modest or unassuming. To them, being loud and highly expressive, you know, it can be—it can be tacky on the one hand, but it can also be a social risk, you know. Instead, I might tell myself: if my ideas have merit, you know, or if my work is really outstanding, it should be able to sell itself, you know. I shouldn't have to brag about it or gin up all this excitement, you know; frankly, that feels phony, you know. I should let my ideas or my work stand for itself.

Or another strategy, uh, to minimize exposure kind of, on a—a little bit of a different track, is—is hedging, uh, you know, not fully advocating for a position or not fully putting all of my weight behind a position, right, because, you know, it could be wrong. And so even speaking up about a topic with absolute confidence—that can feel irresponsible because, you know, I can always see exceptions and, you know, I can see all the ways that I might not be, you know, getting things completely right or all the ways that someone else might contradict me. And so as a consequence. It just doesn't seem right to speak firmly about something that I'm not 100 percent confident about. And in one sense, you know, that just seems responsible because really, you know, how often are we 100 percent confident about a decision? You know, not very often.

On the other hand, the world, as probably, you know, recognize, is full of people who speak very confidently, a lot of whom don't actually have a good reason for their

confidence. And for better or worse, I'm sharing the world with them. And so given my hesitancy to project certainty or that level of self-assurance, oftentimes my ideas or my needs or my insights, they're going to get a lot less attention than they really deserve, you know, partly because I'm not really willing to put myself out there, to kind of expose myself. Because really, if stability is my ultimate goal, then being inconspicuous, it's not a horrible strategy. It takes away a lot of the possibility for people to be angry with me or to be disappointed with me, you know. Making myself small—I can tuck myself away from a lot of the expectations of the world, from, you know, a lot of the possibility of not living up to those expectations. You know, that takes a lot of pressure off and taking pressure off, well, you know, that feels good.

And people with this style, they really do put a lot of pressure on themselves to live up to other people's expectations. And I think even more than that, there's a pressure not to disappoint people. You know, I know personally, you know, I can watch one of those movies, uh, I don't know if you know the type of movie I'm talking about, but there's—it seems like there's a whole genre of movies where everything is falling apart for the protagonists, you know. Like, there's this normal person, and then due to some unfortunate event, they're suddenly in danger of losing their job and the police are after them, and, you know, maybe there's a gang chasing them and, you know, um, they're in all of this legitimate danger, right, and all I'm worried about as the viewer—the thing that is most stressful for me—is that the main character is disappointing all of these people like his wife or, you know, his kids, like—or like he's not going to get this project done on time, you know, and I'm pretty sure that's not what the screenwriter intended, but I think for a lot of people with the, um, the SC style, you know, failing other people can really feel like, you know, that's the ultimate failure.

But on the positive side, right—let's switch to the positive side a little—you know, a lifetime of worrying about that stuff, right? People with the style—they actually do often become very reliable for other people because it is, it's a core value. And so I'm particularly attentive to not inconveniencing others or to not being the source of another person's irritation or unhappiness. Part of why I—I really thoroughly research a decision

before I make a call is because I actually want to protect the well-being of other people, you know. The thought that I may have led others in the wrong direction, that's really troubling, you know, compared to a lot of other people who have this ego that, you know, it won't allow them to—to fully admit even to themselves when they've made a mistake and, you know, they can ignore all of the harm that they've done to others.

I have this feeling of guilt over that stuff and kind of—and beat myself up over it you know. That responsibility really weighs heavily on me. And so I'm going to make absolutely sure that doesn't happen, even if that means that I have to make personal sacrifices. If someone puts their trust in me, I'm honored that they've done so. And I take that responsibility really, really seriously. And so with this style, we do often see that there is really good follow through and there's a real tendency for people to make good on their promises, you know, being reliable, because letting someone down is really just this huge source of guilt and even further, kind of sometimes even a big source of shame.

All right, so, I—I want to pull back here a little, though, and talk about a different topic that's related to this—this style's very strong need for stability and harmony, and that's this really kind of gut instinct to avoid conflict whenever possible. Conflict is, of course, the exact opposite of harmony. So it makes absolute perfect sense that even the vague potential for conflict can be stressful and the SC style will not only avoid the things that cause conflict, but they'll also avoid the things that cause the things that cause conflict, like, for instance, generally avoiding argumentative people. And when they find themselves being forced to work with an aggressive person, they may be inclined to cave in at the moment, but then they're going to go out of their way to work around that person in the future, because having to argue for every single point to get your perspective across, it's exhausting, particularly for this style.

And in group situations, the SC style often plays the peacemaker role, trying to make everyone happy or find compromises. They put their own needs aside and focus on getting harmony restored, which in some respects actually is their need. And it's

interesting because in many instances, this need for harmony even extends to the ideas that are being discussed. For instance, in a—in a group meeting, there's this drive to—to make ideas work, especially if they're someone else's ideas. And—and the emotional reward for making an idea work is that it reduces tension in that meeting, the tension of not knowing, uh, the tension of having to push and come up with an idea, that mental struggle, or the tension of having to disagree with someone else or having to shoot their ideas down.

And so people with the SC style usually come across as very agreeable when someone else pitches an idea. What they might not realize in the moment, though, is that some people are actually more likely to respect the opinion of a person who's known to be challenging or skeptical. And someone who's always agreeable can sometimes appear to be less discerning or not really a strong critical thinker, regardless of how sharp the person actually is. But back to conflict—the initial instinct then is to smooth things over, but if things get really heated, there's often this tendency to just shut down and silently wait for the tension to pass.

And on the surface, it usually looks like the SC style is calm and they're not too bothered by the whole situation. But underneath, there can be a whole lot of stress going on. In fact, in general, the SC style has this real tendency to internalize their stress, to put a lot of pressure on themselves to mentally figure things out, but to not burden other people with the weight of their problems. And actually what sometimes happens is these—these two opposing strategies on conflict.

On the one hand, there's a lot of ruminating, and on the other hand, a lot of kind of glossing things over in their minds, you know, putting things out of their mind, pretending everyone's just fine, uh, maybe even sometimes bordering on—on denial. And both approaches can be adaptive at times, but they can also both have their downsides, obviously. Ruminating, like, for instance, fretting over a problem or playing that problem over and over again in my head—in essence, what I'm trying to do there is it's an attempt to reduce tension, to get harmony by replaying the incident in my head



over and over, hoping that, you know, this time I replay it, I'm going to get some resolution, I'm going to get some closure.

But of course, I rarely actually do get a sense of closure by ruminating. I just end up stressing myself out. Now, if you've got an SC style as you've gotten older, hopefully more mature, maybe not, but hopefully more mature, you may have developed more comfort with other strategies for dealing with conflict, maybe more direct strategies. But that instinct for harmony is oftentimes always going to be kind of pulling us back from the fray a little bit, telling us to just end this thing as quickly as possible with as little bloodshed as possible. And so there's always that temptation to either withdraw or cave in just so we can have peace again.

Now, at this point, I want to pull back a little and introduce this idea of driving assumptions. These are unspoken belief systems that each of us has, beliefs that are 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 question them. We just assume they're true. So, for instance, for the SC style, one of these assumptions is: if my world isn't in harmony, things are bad. And I call it a driving assumption because this little belief that we probably came up with when we were three or four, it drives a huge amount of our behavior and it drives a lot of how we interpret the different events in our lives.

So for the rest of this talk, I want to discuss some of these assumptions. And if you have an SC style, you might find yourself a little torn. You might find yourself saying, on the one hand, you know, this assumption is just plain stupid. I'd be embarrassed to admit that I believe something like that. At the same time, though, there might also be some part of you that kind of actually does believe it. You don't really want to admit it, but you kind of know it's there. The thing you should know, though, is that this is true for everyone. We all have these unspoken beliefs about the world that, on the surface they're kind of ridiculous or even embarrassing, and if you examine them in the light of day, it's like, you know, this is how a child sees the world, not an adult. But to the

degree that these assumptions are legitimately there, going on in the background of our mind, and we go on not owning them or refusing to acknowledge them? They have that much more power to shape our lives and guide us towards decisions that aren't always in our long term best interest.

All right. So here's another driving assumption. And if you have an SC style, try it on, ask yourself if there's some part of you that believes this even in a small way. Maybe it does, maybe it doesn't. But, so here it is: I should never be the source of someone else's unhappiness. It's a very simple statement, but it can have a really powerful influence on our behavior. And the statement can take on a variety of different forms, like: I should never burden other people. Nobody should ever think I'm selfish. If someone is displeased with me, I've done something wrong. But the basic theme is not making other people unhappy, not troubling them.

Okay, so think about all of the ways this assumption would affect someone's behavior if they had really, really incorporated into their worldview. So one of the implications is something we just talked about, not burdening anyone else, keeping things inside, internalizing problems, not asking for favors, not asking for help, you know, being willing to take on immense workloads by ourselves, dealing with frustration internally rather than upsetting our relationship or not telling people that we're unhappy with them and even, to some degree, putting the blame on ourselves, worrying about situations where we may have offended someone.

And so if you have an SC style, you probably have a strong instinct to protect other people's feelings. And in fact, it may not occur to you just how much of your energy is actually being consumed by trying to understand and—and cater to other people's feelings. You may not realize just how much more efficient it would be to just tell people what you're thinking without filtering it and, you know, and—and adjusting it for their emotional response. Often with the SC style, when they're talking with someone, they're used to running through a variety of different ways to phrase something so that it's least offensive. But this can also make them appear hesitant or even unassertive when

they're talking. But—but that's part of making sure I don't say something that hurts another person.

There's also almost an unconscious assumption that they should live up to other people's expectations. So if, for example, someone's showing impatience in a conversation, I see that and now I work extra hard to speed things up in the conversation or to get the information they want to them more quickly. Basically, I internalize this—this pressure to attend to the other person's expectations of how the conversation should go. And so one of the consequences of this that's very subtle on the one hand, but also something that registers with other people on an unconscious level, is this eagerness to please.

That is, in social situations, to what degree is someone with the SC style unintentionally giving off small cues that give away their social power, things like asking questions rather than making declarative statements or making a point to laugh whenever someone makes a joke, no matter how bad the joke might be, because they're trying to make the other person feel comfortable, or nodding a lot to make sure the other person feels accepted, maybe focusing on the other person's topic rather than their own topic, maybe turning away eye contact first, making themselves physically smaller by, for instance, putting their hands in their pockets or—or taking on a more gentle, quiet tone, looking down, matching the other person's pace and tone rather than asserting their own pace and tone, qualifying their statements with things like "kind of" or "sort of" or "this is probably a bad idea" or going out of their way to agree with the other person's statements, sometimes smiling awkwardly again with the purpose of communicating acceptance.

And all of these gestures really do come from a good place, but socially, they can slowly hamper a person's ability to influence or even really just to get credit for their abilities. And a large part of this is because these gestures can, often mistakenly, send a message that says: I'm unsure of myself. And even more than that, they unconsciously

send the message that I'm trying to please you. And this translates into, you have more power in the relationship.

Now, for most people with the SC style, they're not particularly power hungry. They want to work with people rather than above them. Power, for a lot of them, can actually feel uncomfortable, like, for instance, even delegating can—can feel uncomfortable. Like I'm telling someone, here, you do this instead of me. And there—there's a number of reasons for this, but one of them is having power over someone can feel like you're controlling them or even harming them, like you're violating someone's rights by having dominance over them. You know, it's not a rational thing. It's more of an instinctive thing, almost like being allergic to showing dominance.

And it's something that can show up in a lot of different ways. For instance, a lack of comfort in—in defeating someone or clearly outperforming another person. People with the SC style, they want to make sure the other person feels good about their performance too. Okay, and—and we'll get back to this whole issue of power in a second, but—but the point I want to emphasize here is more about influence, and to some degree about getting the credit they deserve. Basically, all of these cues that I was talking about earlier can slowly erode their ability to get their needs met, to have their needs prioritized by other people, or sometimes to really even have their rights respected.

And so if you take that a step further, the idea of being outright aggressive is pretty hard for someone with the SC style. After years of training, the brain is now telling them: aggressiveness, that's the behavior of a bad person. It violates this core principle of do no harm. And so even showing forcefulness in smaller ways is avoided. And if you work with a lot of strong personalities and you find it exhausting to use force, your needs and your ideas are unfortunately going to get dismissed a lot. And most people with the SC style actually do recognize this and in fact, can be very self-conscious about being seen as timid.

On the other hand, mustering up the energy and force necessary to get their say in those environments can be really exhausting, especially in the long run. You know, generally, they really just don't want to be in one of those environments where they constantly have to fight. But to a less extreme extent, even in regular social interaction, can feel a little draining at times for the SC style. I think a lot of it can be traced back to this belief that I should keep people happy. That is, if we're expending so much unconscious energy to make sure everyone is happy and to make sure other people are enjoying our company, we can sometimes eventually find ourselves unconsciously wanting to avoid those social situations because processing all of that information, that's—that's draining thinking about other people's needs, not being able to let our guard down, that's draining. And because of that, alone time can seem like a particularly attractive option.

Now, I—I do want to pull back again to the big picture, because, again, all of these tendencies I've been talking about, they can be traced back to this driving assumption: I should never be the source of someone else's unhappiness. And so if you have an SC style and if you've really internalized this belief, it really, really, really makes sense that you wouldn't want to be aggressive, that you want to please people in a conversation, that you don't want to impose on anyone, and even that you're going to be slow to push back against someone or stick up for your rights. And in this light, all of these habits make absolute, perfect sense.

Okay, so there are another few driving assumptions that I want to introduce, and again, if you have an SC style, these—these may or may not fit for you. But, you know, I think it's worth trying them on, at least, you know, asking yourself if there's maybe some part of you that believes in these statements. All right. So let's take the next one: I'm only half pretending that I know what I'm doing. And, you know, I think it's—it's almost a little bit comical how blunt this is. Um, and, you know, we all feel like this sometimes. But for people in the SC region of the Everything DiSC® map, uh, they might find that this script is playing in the back of their heads a little more often than it is for the typical person. And, you know, there are some other related to assumptions to this, um, things like: my

opinions are only half baked. Or: other people's opinions must be more informed than mine.

In essence, these beliefs stem back to this hyper-awareness of how incredibly fallible I am, how many possible ways I could go wrong, how often I make mistakes. And it's not that people with the SC style make more mistakes than other people, it's that they're more aware of them. But more importantly here, they're more aware of the potential that they can make them in the future. And it's this hyper-awareness that can have a lot of implications for how they live their lives and how they manage their relationships. So, modesty is often one of the first characteristics that comes to mind for the SC style. There's not a lot of self promotion that goes on here. And so, again, their contributions can sometimes fly under the radar because of this.

And this isn't to say that they don't appreciate recognition. They really do. But there's also an embarrassment about it. Oftentimes, there's an assumption that when we're given a compliment, we have to play it down, say it was no big deal or that the idea was just common sense, even though we do actually take pride in the compliment. And compared to a lot of other people, the SC style tends to be okay working in the background. They really want acceptance in the group. They don't necessarily need to be adored or admired or to have the limelight. They're okay with a supporting role. And in some respects this is about realism. It ties back to that hyper-awareness of their own limitations, but also a hyper-awareness of other people's needs, which they really realize are just as important as their own.

There was this, uh, there was a short story that I read in high school, and for whatever reason it stayed with me all this time. The story's about this teenager, a guy, and his buddy's girlfriend has her friend coming into town. So the buddy asks our guy to do him a favor and go out on a double date with this visiting friend. So the guy is dreading the date and being stuck with this girl for the whole night, but it turns out the girl is absolutely stunning. She's gorgeous. He's smitten. So he spends the whole night putting the moves on, you know, but he's not getting anywhere. She's shy, right?

Finally, they're on the train coming back from the city and he—he tries to put his arm around her. And as she moves away from him for like the third time, he has this lightning bolt of a realization, he says to himself, oh my gosh, I am the blind date. He realizes that he's the nuisance, that she, in fact, is the main character and he is just some passing extra in her story. She's the one doing the favor for her friend. He's just some creepy guy who can't take a hint. He sees himself through her eyes and realizes how unimportant he is in her life. It's you know, it's—it's crushing for him and it's humbling. He feels, you know, utterly marginalized.

But the truth is, most people that we come in contact with? We really are just extras in their story. The SC style has a much better grasp of this truism than the average person, because for most of us, it feels like we're always the main character. Things revolve around us. But for the SC style, there's this hyper-awareness of other people's needs and priorities, sometimes so much so that our needs get pushed to the background. And while other DiSC<sup>®</sup> styles are inclined to maybe overestimate their rights, the SC style is inclined to underestimate their rights.

And so, while people who think very highly of their rights, they get angry very often, the flip side of that is people who have a diminished sense of their rights, they're less prone to get angry. People with the SC style, they're much more likely to put themselves in the other person's shoes and realize, hey, you know, I can understand why she's acting like that, or even just assume that the other person has a good reason, even if they don't know what it is.

Now, at this point, though, I think it's worth asking if something even more foundational is going on with this inclination towards modesty. And admittedly, this is—this is pretty speculative. But I think sometimes there's a connection between modesty and a need for safety. And let me explain this a little. If we think about the opposite of modesty, arrogance, well, what do arrogant people do? They brag, they throw their opinions out there. When no one's asked for them, they seize power. Basically, they expand themselves. They make themselves bigger, more noticeable.

But one of the consequences of making yourself more noticeable is that you're more exposed, you're more of a target. More people are going to realize when you've screwed up or when you don't know what you're talking about. And so one of the benefits of being modest is that you make yourself less noticeable, you're less of a target, you have more safety. And sometimes there's even an instinct to attach oneself to someone who projects more strength or confidence or competence. There's a safety and a security in that. Again, we come back to this overriding priority, which is harmony: wanting things to be smooth and steady and secure, even if it means less power or influence.

Now, again, part of this desire for security is because there's such an acute awareness in the SC style of their own limitations and all of the unknowns in the world. As a means of contrast, you know, take someone with a super high-powered, domineering type personality. They're much more likely to have a narrow focus on their goals and disregard for any information that might hinder their accomplishment, you know, the accomplishment of that goal. They're going to brush off the warning signs that their judgment might be flawed. People with the SC style, on the other hand, tend to over-absorb information and danger cues. And there's this indecisiveness that comes with not being too narrow-minded, being too aware of all of the endless choices and all of the possible ways that it could screw up.

So as an analogy, imagine our hard-charging, dominant person crossing a tightrope. Her attention is purely focused on the goal and the goal is the platform at the end of the rope, and therefore she's confident she's going to reach it. She doesn't look down. With the SC style, they're all too aware of the surrounding dangers. They look down, side to side, they test the wind. Their confidence is lower because they're over-processing. In a lot of cases, they're really better off just focusing on the goal and tuning out all of those dangers, even if it can feel a little reckless. Compared to other people, the SC style really feels this full weight of responsibility for being a lone agent in the world, you know, entirely responsible for making choices among an almost infinite universe of possible options.



It's kind of an existential thing, to be honest. This realization, like you mean I alone am responsible for my fate? Seriously? I'm the only one keeping myself from falling off a cliff? Who am I to know the answers? And I think this is most pronounced as kids, as children, this overbearing weight of responsibility. It's almost as if the SC style was put alone in the cockpit, you know, with no one else to rely on to land the plane. There's no expert. Somehow they're supposed to know how to do this task with this infinite number of ways to fail. And so in cases like this, it's very tempting to turn the wheel over to an expert, whatever form that might take. There's this huge sigh of relief. And—and sometimes you do need to do that. But it's about how often we're tempted to turn over the wheel.

And so that SC region of the map, the—the temptation, I think, can be particularly strong, especially when we're young. And it can undercut the belief that I can do these things myself and that things will be okay even if I truly am the only one that's at the wheel. And so one of the things people with the SC style sometimes do to overcome this is to spend a lot of time developing expertise in whatever area before they present themselves as being ready for prime time. Only with that expertise do they feel confident enough to really put their weight behind their arguments. And it might even be as simple as presenting a specific idea in a meeting, for instance.

Whereas other people might have an idea and they—they blurt it out, people towards the bottom of the Everything DiSC® map, they'll work through an idea in their heads until they're absolutely sure they can defend it, until they're sure there are no holes in it. Only then do they wait for the right opportunity or a lull in the conversation to make a pitch. And even then, it's likely to be done in a kind of a tentative, more qualified way. Again, there's this desire to minimize exposure.

So from other people's perspectives, it can sometimes be tough to figure out where the SC style really stands. You know, people are asking themselves, well, what's their real preference? And then this hesitancy can be even multiplied when it comes to leading people. Now, I'm exposed to the judgment of all of these people who expect that I know

what I'm doing. There's this lingering danger that they'll call me out for any misstep and say, who do you think you are? You know, it's that danger of being found out, of having other people realize that I don't actually deserve to be in charge. And like we mentioned before, I might already kind of have that belief that I only half know what I'm doing at any given moment already. Not only can I make mistakes that ruin things for me, but now I can ruin things for other people. I'm responsible for other people's well-being.

So one strategy the SC style might take on, for better or for worse, is to avoid speaking or acting authoritatively, because if I act authoritatively, I take on the full responsibility for making a bad choice. But if I democratize our decisions, we share the weight equally. Likewise, I don't want to criticize the people I lead because if I push them too far, there's that elevated danger that they're going to call me out for not being, you know, a real leader. Better to keep myself in check than to have someone else do it for me. I might even look for ways to give power away, you know, monitoring my words to make sure that I don't come across as a dictator.

And then, as a little bit of an aside here, as a manager, sometimes people with the SC style are also slow to manage up for their teams, to push to get the resources that their teams need or to stick up for the team's rights. Again, it's because this style really doesn't want to push or pressure anyone. But understandably, it can be frustrating for the members of the team, the people that they lead.

Or a slightly different issue, even when they are in an official leadership role, people with the SC style often can have trouble pushing for change or pushing back against the status quo, because in an organization, when you want things to change, you're often going to meet resistance, which is the opposite of harmony. So there may be times when I, as an SC leader, sometimes let problems persist way too long or where I don't really speak out against them because this is usually the kind of stuff that causes tension.

All right. But having talked so much about limitations here, I—I do think it's important to note all the truly amazing things that the SC style does bring to leadership, because there really are a lot of them and it comes back to this modesty and this attention to other people's needs. And so, actually, let me step back for a second and talk about some general aspects of human nature, particularly as it pertains to leadership. There have been a number of studies where we find that people who are given power are much more likely to exploit or objectify others. It's a quirk of human nature. It probably doesn't surprise you.

If you're put in a position of power, you quickly begin to feel that, you know, you just don't need to put as much energy into reading other people's actions or emotions. So the average person stops spending so much energy on this stuff. We become less attentive to the internal experiences of other people, what's going on, their heads, what, you know, what—what are their priorities are. 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? Probably the first one.

Power reduces perspective taking. That is, when we're feeling powerful, we put less effort into seeing things from someone else's point of view. We're also less likely to see other people's contributions. There's a whole field of research on this. So the great thing about the SC style, then, is there's much more immunity to these negative influences of power. And our own research actually shows that compared to other leaders, the S SC C style gets significantly higher ratings from other people on things like staying open to input, showing diplomacy, facilitating dialog. And these are really important leadership qualities.

And of course, the flip side of this, uh, in the follower role, these qualities are just as important. You know, generally speaking, people with the SC style, they tend to be pretty respectful of authority. And, you know, frankly, a lot of the time, they might not even really consider questioning it. Um, a lot of this ties back to this very trusting nature

that we talked about, you know, a willingness to say, yeah, you know, I guess they know the best, right. And sometimes honestly underestimating their own judgment.

In fact, if someone else really shows self-assurance, the SC style is often just kind of naturally inclined to believe that other person, because this style, the SC style, really doesn't show that level of intense self-confidence unless they're absolutely certain, unless there's positively no doubt in their mind. Now, on the positive side, though, um, the SC style, again, is still being open to input in the follower role, you know, really hearing what the other person has to say, genuinely considering the other person's point of view, right. It's it's much easier for them to take their ego out of the equation. And that's huge in an organization, really. You know, a lot of bad decisions get made in companies precisely because of ego.

Okay, so at this point, let's pull back again to talking about these driving assumptions. And we've talked about beliefs about not making other people unhappy and feeling a little bit like an imposter. I think there's another important one which people with the SC style sometimes find rattling around in the back of their heads. Again, not true of everyone, but worth considering. So here it is: I can show my value by helping people. And one of the key words in that sentence is value—it doesn't feel like a key word, but it actually is crucial.

One of the core needs that every human being shares is this need to feel like they're valuable, like they have worth. We all have that need in common, but we can have different ideas about what gives value to a person. Sometimes people feel like it's about my accomplishments or it's about getting attention or it's about connecting with other people or it's about being competent. Again, these can be very unconscious assumptions and not necessarily the kind of things we're always proud to admit. Everyone has them.

And so for the SC style, one of those assumptions is often about my value being shown when I'm helping other people. Or another way to phrase this is: I'm valuable because I

make other people happy. And so, to the degree that someone has this assumption in the back of their heads, they're going to be very accommodating. They're going to adjust to other people's needs and minimize their own needs. They're going to let other people know that they're always available to help. They're going to have difficulty saying no, because a good person—in this framework—a good person helps others. That's part of what makes me a decent human being.

One of the other qualities you often see in the SC style is listening, you know, a willingness to put in whatever amount of time helping the other person feel like they're important and that their concerns matter. You know, the idea of just cutting someone off, it doesn't even really feel like an option. You know, you're just not allowed to do that. So, you know, a lot more time is spent listening than speaking. And in fact, a lot of times people with the SC style will just assume that, you know, maybe others just really don't have much interest in hearing about, you know, the SC's experiences or ideas. You know, they worry maybe about boring people.

So as a consequence, they—they can be hesitant or tentative when speaking, you know, always kind of, uh, maybe testing out the waters a little bit to make sure that the other person is still interested, um, which, you know, ironically, which may actually cause the other person to be less interested because the other person isn't picking up on that passion for what's being said, all right. And that's just not as engaging. The listening, though, that is something that people really appreciate, although sometimes it takes them a while to realize just how much they appreciate it. You know, it's—it's subtle. Being a good listener, almost by definition, doesn't draw attention to itself. But it is so needed.

I mean, really, how often do you have someone truly showing intense interest in your world? It feels good. It's validating. And—and for the listener, the person with SC style, there's usually a genuine interest in the other person's life. But there's also sometimes kind of a secondary motivation. And it ties back to this assumption that I can show my

value by helping people and listening, and listening earns appreciation, sometimes even affection.

And so, sometimes early in life, people with SC style realize that, hey, this is a—this is a pretty effective strategy for connecting with people, for fitting in. I ask questions, I listen, I show interest. It's a really reliable tool in a social setting. And so over a lifetime, people with the SC style really hone this listening skill. And even bigger than that, they hone a natural attentiveness to other people's needs and they they learn to pick up on happiness cues or sadness cues or anger cues. And this can be a tremendous asset that even they don't realize they have.

All right, so that's that driving assumption and we've talked about a few, but before we wrap things up, I do want to double back to that first one, the first assumption, because I think it's one of the most central. It's this assumption that says: if my world isn't in harmony, then things are bad. It's the harmony thing, right. And so if I have internalized this assumption, then chaos is bad. I need to have things stable. Consequently, I'm going to tend to be careful. I'm going to minimize the potential for mistakes. I prefer not to have unclear expectations. I want to know what I'm getting myself into.

And sometimes, I might need to have an unrealistic level of information before I truly feel comfortable making a decision or speaking out with an opinion. And that can seem hesitant or wishy washy. Now, on the other hand, I might be willing to stick with the status quo because at least I know exactly what I'll get out of the situation if I put in the required effort. And I'm usually persistent and conscientious enough to put in that effort, you know, and then I get steady, predictable progress.

And so, generally speaking, there's much more focus on the downside of failure compared to the benefits of success. So working within the existing structure, that feels much more secure. I might get very attached to certain routines, procedures, a certain piece of equipment, even. I like having a steady rhythm that I can maintain and to do it tirelessly, even over an extended period of time, and turn out this remarkably consistent

progress day after day after day. And so if I've got an SC style, there's less of a tendency for me to get bored with routine compared to other styles. There's also less of a tendency for me to generate a lot of urgency or momentum without prompting, because having steady established patterns really feels like my comfort zone.

And so obviously it can be a little disturbing when I'm forced to give these things up, to change the routine or the world that's comfortable and secure for me. That security's—it's like a friend, it feels good to have around me. And so oftentimes when there's a major change in an organization, people with the SC style can feel a sense of loss or they can feel lost, feeling like everything's foreign. It's—it's a surreal experience, like being completely uprooted. They don't necessarily speak up about it or complain about it. But this foreignness can feel really lonely and really, not to be too dramatic, but almost kind of like the death of a friend.

So, one of the general strategies to maintain stability, for—for better or worse, is to minimize novelty, which means there's less of an instinct to scan our environment for new opportunities or to dream up how things could be different. You know, for some people, they constantly have their eyes open towards the future and the outside world. They have this open posture towards the outside world and new opportunities rather than one of reluctance. When a new or unexpected piece of information comes their way, they think, how can I make this work for me, you know? How can I take advantage of this? They simply don't see the constraints that other people see.

For people with the SC style, though, they're much more likely to see the value in what they already have in front of them, to get absorbed in the safety of their current world and putting out, you know, for instance, the day to day fires that come up. And so on the social front, for instance, it's nice to have a small group of intimate friends that they know really well. And again, for better or worse, this can be a little bit insulating. They can take a little bit of comfort in being buffered from the unpredictability of the outside world. Now at work, particularly in a leadership or management or supervisory role, a resistance towards change, it—it can present a challenge sometimes. Incremental

changes, you know, they might feel okay, but drastic new enterprises, on the other hand, they can feel really jarring.

And so if I've got an SC style, I might not even consider that these things are part of my role at work. There's much more of an emphasis on maintaining than there is on changing. And so in this regard, I might really not call myself ambitious or even super driven. And—and that doesn't even necessarily feel bad, at least partly because my self-esteem is a lot less tied to my accomplishments or my status. It's tied to other things. Okay, but back to the steadiness and stability thing, the SC style as a general observation just tends to be more moderate in nature. They self moderate, leaning towards, you know, middle of the road approaches. They use words like peaceful or calm or serene to describe themselves. They stay away from extremes of being melodramatic or catastrophizing on the one hand, but also of showing excessive enthusiasm or being showy. There's a real modesty to this style, genuine modesty. And I think it's one of the things about them that people really are genuinely attracted to.

All right. So there's a lot of information here, a lot of dimensions that we talked about. So how do you make sense of it, or, how do you put it to use? Well, I'll just make one broad suggestion here and it's about these driving assumptions. And I think a practice that's actually 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 being played out in the background.

And so, let me just give you a reminder of what some of these assumptions are: I should never be the source of someone else's unhappiness. I'm half pretending that I know what I'm doing. I show my value by helping people. If things are not harmonious, things are wrong. And some of these are probably going to fit for you more than others. The whole exercise is about becoming more aware of when these assumptions are driving our behavior, our thoughts, our emotions. Sometimes they're realistic, sometimes they're not.



But the first step is just about becoming consciously aware of them so I can make my decisions and choices in a more deliberate fashion. If the assumption's realistic, you know, great run with it. But if it's not, then I learn to challenge it and replace it with a statement that's more accurate, more fitting for the circumstances. And it definitely takes some time and deliberate effort. But ultimately I end up having more control over how I see the world and really, how I interact with it.

All right, well, thank you, everyone, for your time.

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