The i Style – An Everything DiSC® Podcast

Narrator: The following podcast by Dr. Mark Scullard describes the i 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 i style, influence. And if you have an i style, I think what you'll find is that, you know, roughly 70, 80 percent of what we're going to talk about is probably going to fit for you. You know, some of it will be spot on or, you know, there's going to be maybe parts that are like, yeah, that's, you know, that's not really me, or even, you know, well, yeah, that sounds like 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 experience or, uh, really help you see your thought processes or your habits in a new light.

So we're going to take all of these different characteristics that are associated with the i style—uh, think things like being enthusiastic, lively, social, optimistic, talkative, you know—and as we talk about these, one of the things that we're going to see is that there are some underlying themes that really tie them all together. And actually, what I'll do is I'll call them kind of psychological needs, um, like, for instance, you know, some people have a really strong need to be in charge or to demonstrate their competence or a really strong need for stability. For the i style, it's, you know, it's a different set of needs. And there are kind of four major ones that I want to talk about and I'll weave in throughout the conversation.

So the first one is this really strong need for connection. And, you know, you know, I often hear people say humans are social creatures, you know, and we all have a need to be connected to other people. But for the i style, this is really—this is particularly pronounced, you know, this is one of the core things that gives their lives meaning. And because it's so valuable, threats to this sense of connection—they're going to feel

particularly gut-wrenching, you know. They're going to feel particularly scary. And when things are scary, you know, it—it's going to affect our behavior. You know, we're going to do things to make sure that our connections aren't jeopardized then, you know. Some of those things are healthy and then some of those things are less healthy.

Okay, a second need, which I think is kind of related because it's, you know, it's social in nature, is a need for expression, a need to externalize the thoughts and emotions that are tumbling around in my brain. And, you know, not only to get those ideas out there, but to have those ideas heard and acknowledged by another human being. And then third, there's a strong need for stimulation, you know, especially relative to the average person. For the, you know, for people with the i style, you know, their brains are particularly tuned to rewards in the environment.

You know, two people can walk into the—to the same social gathering and one of them sees all of the possible things that could go wrong. You know, the potential for embarrassment, you know, the potential for me to be really awkward. And then the other person, you know, in this case, the person with the i style, sees all of the possible rewards they could get out of this thing if if they work the situation. Right.

And then finally, there's fourth need that I'll mention. And this one I think is a little more a little more sensitive in nature. You know, I think it—it cuts a little deeper. And it's one that, you know, even if someone has this need, you know, it's—it's not necessarily one that they're going to be shouting from the rooftops because, you know, maybe they worry that it comes across as a little, you know, maybe even a little desperate, right. But in fact, I think when it comes to this need, really the opposite is true. I see it as very earnest and profound and a need that really cuts through a lot of the B.S. that we typically fill our lives up with. And so—so the need is—it's a need to really be wanted.

And I think a lot of times, you know, particularly in a very individualistic culture where we're told that, you know, we should be very self-reliant and our self-esteem should be

so secure that we shouldn't need the validation of another person, you know, and that's a value judgment, and, you know, hey, maybe it's a great idea, but the reality for most of us mere mortals is that our self-esteem is pretty much never 100 percent secure, right. And, you know, that we all have this very core need to feel valuable in some way.

And, you know, maybe I seek to earn my value through my achievements or maybe I seek to kind of cement my value by becoming an expert in something. For the i style, however, it's not uncommon, I think, for a large chunk of this very human need to have—this very human need to have value—it—it's directed more towards being wanted by other people. And so when I feel secure in being wanted, you know, it's likely to be a good day. And when I'm insecure in being wanted, you know, when I'm interpreting signals that, uh, you know, I'm not surrounded by this, it's often times going to be more of a rough day.

Okay, admittedly—I mean, you know, maybe I got a little grandiose a little too quickly here. So, you know, let me—let me pull back and, you know, perhaps ease into this kind of more I don't know, transcendent stuff a little later. And, you know, maybe let's redirect right now towards that kind of first need that I mentioned, which is I need to connect. And there's this very concrete i behavior that's linked to this and that's being social. I think it's safe to say that most people with this style really do identify themselves as extroverts. You know, not all, but most of them, you know, and, you know, there is just some very strong social needs here.

And, you know, most of us find relationships to be gratifying, but, you know, they're particularly gratifying for this style. You know, if you were to look at, you know, an MRI, you know, someone with i eye style in an MRI, you know, the pleasure centers of the brain are just going to light up particularly brightly for, you know, if these folks, when they get the chance to connect with other people. It's just inherently pleasurable for them. And there really is just kind of this fundamental openness towards other people, the opposite of a guarded disposition.

And one of the things that comes with openness and the lack of being guarded is—is generally a, you know, a lower level of self-consciousness in social situations, lower than kind of the average person in the moment, you know. An ability to turn their filter off. And unlike a lot of people, you know, because the i style is generally more trusting and accepting of people, they don't really see any potential threat in opening up in a new conversation. And, you know, that might not seem like, uh, that remarkable of a statement until you really consider the more guarded instinct that some people have where, in a conversation, my brain might be on overdrive, monitoring and refining any potential word that I might be tempted to say, because, you know, what if I say something that's inaccurate or, you know, that looks ignorant or that gets misinterpreted or that's rude, you know, or that's, you know, TMI, you know?

Basically, what if I say something that I'm going to regret later on? And so the general strategy for these folks going through life is to be, you know, very selective about what I let come out of my mouth because I don't ever want to be in that position of regret. I'd rather be quiet, you know, maybe even perceived as boring, right, than open myself up to the embarrassment or even humiliation of having said something that's inappropriate. You know, for some people, the core motivation in their lives really is to avoid exposing themselves too much. They're okay, you know, working behind the scenes or keeping a—a low profile, you know, thus minimizing their exposure.

For the i style, though, there's often almost the opposite fear: the fear of being ignored or dismissed or forgotten, you know, being swept to the side, being out of the loop. And so they're much more willing to kind of just throw themselves into a conversation. Now, I think it's important to note here that people with the o style, you know, they're not immune to regretting what they've said, you know. In fact, because connection is so very important to them, you know, sometimes these folks actually spend a lot of time over-analyzing a conversation after the fact, you know: did I that I hurt someone's feelings? How did I come across?

But the key difference is this overanalysis is much more likely to happen after the fact than actually during. And I think one of the key reasons for that is, you know, one of those other core needs that I talked about, the need for expression. Again, this is another activity that really just lights up the pleasure centers of the brain. And—and while there are actually people who have to, you know, force themselves to express their thoughts for the i style, the brain is really just kicking out dopamine during expression. You can think of it this way, you know: some people's brains just light up with excitement at the prospect of, you know, tackling a really tough math problem, you know, um, but for other people, you know, maybe even most people, the reaction to that activity is indifference, you know, if not horror.

But here we have the same thing with self-expression. For most people with the i style, it's just innately rewarding. Getting my thoughts and ideas and experiences out into the world and having them heard by another human being and—and particularly to be validated by that other human being, you know, that really feels amazing. That's being in the zone. One of the i style's favorite things is just, you know, get lost in a good conversation, you know? And so because that flow of expression feels so good, it's much easier to drop the filter and just speak stream of consciousness. I mean, you know, it's hard to deny that conversation really usually does feel best for most of us when it is completely free and unguarded.

And so, you know, maybe I'll pay the price of overanalyzing what I said after the fact, you know, second guessing something I said. But in the moment, it feels so good to really just let loose. And really for some people with the i style, there's you know, there's maybe even not so much self-consciousness after the fact. And I think that varies more from kind of person to person, even if they both have the i style. But I do think most people with this i style, uh, they're going to be more willing than the average person to just let themselves speak in this very unfiltered way.

And whereas for a lot of other people, you know, other people that, you know, they have to figure things out in their heads before they can talk about them, the i style, they're much more likely to live life externally, you know, and they process their thoughts out loud, you know. The inner world, that's—it's kind of ambiguous and messy and, you know, when I get things out there, though, when I speak them or write them, they become real, they become concrete, you know. Otherwise they can kind of just float away in this swirl of emotion or whatever other thoughts or ideas I have. So when I externalize, those thoughts become more grounded, now I can really explore them, you know. I'm—I'm, you know, and I'm also acting on them. It's like that excitement of an idea or an insight in my head kind of creates this pressure to do something about it, to—to act on it some way.

So, you know, verbalizing—that's acting on it, you know, that releases some of that pressure to act, you know. It takes all of that kind of chaos of potential and turns it into kind of a—a small form of reality. And not to mention, when I do get something out there, I can get validation for it at that point, you know, affirmation, you know, people nodding their heads and that, you know, that also feels, you know, like it makes it more real. Of course, one of the things that makes as open as possible is having is kind of a more trusting nature, giving people the benefit of the doubt, you know, believing that people are—are generally have good intentions and there's really not much danger in sharing with someone else, you know, even if it's information that's a little bit more on the personal side.

You know, why—why do they you know, why do other people feel like they need to guard this stuff so much? You know, what's the big deal if it gets out there? You know, it—it feels good to get it out. And so the personal boundaries with this style are much more fluid and permeable than they are for a lot of other people. You know, I share my ideas and feelings freely and so things that might feel intrusive or invasive to other people, to me, that just feels like two people connecting, you know, it just feels like being genuine.

And this genuineness and openness are—are what often make people with this i style such good networkers because, you know, it feels sincere. Because they're not trying to use me, you know, or—or get something else out of the contract, you know. I really feel, as the other person, that the i style cares about connecting because they do care about it. Whereas someone else might have a contact with another person and just kind of consider it to be a random acquaintance, with the i style, they're much more likely to kind of open this up into a real friendship, you know, and people sense that sincerity, you know, and they sense the desire to make deeper connections, you know.

And I think, you know, on—on occasion, you know, sometimes it's so much, in fact, that other people, more reserved people, might even keep their distance. You know, you know, if—if I'm someone who really likes my privacy and I have very firm boundaries and I sense this other person I'm talking to has much more fluid boundaries, you know, maybe I'm going to try to cut things off at the pass a little bit, you know, kind of protect my space. And, you know, I do think, in working with a lot of people with the i style, that this is oftentimes one of the things that they don't necessarily fully appreciate or, you know, how protective certain people can be about their space, you know—physical space, certainly, but even more so, their—their emotional space, and how easy it is for them to feel like their space is being encroached upon and, you know, where the—these unconscious alarm bells are really going off when this happens.

And for the i style, one of the things that makes it so easy to overlook this is because it's—it's really is the opposite of their intention. Their intention is to get close to this person to to bond or to share a fun moment, you know. Or often the intention is really to avoid what for them is an uncomfortable social moment, you know, kind of that—that awkward silence, you know. Where there are two or more people gathered together and no talking is happening, you know, people with the i style often feel this immediate pang of responsibility to bring things back to life, you know, as if it literally is their job to make sure that no one in their company ever experiences social awkwardness. Like, there's this almost kind of this message in the back of their head saying, you know, I'm

responsible for making sure everyone is comfortable and everyone is enjoying themselves, you know, at least while they're around me.

And I think there's potentially a couple of things going on there with that statement I just made. And one of them—is is kind of taking on this burden of other people's happiness, which we'll talk about later. But on a deeper level, I think there is also sometimes an element which is about protecting my worth. And it's certainly not obvious. But there's something to be said about protecting my worth as the type of person that other people want to be around, that other people want to have around, right. That, again, that core need to be wanted. And so if others in my presence are feeling uncomfortable or awkward, you know, what does that say about my value as a companion, you know? Oh, you know, I better—I better fix this.

Now, again, this is a lot of speculation, and I don't think it's necessarily something that everyone with an eye style has going on in the back of their heads. But, you know, at the same time, for this podcast, I mean, this is just about things to consider. And so, is this worth something? You know, is this something that's worth considering for you? Like I said earlier, we really all do derive our sense of value from somewhere. And, again, I think in an ideal world, we all accept that, you know, we're just inherently valuable and we don't have to earn that. But that sort of belief system, you know, really internalizing that, you know, as wonderful as it might be, that really only comes with some maturity and oftentimes kind of some serious maturity.

And I think our—our default setting is more to kind of try to earn our value somehow, you know, and again, you know, sometimes it's, you know, for other people, it's: I try to earn my value through my achievements. Sometimes I try to earn it through my talents. And oftentimes with, in the case of the i style, it's through my relationships, or at least in part. And this kind of, again, directly ties back to that core need we talked about earlier, which is to be wanted. But this—this really does—it takes a lot of different forms. For some people, they instinctively equate being wanted with getting attention or with

entertaining others, right. You know, something like, you know: they must want me if they're paying attention to me.

Other times, though, the strategy is more about getting people to need me because, you know, certainly if they need me, well, they're definitely going to want me. And so there's a lot of different ways that I can try to make people need me. You know, one, you know, if I'm useful to them, I'm needed. Or if I'm a—a source of comfort and support for other people, that's needed. Or if I can be the life of the party, you know, people like that. You know, whatever the strategy, getting people to need me is a concrete, actionable way to get people to want me, you know, wanting me to stick around, wanting to include me.

And I think this is one of the reasons why the, you know, the prospect of exclusion feels particularly painful for the i style, you know, and of course, not that many of us really want to be excluded, but I think this can be particularly difficult if I've got the i style. You know, I remember talking to a woman with this style who, you know, very reluctantly acknowledged that when she gets a group email, for instance, you know, she pays attention to where she is on the list of names, right, that people wrote. Did they think of me first? Or was I an afterthought?

And she was, you know, legitimately, you know, embarrassed to admit it, but she was also mature enough to be honest with herself about why she did that. And it was, you know, it was kind of a question for her, of: how wanted am I? I think another place where you can see the implication of this is in the area of expression we talked about earlier, you know. It—it feels good to express myself, but it feels particularly good to know someone else is really listening, you know, really registering my thoughts and feelings that, you know, I'm really being heard, that this—this other person genuinely cares about my inner experience, you know.

And that's—that's incredibly validating, you know. And why wouldn't it be, you know, when I—when I have a core need met, that that feels good. And so if relationships are—

are such an important source of my ups and downs, I'm going to put a lot of energy into this area, you know, perhaps spend a lot of energy trying to read other people's thoughts, kind of reading social cues, not only, you know, what did this person do, but what didn't they do? You know, did they not say hi the way they normally do? Did they laugh at this other person's lame joke, but not mine?

I remember a, uh—as a little bit of an aside here, I remember an episode of This American Life, uh—which is a radio show and a podcast—and they had a very—had a very extreme but also, you know, very concrete version of this, um. You know, it was with teenage girls, so, you know, it's going to be extreme, right. But it was an interview with these high school freshmen, and the girls are describing in it the process of, you know, posting things on social media, you know, Facebook, Instagram, probably a whole list of things that I have no idea that even exist. But they described how they'd post something, you know, something even casual and—and light, and then they'd sit and they'd wait for the response that they got. You know, did they get just likes or did people take the time to comment? And who were the people that commented and how quickly did they respond and who didn't respond, you know? Are they mad at me, you know?

And this whole thing was, you know, energy consuming enough as it was, but then they also had the flip side, which is they had to also constantly be on their phone so that they could respond to other people's posts. You know, seriously, it really—it sounded like a full time job, you know, it sounded completely exhausting, you know. And again, this is a—this is a very extreme example, but I think virtually all people do some informal version of this from time to time in their heads, you know, tracking our social standing, you know, where do we stand with other people? It—it's just that if relationships are particularly important to me, I might be that much more inclined to do this sort of tracking, you know. And—and that does take energy. Stress in particular is a big energy drain.

So to the degree that, you know, for instance, I worry about letting other people down or not meeting their needs or expectations, that processing power, you know, it does consume a lot of me. You know, I also think, kicking this up a notch, that it's not uncommon for people with the i style to be very quick to absorb blame. And—and what I mean by this is if, you know, if someone else is angry or upset around me, my brain immediately goes into scanning mode, sorting through all of the different things that I could have done to possibly upset that person, you know, whereas in reality, the vast majority of the time, it really does have nothing to do with me. You know, the person, you know, they're just in a bad mood or something else happened or really oftentimes they're not even really just upset at all. I'm just reading that into them.

All right, so now, at this point, I do want to kind of pull back a little and introduce an idea of something called driving assumptions. These are kind of unspoken beliefs that each of us has, beliefs that are—they're usually well outside of our awareness. But they're assumptions that we have about how the world works. And really, because they're assumptions and because they're unconscious, we don't necessarily question them. We just you know, we just kind of assume that they're true. So, for instance, you know, if I have an i style, one of the assumptions might be: I'm responsible for making sure that everyone is comfortable and everyone is enjoying themselves. And I call it a driving assumption because this really little belief, you know, and—that we probably came up with when we were three or four years old, it really does—it drives a huge amount of our behavior and it drives a lot of how we interpret the events in our lives.

So for the rest of this talk, I want to discuss some of these assumptions. And if you have an i style, you might find yourself torn. You might find yourself saying, you know, you know, that assumption, you know, is just plain stupid. I'd be embarrassed to ever admit that I believe something like that, you know. But at the same time, you know, there might also be some part of you that really actually does believe that, you know, you don't really want to admit it, but you kind of know it's there.

But I think the thing you should know is that this is true for everyone. You know, we all have these unspoken beliefs about the world that on the surface look ridiculous and maybe even embarrassing, that if you examine them in the light of day, it's like, no, 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, and we go on not owning them or refusing to acknowledge them, they have a lot more power to shape our lives and guide us towards decisions that aren't necessarily always in our best long term interest.

All right, so here's another assumption, and if you have an i style, try it on, you know, and ask yourself if there's at least some part of you that believes this, maybe even in just a small way. 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, you know, it takes a variety of different forms, things like: I should never burden other people, or: nobody should ever think I'm selfish. If someone is displeased with me, I've done something wrong. But the basic theme here is not making other people unhappy, not troubling them.

So if you do have an i style and if you've really internalized a belief system like, um, you know, I should never be the source of another person's unhappiness, it really, really makes sense that you wouldn't want to be too aggressive, that you would want to please people in a conversation, that, you know, you don't want to impose on anyone, and even that, you know, you're going to be slow to push back against someone. And in this light, all of these habits make, you know, perfect sense. And I think there's another important driving assumption, one that's very much related, which people with the i style sometimes find rattling around in the back of their heads—and again, this isn't true for everyone, but it's worth considering—um, which is: I can show my value by helping people.

Again, these can be very unconscious assumptions and not necessarily the kind of thing that we're—we're always proud to admit, you know, but everybody has them, all right.

And so for the i style, one of the assumptions is often about my value being shown when I'm helping people. Or another way to phrase this is: I'm valuable because I make other people happy. I think a close variant of this is: I'm responsible for fixing people's hurt feelings, or: when I see others in need, I must help them.

And so to the degree that someone has some or one of these assumptions going on in the back of their heads, you know, they're going to be pretty accommodating to others. They're going to, you know, let other people know that they're always there and available to help, that they're going to have maybe difficulty saying no, because, you know, a good person, in this framework, well, a good person helps other people. You know, it's part of what makes me a decent human being. Again, this is that kind of internal monologue. But I want to be mindful here, you know, because I've talked a lot about negative emotions and insecurities and, you know, I don't want to dismiss those, but I also—I don't want to lose sight of what I think are some of the traits that are most strongly correlated with this style. And these are traits like being really lively and high spirited and optimistic.

The i style tends to have this very positive, very accepting outlook. In fact, when you look at our—our 360 research, where we asked people to rate leaders on their performance, you know, leaders with the i style were particularly high in areas like rallying other people to achieve goals and things like building enthusiasm. People really, really appreciate that about the i style. And there's this kind of open posture towards life that, you know, they—they take things as they come and they accept new circumstances. They kind of have this more fluid relationship with the world than the average person, trusting that letting people in and showing their true selves—that's not going to be harmful. You know, it won't lead to hurt. They're more willing to allow themselves to be vulnerable.

Now, I think in a less mature version of this style, there can sometimes be a, you know, naivete, you know, although a pleasant naivete, but, you know, a naive expectation that

sometimes, you know, the world is such a good place that it will take care of my needs, you know, with little stress needed on my part. Although, again, I think this is kind of among the less mature versions of this style. And, you know, it's not necessarily going to be true for the majority of people with it. But I do think it's really illuminating if you contrast this with the opposite side of the Everything DiSC® circle. That's where we find people who are inherently more skeptical by nature.

And as a result of this skepticism, there's often more guardedness. And, you know, there are good things and bad things about being, you know, having this more tough minded mentality. On the positive side, they often have an easier time being firm with people compared to the i style, you know. They'll—they'll dig in their heels in the face of adversity and just keep, you know, pushing and pushing back when they're getting resistance. Because, you know, there's more of an expectation that life is tough and life really requires fight. And so there's this kind of entrenched determinism and resilience to just stick with it rather than that instinct to just, you know, the more go with the flow.

Now, on the other hand, let's take kind of a look at the downside of being more guarded, um, and particularly in, you know, examples from the interpersonal world. So let's say kind of take, for example, when a person experiences rejection or when they're experiencing critical feedback from someone else. Now, you know, for most people, regardless of where you are on the DiSC® map, there were—the reaction to this is to feel hurt, kind of, to feel insecure. For people who are more guarded, though, you know—and I'm talking about people on the opposite side of the DiSC map from the i style—for people who are more guarded, you know, feelings like hurt and insecurity, these emotions, they feel way too vulnerable. You know, they're—they're too soft. They leave me exposed.

And so, you know, my mind really is not as ready to let me experience them. Instead, I'm much more likely to feel anger or resentment or disgust, you know. These are more empowering emotions, you know. People don't necessarily see them as weak, but they

cover up the hurt and they make it extremely difficult for the person to understand what their genuine reaction was to the situation. And as a result, their judgment and how to fix the problem is often clouded and often maladaptive.

So conversely, though, I think this is often an area of strength for people with the i style, even though, you know, it might not necessarily always feel like a strength, all right. They're more likely to experience hurt as hurt rather than cover it up, you know, to be more in touch with the insecurities that are actually being provoked. And as a result, there's—there really is more of an opportunity to be honest with themselves. And that's a more healthy reaction. There's also, on the other hand, a—a less healthy temptation as well. And, you know, it's when I'm in a situation where my brain senses, hey, there's, you know, this really high potential for rejection or criticism and if that happens, that is going to hurt like hell because, you know, because I experience hurt so directly.

Well, and one reaction, you know, it isn't a healthy one but it makes a lot of sense, is to just really kind of avoid the negative stuff because the fear of it and kind just to gloss it over, you know, not to put myself in a situation where there is this potential for the raw hurt because, again, I feel it more directly than the average person. My defense mechanism doesn't necessarily default to distort the information and make it more palatable. Rather, avoiding the negative—that's my defense mechanism. So let's say in a—in a work context, again, the i style has this very positive, welcoming presence, but at the same time, you know, there are tasks, you know, no matter where you work that require more criticism or even negativity. And, you know, those are more challenging for this style.

You know, for instance, in a—in a meeting when someone has a bad idea—imagine yourself in a meeting and someone projects a bad idea—rejecting that idea outright, that just feels so wrong because my instinct is to support other people and build them up. And this little act of rejecting the idea, it feels like kind of a violation of a core value that I hold, you know. I never want to be someone who crushes another person's

passion. So, you know, what do I do? Well, maybe I'll hedge or, you know, instead of rejecting it, maybe I'll kind of redirect the conversation to talk about something positive I see in the idea. If I resort to a more roundabout way, you know, instead of directly rejecting it, to steer the group's direction away from a bad idea, it just—it kind of muddies the communication, you know, and that bad idea that gets to linger on in the background.

And, you know, and people aren't really clear about its status. You know, people are asking themselves, well, are we continuing to go in that direction? Is that an idea we like? You know, is that something we should continue to develop more or should we just forget about it, right? And I think a slightly different danger here is because I want other people to succeed so much, I—I sometimes will hunt down the value in their idea or in their work and kind of focus on that, because when someone says, you know, I have a great idea, you know, I'm really, really hoping that that idea is as good as they say it is, you know, versus other people, you know, who don't necessarily have this style, you know, who might be indifferent when someone says they have a great idea or might even actually be naturally skeptical when they hear someone really enthusiastic about an idea.

And so when that other person's kind of, quote, great idea turns out actually to be problematic, I'm kind of faced with this mini crisis, you know. I'm immediately put in this position that I hate being in where I have to choose between letting this bad idea live on or potentially hurting someone's feelings. And part of the stress is really kind of figuring out the dance that I have to do to achieve both, you know. It's—it can really feel like walking a tightrope. All right, so there you have kind of an example of how this very positive, accepting this position can actually be a little bit of a hindrance or at least add some extra stress to my plate. And with the i style there, there's kind of this tendency to gravitate much more towards the positive and the exciting over areas that might be more, you know, mundane or where the rewards don't come as quickly.

I've heard people sometimes tease the i style that, you know, they're—they're attracted to bright, shiny objects, you know, stuff where there's this kind of immediate potential for liveliness and for excitement and fun. But, you know, that does leave a number of activities where, you know, the excitement or the novelty level, it's not quite as high. You know, the gratification isn't quite as immediate. So take, for instance, analysis, you know, heavy, in-depth analysis. You know, this is the process of digging down into a topic and and looking to, you know, kind of really thoroughly understand an issue when the answers aren't coming very easily, you know, even through all of this frustration of not understanding something, you know, feeling lost and confused and, you know, your brain is telling you to quit because, you know, there must be something anything more fun that we could be doing with our time.

And, you know, it's when the kind of these bursts of gratification are the opposite of immediate, you know. The gains are very slow and very painfully earned. Now, you know, really, I want to be clear is that the i style definitely does have a great sense of internal drive, but that drive is actually usually much more geared towards kind of the new or the novel or the exciting compared to goals that involve kind of slow, even more kind of thankless work. You know, the goals that require keeping a sense of resolve and tenacity to just keep pushing or even slogging through when the task isn't inherently enjoyable, you know. And there actually are other people who don't have as much trouble with this stuff because their focus really isn't as much on reward and stimulation, it's more on stability. It's more on securing their world. Or, you know, their core need includes competency or to be an expert. And so, you know, the absence of immediate gratification, it's not as much of a deterrent.

Again, you know, I certainly do want to reiterate that this certainly isn't true of everyone with the i style, you know. I'm just describing a general trend. But—but let's just say that, you know, it's not uncommon for people with this style to be much more interested in moving forward or starting a new project than it is on maintaining an old one. They're probably not as interested in, you know, making sure that all of the current systems and

the current processes are still working, you know, the way they were designed to work, you know, doing the kind of the routine updates and organizing the records, documenting stuff, you know, fixing stuff that's worn out. You know, kind of this maintenance stuff is, you know, it's not really sexy, you know.

And in fact, people who actually do enjoy this stuff are often kind of the same people who really enjoy stability and crave stability, actually, you know. Maintenance—that ensures that things will run smoothly, you know, so there's some satisfaction for those people in getting that done. But for the i style, movement and novelty, that's what's exciting. You know, new is exciting. And so when I find myself in a mundane environment, my brain, consciously or unconsciously, it's trying to meet that core need for stimulation. And so, you know, it's going to look for some distractions. It's going to look for excuses to go off and maybe play, you know, really kind of to do something big.

And I think in that vein, people with the i style, kind of a slightly different topic, but in that vein, they actually do report more intense experience of their emotions. You know, that is kind of their conscious awareness of their emotions often comes across as more intense for them than it does for the average person. You know, and I want to be clear that, you know, even people who are very reserved and matter of fact, you know, they often have very rich internal emotional lives, you know, even if you can't see it from the outside. But there's also this dimension where, you know, we're not always consciously aware of the emotions kind of pulsing through our brains, you know.

For instance, it really, you know, it's possible to be experiencing a good deal of emotional stress without really being consciously aware of it. You know, your body knows, you know, maybe your blood pressure has increased and your jaw has clenched. But at the same time, you're able to say, you know, completely honestly that, you know, you don't feel stressed, it's not in your consciousness. But for people with the i style, their conscious awareness emotion, you know, at least what they report, is that it is more intense. You know, the highs feel higher and the lows feel lower. You know,

when we do surveys of people and, you know, we have a—a scale that goes kind of from strongly agree to strongly disagree—people with this style, they're actually much more likely to kind of give the strongly agree and the strongly disagree responses, you know, as opposed to just responding in the middle region, you know. They give more at the extremes.

And again, a lot of these stronger emotions are in the context of relationships, which, if you really, really care about something, you know, you're going to have strong feelings when that thing is impacted. You know, let's take my car, for example, right. If I have, um, a 1995 Ford Escort, I'm probably not going to care much about if it gets dinged in a parking lot, you know, but if my car is my baby, you know, and I spend my weekends washing and waxing it, you know, that same little thing that's, you know, understandably, that's going to get a big reaction out of me.

And so if connections and approval are inherently very important for me, you know, that's going to get a big reaction when those things are on the line, like when there's an insult or a rejection or I'm being left out, and so particularly in high charged situations, managing these heightened emotions can be a lot more difficult. It's like if you're waiting in the ocean and a little wave comes along, you know, it's not going to be too hard to stay standing on your feet. A big wave comes around, though, and you're probably going to get knocked around.

And so for other people who throughout their lives may have developed these strategies for muting their conscious experience of emotion, a charged situation, that might feel like kind of a small wave to them. But if you've got an i style, I'm oftentimes battling that huge wave of emotion coming at me, you know. And it's very hard to remain unaffected the way some other people might. And most people with this style, to be fair, they wouldn't want to change that. They wouldn't want to lose the—the richness and the color that this brings to life, you know, the passion that comes with this. But I do think it's

that in those heated situations where the goods and the bads of this really start to become most clear, you know, in conflict in particular.

And the i style, it really does—has kind of this very interesting mix when it comes to conflict, because there's almost this dichotomy. You know, on the one hand, when conflict is just on the horizon, when the problems are just brewing, people with this style really do put a lot of effort into just kind of smoothing things over, all right. Again, you know, again, relationships are a priority. I don't want to see my connections with people threatened, you know. And I think for some people with this style, there's often even this kind of unspoken assumptions going on in the back of their heads, things like, you know, if I criticize someone, I'm a mean person; or, if I upset someone, they're going to reject me. Or: if, you know, if I express negativity, I'm a negative person, you know.

And again, these aren't rational thoughts. They're more like those driving assumptions, you know, unconscious, baked in. But to the degree that I have these going on in the back of my head, I'm going to do everything I can to keep things positive, to make sure no one gets upset, you know, maybe even sweep some problems under the rug if that's what's necessary to really keep the peace, to kind of put a happy face on things. But actually, back to this dichotomy. On the one hand, you know, when conflict is brewing, there's that instinct to smooth it over, but when the conflict hits a certain threshold, well, you know, that's when the floodgates open.

Because one, I've got all of this strong emotion, and two, I've got this very strong instinct to express myself, you know. There's—there's a high potential for drama there because, you know, part of the i style's charm, in less stressful times, is to really throw themselves into a situation, really allow themselves to kind of feel the emotions in the moment and talk without filtering themselves. In conflict, though, this same instinct, you know, well—you can—you can probably imagine that's going to have some downsides. So in the midst of all of these strong emotions, it's really easy to get flustered and to not take the time to choose my words super carefully, to kind of just say things in a way that

communicates the intensity of the emotions inside, maybe even like exaggerating, for instance.

You know, we exaggerate things so that they sound as bad as they feel. So things like, you know, "you always do this", you know—well, logically, we know the other person doesn't always do that thing. But that's not very satisfying to say. You know, "you sometimes do this very specific thing under very specific circumstances!" You know, we want to make things sound as intense as they feel. And when the impulse to do this is so strong, it actually takes a tremendous amount of willpower to stop myself against that, you know, huge wave of emotion that's coming at me. And it's much easier, again, because relationships are so—are close to my heart, to make conflicts personal, because compared to other people, I'm more willing to put myself out there. I'm more willing to kind of make myself vulnerable, you know, to share intimate stuff about myself.

And so when there's a rejection or an attack, it feels like an attack on the core me, you know. Whereas other people may have been more inclined to compartmentalize and say, well, you know, they don't really know the real me, so I can kind of discount that rejection, with the i style, much more of their life really is lived externally. And so when that rejection does happen, yeah, it feels personal. And so, you know, it hurts more. And because it hurts so much, there's also an instinct to look at the person I'm fighting with and just say, you know, oh my gosh, how could you do this to me? You know, you can't possibly care about me, because if you did, you wouldn't be putting me through this torture, all right. You made me feel this way. Now, in reality, you know, oftentimes the other person really has no idea what torture it actually feels like. But it's easy for me to kind of lose sight of that in the moment amidst all of this turmoil.

And so it's easy for me to walk away from the fight with this message going through my head that says, you know, they must not care about me. You know, it's tough in those times to really get perspective and kind of pull myself back, you know, to basically be analytical rather than experiential and to reassure myself that, well, you know, this is

really just one small part of that relationship. And again, you know, back to this tendency towards strong emotion, when those feelings get too powerful and passionate, it does make it more difficult for me to compartmentalize, to say, hey, you know what, this part of my life is not going well right now, you know. I need to take a little bit of a mental break from focusing on this and put my mind in another space, you know, an area where things are a little more stable, you know.

Compartmentalization when things aren't going well, that's actually a healthy tool to have in the old toolbox, you know. And it can be overused, absolutely. But it can also help me manage stress when things in one area of my life aren't going well. You know, if I have compartmentalization as a tool, I can take a break from that intense emotion maybe and get some perspective. And actually along those same lines, I think it can actually be very frustrating for people with the i style, particularly if you tend to get very passionate during a conflict, you know, it's frustrating to see the other person do this compartmentalization, because to me, you know, when someone isn't engaging on the same level that I am with that same intensity, the message can really feel like, oh, well, you know, they must not actually care about our relationship. Otherwise they'd be just as upset as me. You know, they'd want to hash things out. Their brains would be clamoring for closure, just like mine. But they're just kind of going about their lives like normal, you know.

And from there, it's easy to make the leap to, you know, again, well, they must not actually care, you know, they must not actually want me, you know, or even feeling like I'm being abandoned here. And, of course, the real key to coming down in most of these situations, you know, regardless of who you are, is perspective, you know. It's—it's just that when I'm someone who experiences emotions so deeply, it's so, so difficult to kind of force myself to do that mental exercise when I'm overwhelmed. It really takes this tremendous amount of discipline when every impulse in my body is kind of pulling me in the opposite direction, you know, the less healthy direction, which is kind of to embrace these emotions in the moment and give credibility to kind of these extreme statements

that are bubbling up from my unconsciousness, you know, from my more core insecurities.

All right, so there is a lot of information there, uh, you know, a lot of different dimensions that we talked about, and like I said at the beginning, you know, 70, maybe 80 per cent of this stuff hits for you. And, you know, the DiSC® model is far from perfect. But even the stuff that does fit for you, you know, how do you make sense of that? Or rather, how do you put it to use? Well, I'll just make one broad suggestion here, and it's about those driving assumptions, you know. I—I think a practice that's really, really powerful in terms of our growth as people is to kind of simply monitor our behavior and our thoughts and start to notice when these assumptions are being played out in the background. And so, you know, let me just give you kind of a reminder of some of the assumptions that we talked about.

And, you know, maybe you can only identify, you know, one or two of these and yourself, you know, maybe none. But here they are, things like: I should never be the source of someone else's unhappiness. I'm valuable because I make other people happy. I am valuable if people want me. I am valuable if people pay attention to me. If I upset someone, they're going to reject me, if I criticize someone, I'm a mean person. I'm responsible for making sure everyone is comfortable and enjoying themselves. You know, and again, some will fit more than others. Maybe it's a close cousin of one of these. Really, though, the whole exercise is about becoming more aware of when these assumptions are driving our behavior or our thoughts or our emotions. And sometimes they're realistic assumptions.

Sometimes they're not, though. You know, but the first step is really just about becoming consciously aware of them so that I can make my decisions and my choices in a more deliberate fashion, you know. And if that assumption turns out to be realistic, great, you know, I run with it. But if it's not, well, then I learn to challenge it and to replace it with a statement that's more accurate, you know, that's more fitting for the

circumstances. And yeah, and this does take a lot of time and deliberate effort, definitely. But ultimately, you know, in the end, I have more control over how I see the world and really how I interact with it because I have that choice.

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

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