2.13: Your Communication Style

Although you might speak the same language as another person, you still have a style of communication that may differ from another. In fact, this difference in style might be a source of conflict between you and someone else. It would be useful then to better understand your style of communication and the challenges you might have communicating with the styles of others.

There are a variety of approaches of communication styles that relate to a person's personality. The approach described here actually has its beginnings in ancient times with Hippocrates some 400 years B.C. He thought that that people could be classified into four groups dependent on the balance of body fluids that he felt influenced a person's personality. This approach evolved through the years to the version described below.

The key to understanding the four types is the understanding if a person is better at using information and data and are they introverted or extroverted. Take a look at the descriptions of the four styles and think about which one best fits you.
Analytic/Owl

Information and Introverted

“Systematic”

The Wise Owls are both indirect and controlling. They are concerned with analytical processes and are persistent, systematic problem solvers and generally well organized. If they say they are going to call you back, they will. They are list makers. They are always asking questions in order to get more information. Owls can be seen to over analyze a situation so much that they delay decision making and suffer from “paralysis by analysis.” They can appear as aloof, picky, and critical.

Pace: Owls actions and decisions tend to be slow and extremely cautious, but they will rarely miss a deadline.

Theme: “Notice my efficiency.”

Motto: “Better safe than sorry.”

Strengths: Accuracy, dependability, independence, follow-through, and organization

Weaknesses: Their procrastination and conservative natures, which promote their tendency to be picky and over-cautious

If you are an owl and want to be a more effective communicator, you need to openly show concern and appreciation of others instead of relying solely on information. Occasionally try shortcuts and time savers.
Driver/Eagle

Information and Extrovert

“Direct”

Eagles respond quickly and focus on decisions. They are controlling and direct without major considerations of others personal feelings. They are oriented toward productivity and goals, and are concerned with bottom line results. If they have an office you would probably see their awards on the wall.

Pace: Eagles are fast-paced and make decisions quickly.

Motto: “I want it done right and I want it done now,” or,” I want it done yesterday!”

Theme: “Notice my accomplishments.”

Strengths: Their ability to get things done, their leadership, and their decision-making ability

Eagles accept challenges, take authority, and go head first into solving problems. They tend to exhibit great administrative and operational skills and work quickly and impressively on their own.

Weaknesses: They tend to be inflexible, impatient, have poor listening habits and fail to take time to “smell the flowers.” If they did, they would return to others and say, “I smelled 12 today. How many did you smell?”

If you are an Eagle and you want to improve your ability to communicate with others, you need to practice active listening and develop patience, humility, and sensitivity. Eagles also need to show concern for others, use more caution, verbalize the reasons for their conclusions, and participate more as team players.
2.13.3: "Peace Dove" by Unknown is in the Public Domain, CC0

Amiable/“Dove”

Relationships and Introvert

“Considerate”

The Diplomatic Dove is the most people-oriented of all the four styles. The Dove is supporting and indirect, relatively unassertive, warm and reliable. They really seek a peaceful, stable environment. Doves are sometimes seen by others as compliant, soft-hearted, and agreeable. They happily go along with others. They seek security and will be very uncomfortable with change. Having close, friendly, personal, and first name relationships with others is one of their most important objectives.

Motto: “Is everyone comfortable?”

Theme: People and their feelings are most important.

Pace: They take action and make decisions slowly. Doves wish to avoid risky or unknown situations. Before they take action or make a decision, they have to know how other people feel about their decision.

Strengths: Relating to, caring for, and loving others

Doves have natural counseling skills and are extremely supportive. They focus on getting acquainted and building trust.

Weakness: They are somewhat unassertive, overly sensitive and easily bullied.

If you are a Dove and want to achieve communication balance and behavioral flexibility you need to say “no” occasionally. You need to be more assertive in order to achieve your needs. Attend to the completion of tasks without being over sensitive to the feelings of others. Take a chance and be willing to reach beyond your comfort zone to set goals that require some stretch and risk. And don’t feel guilty about delegating tasks to others.
Expressive/Road Runner

Direct Communication Style and Support/People focused

“Spirited”

The Social Road Runners are direct, supporting, and lively and effective communicators. Their actions and decisions are fast-paced and spontaneous. They have a disregard for details which causes them to make mistakes, exaggerate, and generalize facts and figures. They often over commit themselves in order to please others. They are easily distracted by new ideas and projects and have a challenge completing projects so they sometimes are not the best people to be relied on. They can be viewed as excitable and manipulative. They work quickly and enthusiastically with others.

Pace: Road runners are fast paced and make decisions quickly.

Motto: “Don’t confuse me with facts.”

Theme: “Ain’t we got fun.”

Strengths: Enthusiasm, persuasiveness, and their delightful sociability

They are idea persons and can influence others and shape their environment by bringing others into alliance to accomplish results. They have a dynamic ability to think quickly on their feet.

Weaknesses: Getting involved in too many things, impatience, and their short attention spans which cause them to become bored easily. Their fast-paced actions lead to mistakes.

To improve their communication, Road Runners need to control their time and emotions; develop a more objective mindset; spend more time checking, verifying, specifying, and organizing; develop more of a task-focus; and take a more logical approach to projects and issues.

A key thought here is that within us we actually use all four of these communications styles. But, there is usually one
style that we are more comfortable using and if we could, that would be the style we would most frequently use. We usually also have a secondary style that we may occasionally lean towards. A situation may occur that makes one style more effective than another and so you switch to that style. You might be a relaxed “Amiable” person, but as a parent, you might have to switch to a “Driver” to get a point across to your children. The more flexible you are in your styles, the more situations you can be effective.

As you might notice, if you are an “Amiable Dove” that cares about the people in your office with and you are working with a “Driver Eagle” who’s focus is on the end results, you can easily see the possibility of conflict. Understanding the differences between these styles can be a great start at resolving conflict.

Critical thinkers have to take the language needs and requirements of their audience into account when trying to persuade them in an argument to adopt a particular point of view.

Understanding the effects of language on the critical thinking and argumentation process reduces the chances of being manipulated by others.