



Difficult Conversation Assessment Tool

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Introduction

Understanding your conversation style is crucial for effective communication and building meaningful connections. It influences the tone of your interactions, impacting the way your messages are received. Awareness of your conversation style also enables you to express your thoughts more clearly, reducing the likelihood of misunderstandings. Ultimately, recognizing and honing your conversation style empowers you to navigate conversations with authenticity, empathy, and effectiveness.

Directions: Select how you tend to respond when confronted with a difficult conversation at work. Choose the first response that you are drawn to—without second-guessing yourself. No one responds exactly the same way in every conversation, so just do your best to be honest about your typical approach.

When faced with a difficult conversation:

1. I do everything I can to not upset the other person.

- That's not me.
- That's me sometimes.
- Yep, that's me!

2. I tell myself I have something else more urgent to do.

- That's not me.
- That's me sometimes.
- Yep, that's me!

3. I raise my voice to get important points across.

- That's not me.
- That's me sometimes.
- Yep, that's me!

4. I avoid the other person for as long as I can.

- That's not me.
- That's me sometimes.
- Yep, that's me!

5. I apologize for things even if I'm not at fault.

- That's not me.
- That's me sometimes.
- Yep, that's me!



6. I apply pressure when the person doesn't agree to what I want.

- That's not me.
- That's me sometimes.
- Yep, that's me!

7. I seek out others who can make my argument for me.

- That's not me.
- That's me sometimes.
- Yep, that's me!

8. I pretend I don't mind when the other person hurts my feelings.

- That's not me.
- That's me sometimes.
- Yep, that's me!

9. If I think their point is wrong, I correct them.

- That's not me.
- That's me sometimes.
- Yep, that's me!

Go to the next page to see your scores and determine what type of conversation style you use most.



Your difficult conversation style

Conversations become “difficult” when they’re about something deeply important to us and/or others. Because there’s something important at stake, someone—whether it’s you, the other person, or both of you—will have an emotional reaction. It’s the emotional reactions that people find most challenging.

Our research shows that there are three common difficult conversation styles. Your highest score below is most likely your difficult conversation style.



Attack

Attacking doesn’t necessarily mean you’re rude or aggressive but that you tend to assert your perspective more than focusing on the other person’s.

Often, it’s good to strive for an approach where you balance courageously sharing your point of view with considering the other person’s perspective.

Appease

When you appease others, you may prioritize their interests over your own to please them or to de-escalate the situation.

Often, it’s good to strive for an approach where you balance courageously sharing your point of view with considering the other person’s perspective.

Avoid

When you avoid, you tend to dodge uncomfortable interactions at all costs.

Often, the best way to address a hard issue is to talk it through, using a balance of courageously sharing your point of view and considering the other person’s perspective.

Navigating Difficult Conversations: Turn Tension Into Progress™

Navigating Difficult Conversations: Turn Tension Into Progress™ takes a targeted approach to helping learners manage emotional tension and conduct conversations in a way that enables all parties to stay engaged in collaborative dialogue. Learners will shift their mindset from fearing and avoiding difficult conversations to seeing them as *the* way to make progress on important issues. And they'll develop the skills to build trust and respect in every relationship as they navigate sensitive topics.

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