

Ask Dr. A. . . . Dr. Michael Abelson

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Dr. Michael Abelson is an internationally respected expert on human resources, assessments and leadership. His company assists organizations maximize their human potential through the use of face-to-face and internet based products, systems and processes. He has delivered seminar, speeches, and key-note speeches to over 800 audiences on four continents.

Click here to Ask Dr. A a question on human systems management and/or leadership.

Notable questions may be included in future Ask Dr. A columns.

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Managing Stress – Dealing With “I”s In The Workplace

With all of the stressors in today’s workplace, learning what to do to decrease stress in the first place and managing stress when present is exceedingly important. The first e-Letter in this series examined how to deal with “Ds” under stress. To read this e-Letter just go to our website (www.TheAbelsonGroup.com). Read on now to see how to deal with stress of people with “I” behavior patterns.

Q *What is an “I” and how do they react to stress?*

A “I” stands for Influencer in the DISC behavioral system. The “I” is people oriented and has an external focus when looking at others and their world. Some behavioral tendencies include optimism, trusting others, desire to interact with/talk with/enjoy others, convincing, personable, not detail oriented and potentially impulsive. The more of these behaviors they have and/or the more intense they are with these behaviors, the more of an “I” they are.

“I”s like “D”s are typically optimistic and believe they can do just about anything they put their mind to do. They usually have a great deal of enthusiasm and energize a room. When they do not succeed or are stressed, they tend to be disorganized and rely even more on their people skills and optimism. It is not unlikely for “I”s to try talking themselves and others into believing they can accomplish the task, even if there may be little substance or specifics in their statement, or worse, in their actions. Expect them to try to talk their way out of the difficulties and to attempt to persuade others that everything will be fine. The very intense “I” is very good at this persuasion and it is not unusual for them to get others to buy into this optimism. This sometimes makes things worse, since things that could resolve the situation are not getting done. Others, especially “D”s and “C”s, may be getting more and more impatient with the lack of actual results or action from the “I”.

Q *What can bosses do to help “I”s deal with stress?*

A High “I”s are probably the least likely of the four primary behavior styles to experience stress.

After all, they are the most optimistic and trusting of the four primary behavior styles. Isolating them, not allowing them to work with others or putting them with people who do not like them can all potentially create stress for the “I”. Since when experiencing stress “I”s tend to be disorganized, you may want to help them organize themselves better at this time. Also, since “I”s typically don’t like data, too many specifics, or keeping records, their disorganization can become even more intense when the high “I” is under pressure. Under extreme stress or pressure, any kind of organization tends to disappear.

As a boss, help the “I” keep as organized as possible. Have the “I” work with others they like and get along with who are organized. Everyone working with the “I” needs to help the “I” organize themselves and their plan of action. The friendlier the approach, the more accepting will be the “I”. Also, help them regain their optimism and uplifting enthusiasm. Remind them of how they were successful when they used their enthusiasm in the past and/or their positivism and humor (if they are the humorous type). Show them that they can success again by doing what was successful for them before. Succeeding will relieve some of the stress they are putting on themselves. As a boss, both personally reward the “I” with fun things as they succeed and reinforce the “I” to reward themselves after successes.

Q *What can colleagues do to help “I”s deal with stress?*

A There are many reasons for stress in the workplace. Here are some thoughts on one particular issue. An “I” may tend to be too optimistic and discount the possibility of negative outcomes. When the negative outcomes occur they may continue to discount them or attempt to look past them. Colleagues should approach the “I” in a friendly, but assertive way and help the “I” look at the reality of the situation. Also, work with the “I” to develop possible alternatives to this current situation. Even though “I”s are not detail oriented themselves, you need to help them be specific with their action plan including action steps and deadlines. Be friendly and personable throughout this process, but have them commit to you as well as themselves that they WILL take the action and commit to when this action will be taken. You can even be a little stern as long as you do it in a friendly way. Hold the “I” accountable for taking action and make sure not to let them talk you into doing it for them

(this is especially important if you are an “S”). Reward them with friendship and fun things as they take actions and succeed. Remind them to reward themselves as well, but only after the success.

Q *What happens when two people in a stressful situation are both “I”s?*

A Let’s assume they are both intense or “high” “I”s, they are both experiencing stress at the same time and they disagree on what should be done because their values or work related passions are different. Beware! Beware! Disorganization collides with disorganization and nothing gets done. But if they get along with each other they will have a good time doing nothing. If they don’t get along with each other, impulsive behavior may occur and they may say something to the other they wish they had not said.

To deal with the stress, approach each in a friendly way and talk with them about the situation. Let them talk out the conflict and/or the stress. Work with them to develop and act on a solution. If you make the solution fun to do, they are more likely to actually take action to implement the solution. Keep in contact with them and reward them with positive comments as they work toward resolving the conflict or stress. Reward them with a positive comment after their success and/or after they reward themselves for their success.

Q *Can I find hints on helping “I”s deal with stress in their DISC reports?*

A Not all DISC or DISC reports are created equal or are the same. Our DISC reports have several sections that help you deal with the assessment taker’s stress. Go to the “Perceptions” page, go to the “Keys to Managing” page and go to the “Checklist for Communicating” page to see specifics on how that person acts under stress and how to manage as well as communicate with them when they are experiencing stress.

Q *How can I learn more about dealing with stress for other major behavior styles?*

A Read our past and future e-Letters on the subject, visit our e-Learning Center™ which has more information that answers this question, and/or invite Dr. A to present a DISC seminar that includes handling stress to your group.

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