

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

Nov. 4, 2008



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.

Managing Stress – Dealing With “D”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. Read on to see how to deal with stress of people with “D” behavior patterns.

Q *What is a “D” and how do they react to stress?*

A “D” stands for Dominant in the DISC behavioral system. The “D” is task oriented and has an external focus when looking at others and their world. They tend to be forceful, decisive, direct, ambitious, independent, confident, and have a desire to win. The more of these behaviors they have and/or the more intense they are with these behaviors, the more of a “D” they are.

“D”s are typically optimistic and believe they can do just about anything they put their mind to do. When they do not succeed or when there is pressure or stress on them while they are working to deliver, they most likely become impatient with themselves and/or others. It is not unlikely that they will become demanding, forceful, and harsh, even more than usual, in an attempt to get their way or “win.”

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

A There are many things that contribute to or cause stress. Here is one thing you may experience with “D”s. “D”s are typically bottom line and results oriented. They also tend to manage time poorly and overstep their authority. When “D”s don’t manage their time wisely or they do overstep their authority, this just puts more stress on their relationship with their boss. As a boss, help the “D” focus on reaching bottom line

results. Have them take “baby steps” getting your approval for actions ahead of time. Succeeding will relieve some of the stress they are putting on themselves. Getting advanced approval from the boss will also decrease the chances the “D” will overstep their authority. If they are successful, the boss needs to give them feedback of their success and allow them to take the credit. If they are not successful, the boss needs to take some of the responsibility since they OK’d the action in the first place.

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

A Again, there are many reasons for stress in the workplace. Here are some thoughts on one particular issue. Colleagues can help by trying to tolerate the “D”s forcefulness and potential harshness. Also, realize the “D” can be a poor listener at times. Be patient with them and try to clarify the situation without them thinking you are “looking down” on them or judging them. Their behavior is not personal against you. It is just the way they deal with stress. Since “D”s like to take responsibility and pride themselves in succeeding, if they don’t succeed help the “D” to better understand the situation so the next time they try, and they will, they will have better information to make a decision and take actions, which they will also do.

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

A Let’s assume they are both intense or “high” “D”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. This could be a dangerous situation. We have the potential for them both being impatient, both not listening well or hearing the other, explosive, and both wanting to “win” by pushing for what they each believe is the best (but of course, different) solution. When this happens it is best

to have them focus on the task itself, while you attempt to decrease their emotional response by pointing out that what is occurring “is not personal” but because of their DISC style. If they understand DISC, this will help calm them and defuse the situation. It is also a good idea to call a “truce” at this time. Allow both people to go to their “corner of the ring” and settle down. Set another time for the two people to again talk with each other about the situation. In the mean time, attempt to get more external data to help them better understand the situation. When they meet again, focus on the data, the task, and reaching a solution both think reasonable. Act on the solution and set a time to re-evaluate the actions taken. Remember, “D”s pride themselves in being able to solve problems, make decisions, take action, and get results. Allowing them to both do all these things and then to point out they can always modify the solution if the current solution hasn’t worked, allows for these things to happen and moves both “D”s ideas and solutions forward.

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

A Not all 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 or go to the “Keys to Managing” page to see how the person acts under stress and how to manage them when in stress. Our Wheel gives you insight on which of these are Ds and manageable by the comments above.

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

A Read our 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 to your group that includes handling stress.