

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.

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

With all of the stressors in today’s workplace, learning what to do to decrease stress when present is exceedingly important. The first and second e-Letters in this four-part series examined how to deal with “D”s and “I”s under stress. To read either of these e-Letters go to our website (www.TheAbelsonGroup.com). To read these and other past e-Letters become a member of our Abelson e-Learning Center™ located on our website and go to the Center’s e-Letter archives section. Read on now to see how to deal with stress of people with “S” behavior patterns.

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

A “S” stands for Steadiness in the DISC behavioral system. The “S” is people oriented and has an internal focus when looking at others and their world. By internal focus we mean they look within at their feelings, their thoughts, and ask themselves “what should I do in this situation.” External focus people look outside themselves, at their environment and others to make judgments and decide on courses of action. Some behavioral tendencies of an “S” include patience, good listener, stable, predictable, steady, slow to change, accommodating to others, and indirect communicator. The more of these behaviors they have and/or the more intense they are with these behaviors, the more they are an “S”.

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

A When an “S” is stressed they tend to become possessive. They may become possessive of their thoughts and feelings, not sharing them. They also may not want to share their perception of their current situation or their perception of what is occurring in their environment. They may even decide not to share their comments or suggestions on how to work with or relate with others, something they usually share and take pride in doing. In these cases they have a tendency to keep to themselves. In

other situations they may become possessive of their relationships, not willing to share their friends or others of importance to them with others. They therefore may want other’s attention and feel upset if they do not get that attention.

Bosses can attempt to help the “S” deal with stress by helping them feel more secure, accepted, and part of things. They can also attempt to get the “S” to communicate more, so the “S” can feel more connected with others and part of what is currently happening with people close to them. Additionally, the boss can help the “S” by reducing whatever is causing that pressure or stress. For example, “S”s prefer doing one or a few things well and not being overloaded with a number of tasks or chores. Bosses who may be “D”s, on the other hand, prosper when they have many tasks all occurring at the same time. The “D” boss may share this burden with the assistant who is an “S” assuming the “S” will be able to easily handle the multiple tasks simultaneously. Bosses, if you are a “D” please don’t overload your “S” assistant with multiple tasks. It just increases their stress and decreases their efficiency and effectiveness. Give the “S” assistant fewer tasks until they competently handle the few tasks already assigned to them. Then give them the next task or two. This approach will decrease the “S”s stress and increase their efficiency and effectiveness. When “D”s are experiencing pressure or stress they tend to find more to do and may dump part of those new tasks on others. This is NOT the way to an “S”s heart, or their competence.

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

Colleagues can do some of the very same things that the boss does. For example, colleagues and bosses can help the “S” by taking some of their tasks or by helping the “S” divide the tasks into smaller and more easily done tasks. Colleagues and bosses can also help the “S” feel more at ease by not being too confrontational with the “S”, by slowing down the speed things are changing for the “S”, and/or by helping the “S” see things as being more predictable and/or stable. Trusting the “S”, being supportive of their ideas, and interacting with them non-emotionally will all bring greater stability to the “S”s life

and reduce their stress. The outcome is the “S” feels better about their situation and can better manage themselves and their environment.

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

A When two people are both “S”s they tend to be overly possessive on numerous dimensions. They also may tend to withdraw from the situation and not return until they feel more comfortable or secure in the situation. When two “S” both experience stress, don’t be surprised if 1) communication decreases, 2) if other tasks do not get done because both “S”s feel overwhelmed and either or both “S”s 3) avoid or minimize the importance of taking action on the situation and do little. In these situations it is helpful to not criticize the “S” or put pressure on them to get the job done. Instead, help the “S” or “S”s feel more secure or as their boss or colleague use one or more of the techniques mentioned in the paragraphs above to help the “S” feel more at ease and in control.

Q *Can I find hints on helping “S”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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