

BACK-UP BEHAVIORS

Within each individual there is a point where tension increases until it results in stress. People in stress seek to reduce it any way possible, frequently by verbally or psychologically dumping it on the person “responsible” for the tension. Most dumping behaviors are unproductive, and can be destructive to the relationship at hand.

When tension increases, each behavioral style tends to manifest symptoms and respond to tension in ways (sometimes immature ways) that characterize that behavioral style. Each style has its own unproductive but characteristic manner of “dumping” stress on another.

The Steady Style who resorts to back-up behavior generally **gives in** or “**submits.**” The purpose is to avoid conflict at all cost. Although the Steady Style’s back-up behavior on the surface may appear to be a “go-along” attitude, it is not. Resentment builds due to the high tension level, and the subsequent interactions are likely to be filled with distrust and tension.

The Conscientious Styles back-up behavior takes the form of **withdrawal** from the other person or the situation. Being less assertive in nature, a Conscientious Style would rather flee from the unpleasant relationship than deal with it outright. Thus, the Conscientious Style typically seeks more and more information and wants to think it over as a means of avoiding the other person and the stressful situation.

Under stress, the Dominant Styles tends to become **overbearing, pushy, uncompromising, and dictatorial.** It’s an outgrowth of the Dominant Style. When the Dominant Style is in back-up behavior, he or she tries to control anyone or anything that gets in his or her way.

As a rule, an Influencing Style resorts to back-up behavior by **verbally attacking the person who causes the stress.** And if you have an Influencing Style on the attack, what tends to be your reaction? Most people react with increased tension of their own which, at some point, can push them into stress too. At this point, the relationship has all but ended.

THE GOOD NEWS

Fortunately, our understanding of behavioral Styles and communications lets us recognize back-up behavior for what it is. Rather than *reacting* to that behavior in ways that might make matters worse, we can **respond** to the behaviors with appropriate strategies that will reduce relationship tension before it has a chance to become significant stress.

If you are dealing with a style that moves fast, you move fast. If an individual is more comfortable taking time to get to know people, allow more time for the appointment and avoid looking at your watch. Move at **his** or **her** pace and priority, not yours. When you understand someone’s behavioral style needs, you can help create a climate of good chemistry and mutual trust. As the trust develops and strengthens, the other person—a co-worker, a client or a friend—will begin to tell you what he or she really needs from the relationship. There will be no contests or testing one another. The relationship will become more productive. As you develop better personal interaction, you will also feel more confident.

For our purposes, **tension management** involves meeting the behavioral needs of the people in a relationship—specifically those needs dictated by their behavioral Styles. In short, you must treat them the way they want to be treated; exercise **The DISC Platinum Rule.**

BEHAVIOR UNDER STRESS

When tension is high, each style tends to manifest symptoms of behavioral stress, often called “back-up” behavior. Often immature, this behavior results from a need to reduce tension immediately. In dealing with people under stress, you can reduce tension by providing what they most need.

THE CONSCIENTIOUS STYLE: WILL WITHDRAW

EXAMPLE of typical response to stressful situation:

“I can’t help you any further. Do what you want.”

MAY APPEAR

- Over-reliant on data and documentation
- Resistant to change
- Slow to act
- Slow to begin work
- Unable to meet deadlines
- Unimaginative
- Withdrawn
- Resentful

NEEDS

- Guarantees that they’re right
- Understanding of principles and details
- Slow pace for “processing” information
- Accuracy

THE DOMINANT STYLE: WILL DICTATE

EXAMPLE of typical response to stressful situation:

“If you can’t stand the heat, get out of the kitchen.”

MAY APPEAR

- Restless
- Critical
- Blunt
- Intrusive
- Uncooperative
- Irritable
- Aggressive
- Pushy

NEEDS

- Control of situation and self
- Tangible evidence of progress
- Fast pace for moving toward goals
- Accomplishments

THE STEADY STYLE: WILL SUBMIT

EXAMPLE of typical response to stressful situation:

“Okay, if that’s the way you must have it, we’ll try it.”

MAY APPEAR

- Wishy-Washy
- Submissive
- Passive
- Dependent
- Hesitant
- Defensive
- Indecisive

NEEDS

- Reassurances that they’re liked
- Personal assurance
- Slow pace for comfort and security
- Relationships

THE INFLUENCING STYLE: WILL DISREGARD

EXAMPLE of typical response to stressful situation:

“Hey, let’s move on to something more positive!”

MAY APPEAR

- Manipulative
- Overeager
- Impulsive
- Inconsistent
- Superficial
- Unrealistic
- Wasteful of time

NEEDS

- To get credit
- Action and interaction
- Quick pace for stimulation and excitement
- Prestige