

What's Your Style Under Stress?

Stressed? Who, me? Never! When stakes are high, emotions run strong, and opinions differ, we all struggle to stay cool. We often either clam up and hope the conflict will go away, or we blow up and damage trust and respect. Take this assessment and find out how well you communicate when it matters most.

ASSESSMENT INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Identify a Relationship.** Before you begin, think of a relationship you want to explore—with your boss, co-worker, direct report, friend, or family member.
- 2. Identify a Circumstance.** Next, think of a tough disagreement you've had or continue to have—one where you feel frustrated or irritated, or that doesn't get resolved to your satisfaction.
- 3. Apply.** With the relationship and disagreement in mind, respond to the statements on the reverse side.

Style Under Stress Score

Please fill out the score sheets in Figures 1 and 2. Each domain contains two checkboxes corresponding to two questions on the test. Give yourself a tick mark for any question you answered with a "T." If you answered "F," leave the tick box empty. Add up the total number of tick marks you have under Silence and the total you have under Violence in Figure 1 and enter the totals in the respective Silence and Violence boxes at the top of the columns. Do the same for the Dialogue Skill boxes in Figure 2. For example, count how many items you ticked in "Choose Your Topic" and enter that number in the box for that skill.

What Your Score Means

Your Style Under Stress score (Figure 1) will show you which forms of silence or violence you turn to most often. Your silence and violence scores give you a measure of how frequently you fall into these less-than-perfect strategies. It's actually possible to score high in both. A medium or high score (one or two checked boxes per domain) means you sometimes or frequently use this technique.

Ch 3: Choose Your Topic ☐ 13 (T) ☐ 14 (T) ☐	Ch 8: STATE My Path ☐ 23 (T) ☐ 24 (T) ☐
Ch 4: Start with Heart ☐ 15 (T) ☐ 16 (T) ☐	Ch 9: Explore Others' Paths ☐ 25 (T) ☐ 26 (T) ☐
Ch 5: Master My Stories ☐ 17 (T) ☐ 18 (T) ☐	Ch 10: Retake Your Pen ☐ 27 (T) ☐ 28 (T) ☐
Ch 6: Learn to Look ☐ 19 (T) ☐ 20 (T) ☐	Ch 11: Move to Action ☐ 29 (T) ☐ 30 (T) ☐
Ch 7: Make It Safe ☐ 21 (T) ☐ 22 (T) ☐	

Figure 2

SILENCE ☐	VIOLENCE ☐
Masking ☐ 1 (T) ☐ 2 (T)	Controlling ☐ 7 (T) ☐ 8 (T)
Avoiding ☐ 3 (T) ☐ 4 (T)	Labeling ☐ 9 (T) ☐ 10 (T)
Withdrawing ☐ 5 (T) ☐ 6 (T)	Attacking ☐ 11 (T) ☐ 12 (T)

Figure 1

Your Dialogue Skills score (Figure 2) is organized by concept and chapter so you can decide which chapters in the *Crucial Conversations* book might benefit you the most. The nine domains reflect your skills in each of the corresponding skill chapters. If you score zero, you're doing well in this area—at least in the scenarios you had in mind when you answered the questions. Note that your answers might be different if you thought about a more challenging situation. If you score one or two, you may want to pay special attention to those chapters.

Your score doesn't represent an unalterable character trait. It's merely a measure of your behavior under the circumstances you thought about when you answered the questions. And no matter your score, you can change that.

Tip: Once you've taken the test yourself, you might want to ask people who know you well to take it with you in mind. Does your assessment of your Style Under Stress match how others see you? If not, pay attention to the discrepancies and watch for what others are seeing. Learning to be a good self-monitor may take some time.



1. Rather than tell people exactly what I think, sometimes I rely on jokes, sarcasm, or snide remarks to let them know I'm frustrated.
☐ True ☐ False
2. When I've got something tough to bring up, I understate it rather than share my full opinion.
☐ True ☐ False
3. Sometimes when people bring up a touchy issue, I try to change the subject.
☐ True ☐ False
4. When it comes to dealing with difficult subjects, sometimes I steer the conversation to safer issues rather than address what really concerns me.
☐ True ☐ False
5. At times I avoid situations that might bring me into contact with people I'm having problems with.
☐ True ☐ False
6. I put off getting back to people sometimes because I'm uncomfortable dealing with them.
☐ True ☐ False
7. In order to get my point across, I sometimes exaggerate my side of the argument.
☐ True ☐ False
8. If I seem to be losing control of a conversation, I sometimes cut people off or change the subject to something that works better for me.
☐ True ☐ False
9. I suspect others walk away from conversations with me at times feeling belittled or hurt.
☐ True ☐ False
10. When I'm stunned by a comment, sometimes I say things that others might take as forceful or attacking—comments such as "Give me a break!" or "That's ridiculous!"
☐ True ☐ False
11. Sometimes when things get heated, I move from arguing against others' points to saying things that might hurt them personally.
☐ True ☐ False
12. When I feel threatened or hurt I sometimes behave in ways that appear spiteful or vengeful.
☐ True ☐ False
13. I sometimes find myself having the same conversation with the same person multiple times.
☐ True ☐ False
14. At times I walk away from conversations with an agreement that I don't think really solves the problem.
☐ True ☐ False
15. When I'm discussing an important topic with others, sometimes I move from trying to make my point to trying to win the battle.
☐ True ☐ False

16. Sometimes I decide that it's better to keep the peace than share my views.
☐ True ☐ False
17. When talking about sensitive subjects, my emotions often get the best of me.
☐ True ☐ False
18. I sometimes walk away from conversations rehashing the reasons I'm right and others are wrong.
☐ True ☐ False
19. In the middle of a tough conversation, I often get so caught up in arguments that I don't see how I'm coming across to others.
☐ True ☐ False
20. When conversations start to deteriorate, I find it hard to figure out what's going wrong and get it back on track.
☐ True ☐ False
21. When I finally say what I really think, I tend to do so in a way that makes others feel defensive.
☐ True ☐ False
22. I often struggle to decide whether it's more important to say what I think or preserve the relationship.
☐ True ☐ False
23. Sometimes when I feel strongly about something, I say it in a way that others tend to resist.
☐ True ☐ False
24. When I am very confident of my opinion, I don't like it when others push back.
☐ True ☐ False
25. I'm often unsure of how to help others open up about things they are reluctant to share.
☐ True ☐ False
26. I spend more of my energy thinking about how to get my point across than worrying about how to help others express theirs.
☐ True ☐ False
27. I spend lots of time feeling very anxious when I'm facing a conversation where I think I might get tough feedback.
☐ True ☐ False
28. I can feel hurt and angry for a long time after a conversation where others said hurtful things to me.
☐ True ☐ False
29. I often have problems with people failing to do what we agreed to, and then the burden is on me to bring it up again.
☐ True ☐ False
30. When resolving tough things, we sometimes have clashing expectations about how the decision will be made, or even about what we agreed to when we talked.
☐ True ☐ False

