

## Interaction Styles: Communicating with Confidence and Charisma

Getting on well with other people and having good relationships is, for most people, the most important thing in their lives and gives them meaning and a sense of purpose. There is convincing evidence that “our relationships with other people matter, and matter more than anything else in the world”<sup>1</sup>. When our relationships are poor, we experience loneliness, distress and ill health. Good relationships are the basis for well-being and fulfilment.

But getting on well with other people at work and at home can be difficult – misunderstandings and conflicts arise, and we don’t get the results we want. Worse than that, we may get results that we definitely don’t want! We are not always aware of how we come across to others or the impact of our behaviour on them and we aren’t always very good at picking up cues from other people about what might be important to them or what is driving their behaviour so that we can respond appropriately. We need to be more emotionally intelligent, but recent findings in neuroscience have shown that perception of other people is prone to distortion and error and that even our knowledge of ourselves isn’t always accurate.

This is where knowledge of Interaction Styles can be a practical help. Interaction Styles is a tool for being emotionally intelligent in the moment. Knowing about the four Styles makes us more self-aware and aware of others, and provides practical guidance on how to adapt our behaviour to connect with others and get better outcomes for everyone.

Emotionally intelligent behaviour is underpinned by attitudes of positive self-regard and positive regard for others<sup>2</sup>. This is about our basic social needs<sup>3</sup> to feel good about ourselves and to feel that we are:

- Significant ie that we matter to others
- Competent ie that we are respected
- Likeable ie that others like us

We have corresponding fears that can affect our behaviour:

- Fear of being excluded if we are not important to others
- Fear of being humiliated if we fail
- Fear of being rejected if others don’t like us

These are fundamental fears and the brain experiences them as acutely as if they were threats to our physical survival, and the flight or fight response can activate<sup>4</sup>.

A charismatic person allays these fears by making people feel that they matter, that they are worthy of respect and that they are liked. So, you can develop charisma – the ability to make other people feel good<sup>5</sup> - by behaving in ways that enable others to feel that they are significant, competent and likeable, as well as maintaining your own self-esteem by believing the same of yourself. If you don’t have self-esteem, you will feel anxiety and self-doubt, which will prevent you from coming across

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<sup>1</sup> Vaillant, G, (2012) *Triumphs of Experience: the Men of the Harvard Grant Study*

<sup>2</sup> Maddocks, J. (2014) *Emotional Intelligence at Work – how to make change stick*

<sup>3</sup> Schutz, W (1958) *FIRO: a three dimensional theory of interpersonal behaviour*

<sup>4</sup> Burnett, D (2016) *The Idiot Brain: a neuroscientist explains what your head is really up to*

<sup>5</sup> Olivia Fox Cabane (2012) *The Charisma Myth: master the art of personal magnetism*

confidently. If other people don't matter to you, if you don't respect or like them, then this will affect how you behave towards them and the impact will not be charismatic! Holding healthy beliefs that we and the person with whom we are communicating are significant, competent and likeable, is an essential starting point for communicating with confidence and charisma.

**Here are some tips on how to make other people feel good:**

<b>Making people feel significant</b>
Build rapport, show that they matter, listen, invite them to participate, include them, make eye contact, pay attention to them, don't interrupt them, make them feel special.
<b>Making people feel competent</b>
Give praise, avoid criticism, don't make them feel they are wrong, ask their opinion, encourage them, don't mock them.
<b>Making people feel likeable</b>
Express liking through your body posture, have an open and approachable manner, smile, soften your eyes, look friendly, express concern for their concerns, show empathy, ask them about themselves, feel goodwill towards them.

To take charismatic and confident communication a stage further, it is useful to know what behaviours might trigger positive emotions and make people of each Interaction Style feel good. Having this awareness of yourself and others helps you to get into a resourceful, confident state and enables you to adapt your style to communicate with charisma.

The workshop at the Type Academy in Maidenhead on 29<sup>th</sup> September will explore the do's and don'ts of communicating with people of each style - what triggers their positive (and negative) emotions during interactions - and how you can use the strengths of your style to become a more charismatic and confident communicator.