

How Interaction Styles™ Helps You to Get On with Anyone

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”ⁱ 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 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 errorⁱⁱ and that even our knowledge of ourselves isn’t always accurate.

This is where knowledge of Interaction Stylesⁱⁱⁱ can be a practical help. Interaction Styles is **a tool for being emotionally intelligent in the moment**. Knowing about the four Styles – their aims, drives, core beliefs, talents and stressors - makes us more self-aware and aware of others, and provides practical guidance on how to shift our communication and energy to connect with others and get better outcomes for everyone. It gives us more chance of making accurate inferences from other people’s behaviour as well as giving us more insight into our own, and we can respond more appropriately.

In particular, Interaction Styles helps us **manage our emotions when we interact with others** - it helps us see the positive intention behind someone’s behaviour, even when it has a negative impact on us and this in turn means we can manage our responses to avoid escalating conflict. For example:

- a colleague who comes across as impatient and demanding, might have the positive intention of getting quick achievable results
- someone who appears slow and inflexible might want to ensure there is a carefully thought-through plan
- someone who seems to be indecisive and unassertive may be trying to get the best possible result
- and someone who comes across as flustered and frantic, may be attempting to generate enthusiasm.

We tend to judge others by their impact on us, but Interaction Styles enables us to make allowances and see beyond that to their positive intention - this can only be good for building better relationships with our colleagues, friends and family.

ⁱ Vaillant, G, (2012) Triumphs of Experience: the Men of the Harvard Grant Study

ⁱⁱ Eagleman, D (2015) The Brain: the Story of You

ⁱⁱⁱ Linda Berens is the creator of the Interaction Styles model – see www.interstrength.org