

A guide to effective communication in a palliative care setting

**D.I.S.C**

Direct – Influencing – Stabilising – Conscientious

as a communication tool



**BEHAVIOURAL STYLE QUESTIONNAIRE**

Check each statement that you believe is a fair representation of yourself

 **Total: \_\_\_\_\_\_ (Box 1)**

[ ]  Gives priority to details and organisation

[ ]  Sets high standards

[ ]  Approaches tasks and people with steadiness

[ ]  Enjoys research and analysis

[ ]  Prefers operating within guidelines

[ ]  Completes tasks thoroughly

[ ]  Focuses attention on immediate task

[ ]  Likes accuracy

[ ]  Makes decisions on thorough basis

[ ]  Values standard procedures highly

[ ]  Approaches work systematically

[ ]  Likes to plan for change

People have a variety of preferred and habitual ways of behaving and responding. When communication is difficult, it can be helpful to tailor your approach to suit others’ preferences and habit. Within any behavioural style, people can be both skilled at getting the job done and getting along with others. Once aware of areas needing improvement, people can often develop valuable new skills. Which behavioural style pertains to you?

**About D.I.S.C – Direct, Influencing, Stabilising, Conscientious**

[ ]  Gives priority to supporting others

[ ]  Enjoys assisting others

[ ]  Approaches people and tasks with quiet and caution

[ ]  Have difficulty saying no

[ ]  Values co-operation over competition

[ ]  Eager to get on with others and willing to show loyalty

[ ]  Calms excited people

[ ]  Listens well/attentively

[ ]  Prefers others to take the lead

[ ]  Gives priority to secure relationships and arrangements

[ ]  Prefers steady not sudden change **Total: \_\_\_\_\_\_ (Box 3)**

[ ]  Gives priority to achieving results

[ ]  Seeks challenges

[ ]  Approaches tasks and people with clear goals

[ ]  Is willing to confront

[ ]  Makes decisions easily

[ ]  Is keen to process

[ ]  Feels a sense of urgency

[ ]  Acts with authority

[ ]  Likes to take the lead

[ ]  Enjoys solving problems

[ ]  Questions the current position **Total: \_\_\_\_\_\_ (Box 2)**

[ ]  Takes action to bring about change

Add up the number of ticks in each box

[ ]  Gives priority to creating a friendly environment

[ ]  Likes an informal style

[ ]  Approaches people and tasks with energy

[ ]  Important to enjoy oneself

[ ]  Rates creativity highly

[ ]  Prefers broad approach to details

[ ]  Likes participating in groups

[ ]  Creates a motivational environment

[ ]  Acts on impulse

[ ]  Willing to express feelings

[ ]  Enjoys discussing possibilities

[ ]  Keen to promote change **Total: \_\_\_\_\_ (Box 4)**

If you have the highest number of ticks in **BOX 1** you are – **CONSCIENTIOUS STYLE**

If you have the highest number of ticks in **BOX 2** you are – **DIRECT STYLE**

If you have the highest number of ticks in **BOX 3** you are – **STABILISING STYLE**

If you have the highest number of ticks in **BOX 4** you are – **INFLUENCING STYLE**

**What is known about your style?**

**FEARS**

* Disapproval
* Stagnation
* Detailed work

**INFLUENCING**

**BEHAVIOURS**

* Outgoing
* Leads by enthusing others
* Prefers a global approach
* Steers away from details
* Acts on impulse
* Keen to promote change

**NEEDS**

* Change
* Acknowledgement
* New trends and ideas

**FEARS**

* Isolation
* Standing out as better or worse
* Unplanned challenges

**STABILISING**

**BEHAVIOURS**

* Reserved
* Works well in a team
* Accommodates others
* Maintains current position
* Recovers slowly from hurt
* Prefers steady rather than sudden change

**NEEDS**

* Security
* Acceptance
* Teamwork

**CONSCIENTIOUS**

**BEHAVIOURS**

* Reserved
* Systematic
* Pays attention to detail
* Focuses attention on immediate task
* Likes clear guidelines
* Likes to plan for change

**NEEDS**

* High standards
* Appreciation
* Quality work

**FEARS**

* Criticism of work
* Imperfection
* Not having things adequately explained

**DIRECT**

**BEHAVIOURS**

* Outgoing
* Challenges
* Keen to get things done
* Resists authority
* Takes action to bring about change
* Likes to have control

**NEEDS**

* Results
* Recognition
* Challenges
* Control

**FEARS**

* Challenges to their authority
* Lack of results from others

EXTROVERTED

INTROVERTED

EXTROVERTED

INTROVERTED

PEOPLE ORIENTED

PEOPLE ORIENTED

TASK ORIENTED

TASK ORIENTED



**Tips on how to communicate with the designated D.I.S.C. style**

**STABILISING**

Generally, quietly spoken, a little shy but friendly, approachable. Give them space, don’t interrupt.

**Use:**

How do you feel about? It would be helpful, I need, I’d be grateful if, would you mind assisting us, it’s fair to all, safe, gentle, quiet, modest, faithful, considerate, most people.

**Don’t use:**

Do this, next, now, that emotional rubbish, you could be the first person to.

**CONSCIENTIOUS**

They speak thoughtfully, precisely with pauses for thinking. Don’t interrupt.

**Use:**

Its logical, reasonable, clear, precise, balanced, guarantee, specifically, judgement, critical, exactly, factual, qualified, professional, just, well thought out, planned, detailed, qualify, discerning.

**Don’t use:**

Creative, risky, daring, generally, colourful, make it up, chaotic, experimental, fun, innovative, popular.

**DIRECT**

They come to the point, in short, sharp sentences. They think and respond fast and have an inpatient style. Don’t bother with niceties or tell them long stories.

**Use:**

Yes, OK, now, I’ll do this, will that be OK, True, solid, effective, bottom line, ball park figure, ASAP, We’ll get right onto it, deadline, be first, leading, initiate, get cracking, I’ll handle it, can do.

**Don’t use:**

I’ll investigate it, we’ll have to discuss it, you must understand, I’ll let you know, this need a consensus decision, you’ll have to be patient.

**INFLUENCING**

Bubbly speaker, friendly, informal, they use creative language. You can talk over them and they will join in. Don’t be critical. They’re optimists.

**Use:**

Positive, bright idea, innovative, fresh, easy, how do you see it, Here are your choices, that’s easy, big picture, the latest, it’ll be fun, enjoy it.

**Don’t use:**

No way, show me your fingers, tried and true, traditional, it’s always been like that, I’m only doing my job.

**Negotiation Styles**

Dealing with difficult conversations, resolving conflict, making decisions, solving problems, all require negotiation.

This guide may help you understand your own negotiation style and those of others and what you may be able to do to increase your effectiveness

**CONSCIENTIOUS**

**At worst:**

* Fanatic
* Cautious
* Machine like

**At best:**

* Discriminating
* Planner
* Evaluative

**To improve:**

* Visioning
* Flexibility
* Consider feeling of others
* Knowing when to break rules

**DIRECT**

**At worst:**

* Fighter
* Dominant
* Arrogant

**At best:**

* Persistent
* Leader
* Confident

**To improve:**

* Include the team
* Eliciting other’s opinions
* Listening
* Delegating

**INFLUENCING**

**At worst:**

* Impulsive
* Verbose
* Dis-organised

**At best:**

* Persistent
* Leader
* Confident

**To improve:**

* Think first
* Be precise
* Hear feedback on proposals
* Be practical

**STABILISING**

**At worst:**

* Accommodator
* Hesitant
* Fence sitter

**At best:**

* Facilitator
* Patient
* Diplomatic

**To improve:**

* Assertiveness
* Self-assurance
* Risk taking
* Confidence

You will note your own D.I.S.C style along with those of colleagues and others.

The people we struggle to communicate with are usually those least like ourselves. For example, Direct (Extroverted Task) people can fail to understand Stabiliser (Introverted people) and Conscientious (Introverted Task) people can misunderstand the Influencer (Extroverted people).

Many things influence our communication. However, it has been shown to be helpful for many people to gain understanding of their own personality preference and those of other people they work with or communicate alongside.

Reference:

Grains Research & Development Corporation – A guide to Communication for Farm Families. 2011, pp 42-46