

The Si Style – An Everything DiSC® Podcast

Narrator: The following podcast by Dr. Mark Scullard describes the Si style. It is an Everything DiSC® production brought to you by Wiley.

Dr. Mark Scullard: All right, so we're going to spend some time talking about the Si style, and if you do have this style, I think what you'll find is that, you know, roughly 70, 80 percent of what we're going to talk about will—will fit for you. You know, you know, some of it will be spot on and, you know, then there's going to be parts that are like, yeah, that's not really me. Um, you know, there might be some parts are like, well, that was me when I was younger.

But I think the value here is more about listening for those insights that really help you make sense of your past experiences or really help you see your thought processes and your habits in a new light. So we're going to take a look at all these different characteristics that are associated with the Si style, uh, things like being welcoming and trusting, easygoing, patient. And as we talk about these things, one of the things that we're going to find is that there are some underlying themes that really tie them together. You know, actually what I would kind of call core psychological needs, like, for instance, you know, some people have a really strong need to be in charge or a really strong need to get attention or, you know, a really strong need to demonstrate their competence, you know. Some people have a, you know, a really strong need to avoid making mistakes.

For the Si style, it's a different set of needs and, you know, and one of the major ones is this strong need for harmony, where I can feel that, you know, everybody's happy with one another, you know, we're all on good terms, no one's mad at me, you know, I haven't upset anyone or disappointed anyone, all right. And then, you know, a second core need, which, you know, it's not completely unrelated, is this need for connection.

And, you know, most people, most human beings, we're—we're often called social creatures, right, we all have this need to be connected to other people.

But for the Si or the iS style, this need is particularly pronounced, you know, this is one of the kind of the core things that gives their lives meaning. And because it's so valuable, threats to this sense of connection are going to feel particularly gut-wrenching, you know, or even scary. And, you know, when things feel scary, it really does—it affects our behaviors in a particularly powerful way. And then there's this final need, which is the need for acceptance, you know. And again, this is something that everyone needs. But I think it's particularly important for the Si or iS styles.

And sometimes, this takes the form of kind of an underlying assumption that, you know, my value, at least in part, it really comes from belonging to a community, you know, whatever that community is, even if this is a more unconscious belief, which it really does tend to be. And so, as a result, being accepted feels really important to me, and, you know, I'm going to go out of my way to make sure that my belonging isn't jeopardized in any way. So, you know, those three themes, you know, we're going to see them kind of pop up again and again through the discussion, you know, even if those things are more subtle, you know.

There's the need for harmony, the need for connection, and then the need for acceptance. And one of the thing that all of these needs converge on is this very positive, very accepting outlook. You know, people with this style tend to have a very open posture towards life. They, you know, they take things as they come and they accept new circumstances. They have a kind of a much more fluid relationship with the world than the average person, you know, just trusting that letting people in or showing them true—their true selves, that that's not going to be harmful, that, you know, that's not going to lead to hurt. You know, they're—they're much more likely to allow themselves to be vulnerable.

Now, you know, I think in kind of maybe a less mature version of this style, there's kind of this almost naive, you know, even if it's pleasant, kind of a naive expectation sometimes that the world is such a good place that, you know, it'll just take care of my needs with really little stress on my part, you know? But again, I think that's kind of among maybe, uh, you know, less mature people with this style, and it's probably not going to be true for the majority of people with it.

And one of the things that I think is really illuminating, though, is if you contrast this with the opposite side of the Everything DiSC® circle. You know, that's where we find people who are inherently more skeptical in nature, you know, and as a result of this skepticism, there's often more guardedness there, you know, and there are good things and there are bad things about, you know, this more tough minded mentality. And on the positive side, they often have an easier time really being like, for instance, very firm with people compared to the Si style. You know, they'll dig their heels in in the face of adversity and just, you know, keep pushing and, you know, pushing back. Uh, and, you know, because there's this expectation that life is really tough and, you know, life is going to require a fight, there's kind of this entrenched determination and resilience to just kind of stick with it rather than that instinct to kind of more go with the flow.

Now, on the other hand, there's kind of—you take a look at the kind of the downside of this more guarded disposition, um. And I think a lot of these examples come in the more interpersonal world, right. But let's say, for instance, in a situation where someone is experiencing rejection or someone's experiencing critical feedback from someone. Now, for most people, you know, regardless of where you fall on the DiSC® map, the reaction to rejection, you know, it's going to feel hurt—you know, you're going to feel insecure.

For people who are more guarded—and again, I'm talking about people are—who are on the opposite side of the DiSC map from the Si style—uh, for those more guarded people, these feelings—like, you know, things like hurt and insecurity—these emotions just feel way too vulnerable. They feel way too soft, you know, they leave me exposed

in this tough world. And so my mind really doesn't let me experience them as directly. Instead, I'm much more likely to kind of cover them up and—and feel anger or resentment or disgust, you know. These are more empowering emotions, you know. People don't see these emotions as weak. But what they do do is they kind of cover up the hurt. They, you know, they make it extremely difficult for a person to understand what their genuine reaction was to the situation.

And as a result, their judgment in how to fix the problem is actually kind of clouded and oftentimes maladaptive. So, conversely, I think this is an area of strength for the Si style, you know, even though it might not necessarily always feel like a strength, right. They're more likely to experience hurt as hurt rather than the covered up version, you know, more in touch with the insecurities that are actually being provoked in the situation. And as a result, there's much more of an opportunity to—for them to be honest with themselves, you know. And—and that's a more healthy reaction.

Now, there is kind of a downside to that. I think a less healthy temptation is to just kind of because you know it's going to hurt, is to try to avoid the negative stuff to begin with. And so I'm in a situation, you know, and I sense, hey, there's a high potential for rejection or criticism. And if that happens, it's really going to hurt like hell, you know, and because I experience hurt so directly. So my unhealthy reaction, which, it's unhealthy but it makes a lot of sense, is to just keep away from all that negativity, kind of gloss it over and, you know, to take myself out of a situation where there's really any potential for that raw hurt, because, again, I feel it more directly than the average person.

My defense mechanisms aren't as primed to distort the information when it happens, kind of to—to twist it in a way that makes it more palatable for my ego, you know. Instead, my defense mechanism is to really just avoid the negative to begin with. So let's take that and say, you know, look at it in a work context, uh, you know, the Si style has this very positive, welcoming presence, but at the same time, the tasks that require more criticism or negativity, those are ones that kind of tend to come less naturally. For

instance, let's say in a meeting, when someone has a bad idea—we've all been in a meeting where someone had a bad idea—and rejecting that idea outright, for this style, it just feels so wrong because my instinct is to support and build up people, you know, and this tiny little act of rejection, it feels like a violation of a really core value that I hold, you know. I never want to be the person who, you know, crushes someone else's passions.

So, you know, so what do I do? You know? Well, maybe I hedge, or maybe I redirect the conversation to talk about something positive I see in the idea. But, you know, really, when you step back, I mean, that is a—a pretty inefficient way to approach this situation. You know, if I find a roundabout way to kind of steer the group's direction away from a bad idea, I mean, that's just kind of muddy communication. That bad idea the other person had, that idea gets to linger on in the background.

And, you know, people are unclear about the status of the idea, you know, are, well, are we continuing in that direction? Is—are we considering that to be a good idea? Is that something we need to develop more or should we just forget about it? Because, you know, because I didn't want to be that direct. And that's a real danger, you know. And I think a slightly different danger is because I want other people to succeed so much, I really will hunt down the value in their idea or their work and focus on that—that—that good part, you know, because when someone says "I have a great idea!", I'm really, really hoping that that idea is as good as they say, you know, compared to other people who might be, maybe, might be indifferent when someone says, "I have a great idea", or might even actually be very naturally skeptical when someone says they have a good idea.

So when that other person's, you know, quote, "great idea" turns out to be problematic, I'm kind of faced with this kind of mini crisis. You know, I'm immediately put in a position that I hate being in where I have to choose between, on the one hand, letting this bad idea live on or potentially hurting someone's feelings. And, you know, and part of that

stress that I'm doing is figuring out in my head the kind of the dance that I'm going to have to do to achieve both of those things. You know, and it really does, it feels like walking a tightrope. It's—it's very tense.

In fact, we have kind of a—a 360 assessment tool where leaders get feedback from their managers, their direct reports, and their peers, and the area where people with the Si and iS styles, where they get the lowest ratings is about speaking up about problems, telling people when some sort of course correction is needed, you know, when there's a problem with their work, you know. Actually and—and just by the way, as an aside, you know, leaders with the Si and iS styles, they do, as leaders, kind of tend to get the highest overall ratings, right. So that is great, you know, and—and we're going to look at some of those areas in a minute where, um, they get really high marks.

But, you know, all of the styles really do have their challenges. And so out of, you know, 24 different leadership behaviors, the one that they were the lowest on was speaking up about problems. And I think, you know, even though part of it is actually about saying something about problems, I think there is also another part of this, which is really about seeing the problem in the first place or perhaps even kind of recognizing the intensity of the problem. I—I think particularly younger people with this style can sometimes be perceived as maybe even, uh, you know, a little naive or as a little green because, you know, because of their ideals and their more kind of chipper attitudes and their inclination to kind of see the best in everyone.

When someone has a drastically different opinion than they do, you know, this—people with a style, they're usually open to saying, well, hey, you know, I mean, maybe—maybe it's actually me. Maybe I'm the one who's mistaken, you know, maybe I should be the one who reconsiders my opinion. In fact, the—the portion of the Everything DiSC[®] map that's on the exact opposite side of this style, um, that's the portion of the map that's identified as being very stubborn and strong-willed. That's the exact opposite

of the style we're talking about here. And, you know, and so being accepting, you know, it does open a person up a little bit to being manipulated or taken advantage of.

And part of this is about a choice in values. Really, would—would I rather err on the side of trusting someone who I shouldn't or would I rather err on the side of doubting someone that I should trust. You know, and by and large, people with the Si style would rather make the mistake of being taken in too easily than to assume the worst about people. Whereas for other people, you know, because of their pride, the choice is clear for them. You know, under no circumstances do I ever want to look foolish, you know. I'd much rather be seen as cold and uncaring than ever be seen as a sucker.

And so, related to this, you know, the Si style, they tend to be very patient with people and actually, you know, even—sometimes even more patient with people than they should be, giving people too many chances or, you know, they learn to live with delays and obstacles without showing too much frustration. So as a leader, for instance, you know, this can earn them very high marks for being receptive and being open to input and being supportive of other people. But it also tends to earn them lower marks for creating momentum and for getting results, you know.

And—and again, recall those core needs that we were talking about at the beginning. The priority is put on kind of acceptance and connectedness and harmony, all right. These priorities are much more about people than they are about getting results. In fact, oftentimes when there is a strong focus on results within this style, it's because they don't want to disappoint or anger other people. The focus is still very much on relationships, you know, it's—it's not that nagging sense of internal pressure some people feel to kind of just produce results because my value is based on what I produce, you know. In kind of a—a task oriented business world, the Si style is the one that can help bring perspective.

You know, they're able to stop and say, hey, listen, you know, we're not necessarily curing cancer here. No children are going to die if this doesn't happen on time, you know. No one ever died wishing they spent more time at the office, you know. They recognize that life is about more than kind of just meeting deadlines and making profits, you know. Life's about family and friends and giving back to other people. And—and so in some respects, this can create a very psychologically healthy climate that helps people balance personal and professional obligations.

But, you know, there is—there is a cost, right. And it's, I think, easy for people with this type of mindset to fall into a more comfortable place. The idea of balance can very easily kind of come to equal leisure. And so, you know, if I'm a leader or a manager with this style, when someone makes an excuse, I'm less likely to experience it as a, you know, as a quote, "an excuse". You know, I'm—I'm quick to see their perspective. I'm quick to recognize that there often are special circumstances in life, you know, and I also—I instinctively understand that, you know, the things I care about, they're not necessarily going to be the things that the other person cares about. You know, I see the validity in their excuses, whereas other people might just look at the bottom line.

In most situations, however, there really are an unlimited number of, quote unquote, "valid excuses" that could be found and justified, you know. Someone can always find a reason for why they were late or why their work was sloppy. You know, if people don't have a mentality that some sacrifices will need to be made and really that some discomfort will have to be endured to get things done, there's always going to be a reason that things kind of had to move slower. And, you know, for my part, as a leader, it's really tough even asking people to make sacrifices, let alone expecting them to make sacrifices, you know.

I want them to be comfortable and satisfied. I want them to be happy, you know. It reflects this really fundamental drive to understand other people's experiences and needs. It's this unspoken assumption that this is what's important in life, not results, you

know, not status, not even necessarily accuracy, but connecting to other people, to helping people. But as a leader, you know, I must also communicate that sacrifices—they are something that needs to be expected at times.

And, you know, this is one of the reasons that in the 360 results that I mentioned earlier, that the area where Si leaders get rated the the second lowest is setting high expectations, you know. Pushing people—that—that feels kind of icky, you know. Forgiveness, on the other hand, that that feels natural. And typically in this style, people are really quick to forgive, you know, for a couple of reasons. One, because they trust other people's intentions are generally, you know, fundamentally good. But two, because they're also—they're very anxious to repair their relationship and, you know, rebuild the relationship and restore harmony, you know. I want to look past people's surface flaws and see the real goodness inside. So I put people's behavior in the best possible light and give the most positive possible interpretation of someone's behavior.

Now, at this point, I do, you know, I want to pull back a little bit and introduce this idea of driving assumptions, and these are unspoken belief system that that really each of us has, you know. They're beliefs that are usually well outside of our awareness, but they're assumptions that we have about how the world works. And, you know, it's because they're assumptions and because they're unconscious, we don't usually question them, you know, we just kind of assume that they're true. So, for instance, for the Si style, one of the assumptions might be: if my world isn't in harmony, things are bad.

And I call it a driving assumption because this little belief, you know, that we you know, we probably came up with it when we were three or four years old. It drives a huge amount of our behavior. And these assumptions drive a huge amount of how we interpret the events in our life. So for the rest of this talk, I want to discuss some of these assumptions. And if you have an Si style, you might find yourself torn. You might find yourself saying on the one hand, you know, well, that's kind of just—that

assumption is just kind of plain stupid, right? I'd be pretty embarrassed to admit I believed something like that. At the same time, though, there might also be some part of you, maybe a small part, that—that actually does believe it. You know, you don't necessarily want to really admit it, but you kind of know it's there, you know.

But I think the thing you should know, though, is that this is true for everyone, you know. We all have these unspoken beliefs about the world that, on the surface, they look ridiculous, and, you know, they're even embarrassing at times, you know? And, you know, if you examine them in the light of day, it's like, oh my gosh, this is how a child sees the world. This isn't how an adult thinks. But to the degree that these assumptions really are legitimately there and they're going on in the background and we continue to kind of go on not owning them or refusing to acknowledge them, they have that much more power to kind of shape our lives and to guide us towards decisions that aren't necessarily always in our best interest.

All right, so here's another driving assumption, and if you have this style, you know, give it a try, try it on. Ask yourself if there is some part of you, you know, even if it is a small part of you, that the kind of believes this or—or some close cousin of this. So here it is: I should never be the source of someone else's unhappiness. It's a very simple statement but it can also have a really powerful influence on our behavior. And the statement can take, you know, it can take a lot of different forms, like, um: I should never burden other people, or: nobody should ever think I'm selfish. If someone is displeased with me, I've done something wrong, you know. But the basic theme here is really not making other people unhappy, not troubling them.

Okay, so think about all the ways that this assumption would affect someone's behavior if—if they really, really had incorporated it into their worldview. So one implication is something that we just talked about, you know, not burdening anyone or, um, you know, keeping things inside, internalizing them, not asking for favors, not asking for help, you know, being willing to take on this, you know, immense workload by ourselves and

dealing with the frustration internally rather than potentially upsetting a relationship, uh, or—or not telling people that we're unhappy with them, um, and even to some degree kind of putting the blame on ourselves, you know, worrying about situations where we might have offended someone.

And so, if you have this style, you probably have a strong instinct to protect other people's feelings. And in fact, it—it really may not even occur to you how much energy is being consumed in the background trying to understand and cater to other people. You may not, you know, realize just how much more efficient it really would be to just tell people what you're thinking without filtering it to adjust for their emotional response. Oftentimes with this style, when they're talking to someone, you know, they're running through a variety of different ways to phrase things, kind of to be least offensive. But on the other hand, kind of the downside of this is kind of it can make them appear a little bit hesitant or even unassertive when they're talking.

And in the head of the style, there's—there can almost be this kind of unconscious assumption that they should be living up to the other person's expectations. So if, for example, um, the other person is showing impatience in the conversation, you know, I see that, and now I work extra hard to kind of speed things up or to get them the information they want really quickly. You know, basically, I feel this internal pressure to attend to the other person's expectations of how the conversation should go. And so if you take this a step further, the idea of being outright aggressive is usually pretty hard for someone with this style. You know, after years and years of informal training, the brain is telling them that aggressiveness—that's the behavior of a bad person. You know, it violates this core principle of do no harm.

And so even showing forcefulness in—in smaller ways is often avoided. And so if you work with a lot of strong personalities and you also you find it really exhausting to use force, your needs and your ideas are unfortunately going to get dismissed a lot. And most people with the Si style actually do recognize this, and in fact, you know, they

really can be very self-conscious about being seen as timid. On the other hand, you know, mustering up the energy and the force necessary to get their say really can be exhausting, especially in the long run. Generally speaking, though, they just, you know, they really don't want to be in an environment where they constantly have to fight, they constantly have to push.

Now, I—I do want to pull back again to the big picture here, because, again, all these tendencies I've been talking about, they really can be traced back to this driving assumption that I should never be the source of someone else's unhappiness. And so if you have this style and you really have internalized this belief, it—it actually does, all this stuff really, really makes sense, as that, you know, you wouldn't want to be aggressive and that you would want to please people in a conversation and that you wouldn't want to impose on anyone. And even that, you know, I'm—I'm going to be very slow to kind of push back against someone. And in this light, all of these habits, they really make perfect sense.

And I think there's also another important driving assumption, one that's very much related to this, which people with this style sometimes find rattling around in the back of their heads. And again, it's, you know, it's not true for everyone, but it is worth considering. So, it's this: I can show my value by helping people. And one of the really key words in this sentence is value. You know, it doesn't really feel like a key word, but it actually is crucial. You know, one of the core needs that every human being shares, no matter who you are, is this need to feel like we're valuable, you know, that we have worth. We all have this need in common.

But on the other hand, we can have very different ideas about what gives a person value. You know, sometimes we think it's about our accomplishments, sometimes about getting attention or being connected with another person or about being competent. You know, again, these can be very, very unconscious assumptions and, you know, not necessarily the kind of things that we're always proud to admit. You know, everybody

has them. And so for this style, one of those assumptions is about my value being shown when I help people, or another way to phrase this is: I'm valuable because I make other people happy.

And so to the degree that someone does have this assumption going on in the back of their heads, they're going to be very accommodating, you know. They're going to adjust to other people's needs and perhaps minimize their own needs. They're going to let other people know that they're always there to help, that, you know, they're going to have difficulty saying no, because a good person, in this framework, a good person helps others. It's just part of what makes me a decent human being.

And one of the other qualities that you often see with this style is—is a strong willingness to listen, you know, a willingness to really put in whatever amount of time that it takes helping the other person feel like they're important and that their concerns matter. You know, the idea of cutting someone off, it just doesn't feel like an option. You know, you're not allowed to do that. So there's a lot more time spent listening than speaking. In fact, a lot of times people with this style just kind of assume that others don't maybe have as much interest in hearing about their experiences or their ideas, you know, worry that they might be boring people.

And so as a consequence, they can be kind of hesitant or tentative when speaking, you know, always testing out the waters to make sure the other person is really still interested, which, uh—which actually that behavior may in turn actually cause the person to be less interested because the other person actually isn't picking up on the passion for what's being said. And, you know, and that inherently just isn't as engaging. But the listening, right, that is something that people really, really appreciate, you know, although sometimes it really does take them a while to realize just how much they appreciate it. You know, it can be subtle.

Being a good listener, almost by definition, that doesn't draw attention to itself. But it really is so needed. I mean, really, how often do you have someone else who is, like, truly listening and, you know, truly showing this kind of intense interest in your world? And that feels good. You know, it's validating. And for the listener, the person with the Si style, there really—I mean, there generally is an interest in the other person's life. But there also it sometimes is kind of, I think, a secondary motivation. And some of it kind of ties back to this assumption that I can show my value by helping people. And listening—really, that earns appreciation, sometimes even affection.

And so sometimes early on in life, people with this style realize that, hey, you know, this is actually a pretty effective strategy for connecting with people for fitting in. You know, I ask questions. I listen, I show interest. This is a really reliable tool in a social setting. And so over a lifetime, people with this style, they really hone this listening skill. And even bigger than that, they hone this kind of natural attentiveness to other people's needs and they—they learn to pick up on the happiness cues or the sadness cues or the anger cues. And this can really be a tremendous asset that they don't even realize that they have.

And because there is naturally a higher willingness to be vulnerable in this style, they do also tend to be kind of more comfortable empathizing with people, expressing compassion in an unselfconscious way. Whereas for other people, this kind of stuff, you know, it just feels a little too intimate, you know, maybe a little too touchy feely, you know, especially in a professional environment. But with the Si style, there's such a comfortable, approachable quality to this style that this type of connection, it feels natural and just unforced. It's—it's sincere, you know, even if they're not naturally interested in a topic, people with the style, though, often find their interest in an area because it's a way to connect with another person and another human being in a way to enter into their world.

And when I pay attention at this level, I really start to understand what's important to them. And now I'm in a position to give encouragement and praise that—it's especially powerful to them because I know what they care about. You know, to a lot of people, listening at this level, that feels like a waste of time. You know, they get impatient. But to the Si style, why wouldn't I choose to spend my time like this, you know? If one of my core values is connecting with people, then, yeah, you know, of course I'm going to choose to invest my time like this. In fact, with that 360 data I was talking about earlier, the Si and the iS styles, one of the areas where they got their highest ratings was in being approachable, you know, higher ratings than any other style.

Leaders with this style are just really good at maintaining solid, informal relationships with everyone, you know. It feels like a personal relationship because it is. One of their strongest gifts as a leader is to create that sense of cohesion. People feel personally connected to the leader and, you know, even personally connected to each other and members of the team. And as a result, it's much more likely that the group perceives themselves as a team rather than just a group of individuals working together towards the same goal, right. Cohesion, familiarity, trust: these are a huge asset when it comes to a team.

Now, let's take kind of the—the flip side of that, which is, you know, of cohesion, which is conflict, and—and that's pretty uncomfortable for this style, you know. Basically, conflict, that's the exact opposite of harmony. So it—it really makes sense that even the vague potential for conflict can be really stressful. And the Si style will not only avoid the things that cause conflicts, but they can often avoid the things that cause the things that cause conflict, like, for instance, uh, you know, generally avoiding argumentative people, you know, and so when they find themselves being forced to work with a really aggressive person, they may be inclined to cave in in the moment, but then they'll kind of go out of their way to avoid working with that person in the future because really, I mean, you know, frankly, having to argue for every point that you need to make or to get

your perspective across is, you know, that's exhausting. And I think it's particularly exhausting for this style.

And because conflict can be so uncomfortable for this style, they oftentimes find themselves in group situations playing the peacemaker role, really trying to make everyone happy or to find compromises and oftentimes putting aside their own needs and so they can just really focus on getting harmony restored, which, in respect—in some respects, you know, that is their need, right. So they're putting some of their more surface needs across because their need really is to have kind of the harmony in the group. And it's interesting because in many instances, this need for harmony even extends to kind of the ideas that are being discussed in a group, right.

You know, let's—let's take, for instance, in a meeting, you know, there's this really strong drive to make ideas work, you know, especially if it's someone else's idea. The emotional reward for making an idea work is that it reduces the tension in the group, you know. There's the tension of not knowing, right, that, you know, trying to figure out something that you don't know. There's, you know, there's also kind of the tension of having to push to come up with an idea, that—that mental struggle, kind of that creative tension. There's also the kind of the tension of having to disagree with someone or having to shoot down their idea.

And so people with this style, they usually come across as very agreeable when someone else pitches an idea, you know, but what they might not realize in the moment, though, is that actually some people are actually even more likely to respect the opinion of another person who is known to be challenging or skeptical. And, you know, on the other hand, someone who's seen as always being agreeable, they can appear, for right or wrong, they can appear to be less discerning or to be less of a critical thinker, regardless of how sharp the person actually is.

But actually, back to conflict. The initial instinct for this style then is to really smooth things over, but when things really do get heated, one of the tendencies is to just shut down and kind of silently wait for the tension to pass. And on—on the surface, it usually looks like this style is like really calm and they're not too bothered by it. But underneath, there really can be a whole lot of stress going on, you know, knowing that someone is mad at me or it really has—even just has the potential of being mad at me that's going to eat away at me. You know, it's that lack of acceptance, you know, a lack of connection and, you know, a lack of harmony. In fact, in general, this style really has this tendency to internalize their stress—to—to—to put a lot of pressure on themselves mentally to figure things out, to—to not burden other people with the weight of their problems.

And actually, one of the things that you do sometimes see are these kind of alternating or opposing strategies within this style of, you know, ruminating on the one hand and then on the other hand, really kind of just glossing over things in their minds, you know, putting things out of mind or pretending everything is just fine, you know, maybe even—maybe even just kind of bordering on denial in some cases. But both approaches, both of these approaches that I've talked about, they can be adaptive and helpful at times, but they can also really have their downsides, you know, obviously.

Ruminating, you know, things like fretting over problems or playing them over and over in your head, right—in essence, this is this strategy to kind of reduce tension or to get harmony by replaying an incident in my head, hoping that, you know, this time when I replay it, I'm going to get some resolution, I'm going to get some closure, I'm going to figure something out. But of course, and the research backs this up, that I rarely actually do get that sense of closure by ruminating, you know. I just actually stress myself out. And you can kind of show this in a laboratory setting as well.

Now, if you do have this style, as you've gotten older and, you know, hopefully more mature, maybe more mature, you may have developed, you know, more comfort with

other strategies for dealing with conflict, you know, maybe, um—maybe more direct strategies. But that instinct for harmony really is kind of always pulling us back from the fray a little bit, telling us to just, you know, nagging us to just kind of end this thing as quickly as possible with as little bloodshed as possible. And so, you know, there's always a little bit of that temptation to kind of just withdraw or cave in just so we can have the peace again.

But on the positive side, you know, particularly as this style matures, there's often this openness and sincerity in conflict, you know, and I mean, after the initial blow up has happened, you know. When things are really heated, you know, we can all act in some pretty unpredictable ways. But after that initial intensity of the emotion has passed, this style is often really kind of almost quicker to kind of return to that sincere, open posture in—for discussing an issue, which can really feel foreign to some other people who might still be very guarded or cynical in those moments, you know, still defending their turf for their position.

On the other hand, though, you know, I don't want to minimize the sense of hurt that often comes in the midst of these situations. The sense that, you know, if you were willing to put me through this inner turmoil, you know, how much could you really care about me, you know? How could you do this to me? Because, again, the experience of conflict from, you know, for this style is often very raw and it kind of shakes his core needs, you know, for—for acceptance, for connection, for harmony.

And so unlike some other people who can compartmentalize a fight, you know, this is an ordeal. And even if it's not a rational thought, I can sometimes feel like, you know, I really feel like the mere act of fighting with me is a sign that, you know, you must not really care about my feelings, not even to mention the things that cause the fight in the first place. Because the connection is so important to me and because I made myself so vulnerable and I trusted you to handle my feelings with care, it sometimes can feel like a little bit of a betrayal.

Okay, but even having said that, getting back to what I was mentioning earlier, when the other person does extend an olive branch, you know, and—and makes it clear that they don't want to be in tension anymore, you know, people with this style, they're—they're usually very quick to jump on board, you know, maybe even forgive some people that—that they shouldn't forgive, again because of these core needs: connection, harmony, acceptance. So, you know, well, one option is, you know, I could hold on to my anger or resentment or, you know, I could immediately have all of these core needs met, you know? Hmm. Yeah, I think I'll take the second one, right.

And in that sense, you know, reconciliation, that's—it's particularly tempting. And so this is one of the reasons why the Si style can be so good at focusing on the win-win in a conflict situation, really showing a willingness to give up some of their position and also showing a willingness to—to shift perspectives and see things from another person's point of view. And that is so, so difficult to do when you're really mad at someone. You know, if I'm mad at you, it feels like I shouldn't have to take your perspective because you're just wrong, you know, and—or we're tempted to create a straw man argument, you know, a really weak description of the other person's side.

But to genuinely swallow my pride and empathize with how someone else might be thinking, that's—that's extremely difficult to do in the midst of a fight. And I—I'm not saying that the Si style can always do this, but they're often quicker to do it than the other styles. And when it comes to hashing things out, you know, taking the first turn at listening and sitting while the other person says all of these things that to me feel misleading or a distortion of what really happened—you know, that takes a lot of discipline and this style tends to be really good at it.

So that's a bit about interpersonal conflict, you know, the good and the bad things. There's a related area that I wanted to get into briefly, which is about the reaction that this style can sometimes have to resistance. At the very beginning of the podcast, we talked about one of the defining characteristics of this style is positivity, acceptance.

And within the Everything DiSC® model, you know, that circular model, there's often a— a classic distinction that's made between people who fall on the left side of the circle and people who fall on the right, right, the right side being the Si and iS styles.

So on the right side, people over here, they're naturally inclined to see the world as a much friendlier place. It's a place where people are, you know, generally good. They generally can be trusted to do the right thing. Compare that to the other side of the circle where people are inherently more skeptical, you know, are—are much more likely to assume that life's going to be tough and you got to be tough to get through it. If you have this mentality and you run across a messy problem, well, you're not surprised. You know, you expect things to be difficult. You know, this is one of the reasons that the left side of the circle is so associated with being kind of very determined and very strong willed.

But on the other hand, you know, if I expect that the world is a very kind of friendly, enjoyable place, when I run across that kind of same messy problem, well, you know what's going on in my brain? Well, one of the potential reactions is, you know, part of my brain is just saying, hey, you know, this isn't—this isn't how my day is supposed to be going. There's got to be something more pleasant I could be doing, you know, there's got to be a smoother path, you know, this is this is the opposite of harmony. And so perhaps even unconsciously, you know, I might steer myself away from those kind of more stubborn, complicated tasks and more towards the ones that—that come naturally to me.

Now, you know, there's a related psychological principle here called cognitive ease. Basically it says that people—and this is pretty much all of us, no matter who you are—that people will generally take the path that requires the least cognitive effort. So, for instance, we're much more willing to pay attention to information if it confirms what we already believe compared to contradicting information, because it's easier to kind of go

on having the same opinion than it is to challenge that opinion. Our brain really does this thing where it just automatically does that. The brain wants to conserve energy.

And again, we all do this. And all I'm suggesting here is that there can kind of be this heightened tendency to take the path of least resistance within this Si style, you know, precisely because there is more of a positive expectation about the world and a positive expectation about what life should be like. So what might be an implication of this? Well, one good example, I think is—really is in-depth analysis, which isn't necessarily always kind of the favorite pastime of this style, you know, particularly those analytical tasks that require someone to really kind of continue to push and push to understand something when the insight is coming very, very slowly or when things feel really confusing at those initial stages and the only way for me to really gain mastery over this topic is to just keep doing this kind of thankless work, you know, the drudgery and the—the frustration.

And, you know, and again, my brain is telling me over and over again, you know, hey, hey, listen, you know, who's in charge here? Isn't there something more pleasant we could be doing with our time? I mean, you know, come on, this thing clearly doesn't even want to be understood, right. And so, you know, as we talked about before, that—that—there's also that kind of little voice that says, you know, if things don't feel harmonious, something is wrong, you know? And here is a time where the path of least resistance is really tempting for this style, is to just kind of to walk away from this—this analytical, really stubborn thing and find something that's much more comfortable to do, something that's going to come much more naturally.

In fact, um, you know, when I look at the kind of people who are often most committed to sticking with these unpleasant analytical tasks, it's often the people whose self-esteem is—is very much tied to their sense of mastery of the world or to their sense of expertise. And, you know, from that mindset, it's a necessity to master this topic and the eventual reward of understanding it makes the pain of going through it all worthwhile.

And, you know, and they become experts. And—and that's really nice to have in their back pockets. And so, you know, there's that inclination to stick with it until everything clicks like that.

But on the other hand, there—there can also be that temptation to say, well, this is just good enough, right, you know, and just to find the shortcut that will decrease the pain and means I can stop doing this—this—this painful task. And if you have this iS style or Si style, you know, and to the degree that my brain is begging for harmony and positivity, you know, that good enough path, that path of least resistance, that might be tempting enough that it's the path that I take. Basically what I'm describing here is acquiring skills or knowledge on those occasions when they feel, you know, really, really complicated or inaccessible or just, you know, impenetrable. For instance, for me personally, um, it's about understanding how my computer works, you know, much beyond the superficial stuff, right. That just doesn't come naturally to me, you know, so how much time do I really want to spend figuring it out, you know, is the question.

And—and if I have this more go with the flow mindset, maybe it's not a whole bunch of time that I'm going to spend doing this. And—and that has the potential to impact a variety of other choices in my life. Basically, those times when I'm faced with a choice between one thing that's more harmonious and then one thing that's less harmonious, you know, particularly in the short term. For instance, I can think of many times in my own life when, you know, I've just—I've lived with a problem for quite a while because at any given point in the moment, you know, the prospect of tackling it was just really unharmonious, you know?

And in hindsight, I—what I was doing is I was just kind of enabling this really drawn out period of discomfort so I wouldn't have to endure kind of a sharp, immediate pang of discomfort. So, you know, maybe it was things like, um, giving someone feedback that I really needed to give them, but I kept putting it off. Or maybe it was, you know, disciplining someone or bringing up a problem on my team, you know, that's going to

disrupt the harmony that's, you know, really so important to me. And, you know, connected to that is that—this voice just below the surface of me that's saying, you know, I should never be the source of someone else's unhappiness.

So now I do want to kind of be clear about a few things as I'm wrapping up here. You know, this this description, it certainly isn't true of everyone with this style. You know, I really am just describing broad trends. And so if you have this style, it may not describe you, but I think it is worth taking some time to kind of reflect on your patterns and wonder, you know: is there something to this for me? And then a second point I want to reiterate is that there is very much a positive side to this, you know. Even if I do have this tendency to go with the path of least resistance, this is a big part of what allows me to be flexible, to—to bend, you know, to be open to another person's point of view. Like pretty much all psychological traits, there are both kind of strengths and challenges that come with it.

All right, so, really, you know, there's a lot of information here, uh, a lot of different dimensions that we talked about. And so, you know, how do you make sense of all of it or rather how do you put it to use? Well, I'll just make one broad suggestion and it's about these driving assumptions. I think a practice that's really powerful in terms of our growth as people is to simply monitor not only our behavior, but also our thoughts and start to notice when these assumptions are being played out in the background.

And so let me just kind of give you a reminder of what the assumptions were that we talked about, maybe add a few new ones. There are certainly going to be some of these that don't fit for you. You know, the question is more about if there are any of them that—that—that do fit or maybe there's kind of a close cousin of one of these that fits. Okay, so here are some of them: If my world isn't in harmony, things are bad. Or, related to that: if things don't feel harmonious, something is wrong. Or: I can show my value by helping people. When I see others in need, I must help them. I am responsible

for people's happiness. I must be accepted. It is intolerable to have someone mad at me.

Again, this whole exercise is about becoming more aware of when these assumptions are driving our behavior or our thoughts or emotions. And sometimes these assumptions are realistic. But, you know, sometimes they're not. Really, though, the first step is about becoming more consciously aware of them so that I can make my decisions and my choices in a—in a deliberate fashion. And if an assumption is realistic, then, you know, that's great. I run with it. But if the assumptions are not realistic, then what I do is I learn to challenge it and replace it with a statement that's more accurate, that's more fitting for the circumstances. And absolutely this—this takes a lot of time and deliberate effort. But ultimately, what I end up with is having more control over how I see the world and really how I interact with it.

All right, well, thank you, everyone, for your time.

Narrator: This podcast is a copyrighted production of John Wiley and Sons.