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Readers

surrounded by idiots



The Four Types of Human Behavior
(or, How to Understand Those
Who Cannot Be Understood)



thomas erikson

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- 3 How do you talk to people who behave differently from you when you are working or studying?
- 4 Do you behave differently when you are with your friends and family from the way you behave at work or study? If so, how and why?
- 5 Do you think it's a good thing to have different types of people working together? If so, why?

INTRODUCTION

The man who was surrounded by idiots

I was in high school when I first noticed that I had a better relationship with certain people than others. With some friends, we always found the right words, there were never any **conflicts**, and we liked one another. With others, however, everything went wrong, and I couldn't understand why.

I began to test people. I tried to say the same things in similar situations just to see what reaction I got. Sometimes we had interesting discussions. On other occasions, nothing happened at all. People just stared at me as if I were from another planet.

I just thought that there was something wrong with the people who didn't understand me. As I was the same all the time, what other reason could there be? I began to avoid these strange, difficult people because I didn't understand them.

Life went on with work, family, and career, and I continued to put people into two groups—good and sensible people, and all the rest.

When I was 25 years old, I was given the **task** of interviewing a man in his sixties called Sture. He had started his own business and built it up for many years. One of the first things he said to me was that he was **surrounded** by **idiots** in his company. He wasn't joking and he went on to explain why they were all idiots.

The more I listened to him, the more I realized that there was

something very odd about this story. He had no problem in calling anyone an idiot in front of the whole company. This meant that his **employees** avoided him.

When you're young, you're full of great ideas, so I asked, "Who hired all these idiots?" Sture understood that I was actually asking, "Who's the real idiot here?" and threw me out.

It got me thinking. Here was a good businessman, who didn't understand the most important and **complex** part of an organization—the employees. Anyone he couldn't understand was an idiot. Since I was from outside of the company, I saw his thinking was wrong. Sture always compared people to himself. So anyone who wasn't like him was simply an idiot.

Although I never called people idiots, I didn't want to go through life thinking that I was surrounded by people who were impossible to work with. I didn't want to be like Sture. After a terrible meeting with him and some of his unfortunate **colleagues**, all of whom were angry, I decided to learn probably the most important lesson of all—how people **function**.

I began to study how to understand the people who seem so difficult at first. Why are some people silent? Why do others never stop talking? Why do some always tell the truth, while others never do? Why do some of my **colleagues** always arrive on time, while others rarely manage to? Why do I like some people more than others? Along the way, I've learned some incredible things that have changed me as a person, a friend, a colleague, a son, a husband, and the father of my children.

This book is about perhaps the world's most widely used

method to describe the differences in human **communication**, which is called the DISC—the **Dominance, Inducement, Submission, and Compliance** Ability—**system**. These words are the main **behavior** types, which describe how people see themselves in relationship to their environment. Each of these behaviors is linked to a color—Red, Yellow, Green, and Blue.

I have used different **forms** of this tool for over twenty years with excellent results.

There are, of course, different ways to become good at dealing with different types of people. The most **common** method is by researching and learning the **theory**, but this won't make you a world-class **communicator**.

It's only when you begin using this knowledge that you can develop real and functioning abilities. I no longer judge people just because they're not like me. I'm more patient, and I generally avoid conflicts and don't lie.

I have to thank Sture for making me interested in this subject. Without him, this book would probably never have been written.

One thing to note: To make this book easier to read, I have chosen to use "him" and "he" to talk about people in general. I know that you have enough imagination to read "her" or "she" where you need to.

Communication depends on the listener

All of us need to develop a **flexible** way of **communicating**, by **adapting** to people who are different from us. It doesn't matter what kind of behavior you have, or the method you

choose to communicate with, most people around you function differently from you. A good communicator is flexible and able to understand what other people need. If you know and understand how another person behaves and their method of communication, you'll better guess how they might react to different situations. This will also greatly increase your ability to get through to the person.

No system is perfect

This book won't give you a complete picture of how we, as people, communicate with each other. We could try to include details like: **body language**, differences between male and female speech, cultural differences, and all the other ways to explain differences in communication. But the number of signs we give those around us all the time just wouldn't fit into any book.

According to the *American Journal of Business Education* (July/August 2013), more than 50 million **assessments** have been made using the DISC tool. And yet, even with all this information, communication remains a mystery. We can't include everything. However, we can avoid the most obvious mistakes by understanding the basics of human communication.

It's been going on for a while

Different behavior patterns are what give energy to our lives. These include not just a person's actions, but the **attitudes** and beliefs that decide how a person **acts**. We can recognize ourselves

in certain behavior patterns, but we neither recognize nor understand other types of behavior. We also act differently depending on the situation, making those around us happy or annoyed. However, while a person's actions can be right or wrong, there's really no pattern of behavior that is right or wrong. It doesn't matter how you choose to behave or how you're **perceived**. All behavior is fine, within reasonable limits, of course.

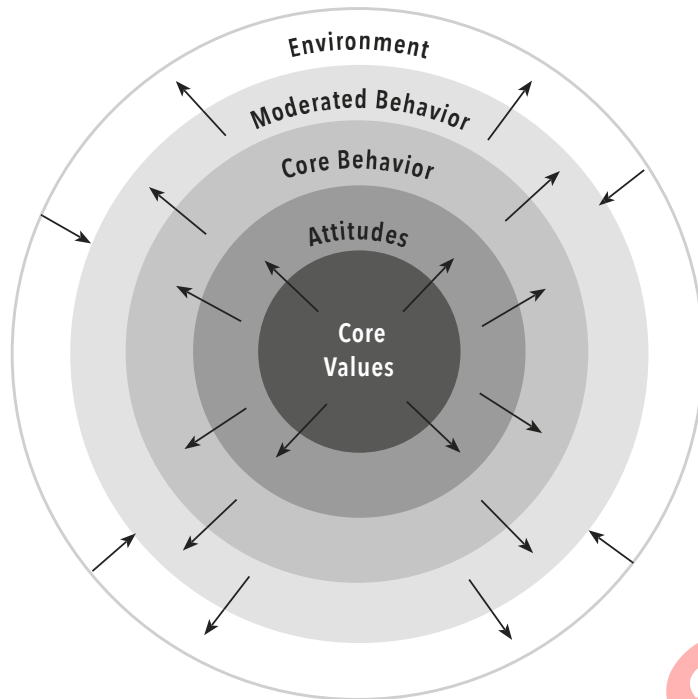
In a perfect world, it would be easy just to say, "I'm a particular kind of person, and it's OK because I read it in a book. That's just how I am, and this is how I act." Wouldn't it be great to always be able to act and behave exactly as you feel at the time? There are in fact two situations when you can do this: alone in a room, when it doesn't matter how you speak or what you do; or when all the other people in the room are exactly like you. In any other situation, it might be a good idea to understand how you're perceived and to learn how other people function.

Every kind of behavior is normal

Normal behavior . . .

- can usually be **predicted**
- is part of a pattern
- is changeable
- can be **observed**
- is understandable
- is **unique** to each person
- can be excused.

Why are we the way we are?



Where our behavior comes from

Where does our behavior come from? Why are people so different? It's a combination of **inheritance** and environment. Even before we're born, the qualities and personalities that we've **inherited** from our parents and our grandparents affect our future behavior. Scientists agree about this, although they're not sure exactly how it works. Once born, children learn and develop in many ways, but mostly by copying what they

see around them, and especially their parent of the same sex.

Children learn **core** values at home or in school. My core values were "study and do well in school" or "fighting is wrong." Another important core value is that people are of equal worth. Attitudes are things I have **formed** opinions about based on my own experiences. Core values and attitudes together lead to core behavior, the real person you want to be, free of the **influence** of any outside **factors**, if that is ever really possible. But people around you most often see your moderated behavior—how you choose to act in a particular situation. Which means:

$$\text{BEHAVIOR} = f(P \times Sf)$$

Behavior is a **function** of *Personality* (P) and *Surrounding factors* (Sf).

Behavior is what we can observe.

Personality is what we try to work out.

Surrounding factors are things that we have an influence on.

Conclusion: We continually affect one another in some form or other. The trick is to try to work out what's there behind the behavior. And this book is all about behavior.

An introduction to the system

As you can see below, there are four main behavior types, each of which has its own color. This book is about how you can recognize them. Quite soon, as you start reading about the different colors, you'll think of particular people. Sometimes, maybe, even yourself.