



Navigating the Uncomfortable – Building Skills for Difficult Conversations Alex Willis

Tuesday, March 4th
11:30a.m. – 12:30p.m.

Please let us know what you thought of this session



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MCAA25

Navigating the Uncomfortable – Building Skills for Difficult Conversations



Alex Willis



MCAA
WOMEN *in the*
MECHANICAL
INDUSTRY

The Art of Navigating

CHALLENGING

Conversations

A close-up, low-angle shot of a weightlifter's legs and feet in a starting position. The lifter is wearing white socks with a dark stripe and white athletic shoes. They are holding a barbell with both hands, positioned on a wooden floor. The barbell has large red and yellow weight plates. The background is slightly blurred, showing more weight plates and a blue mat.

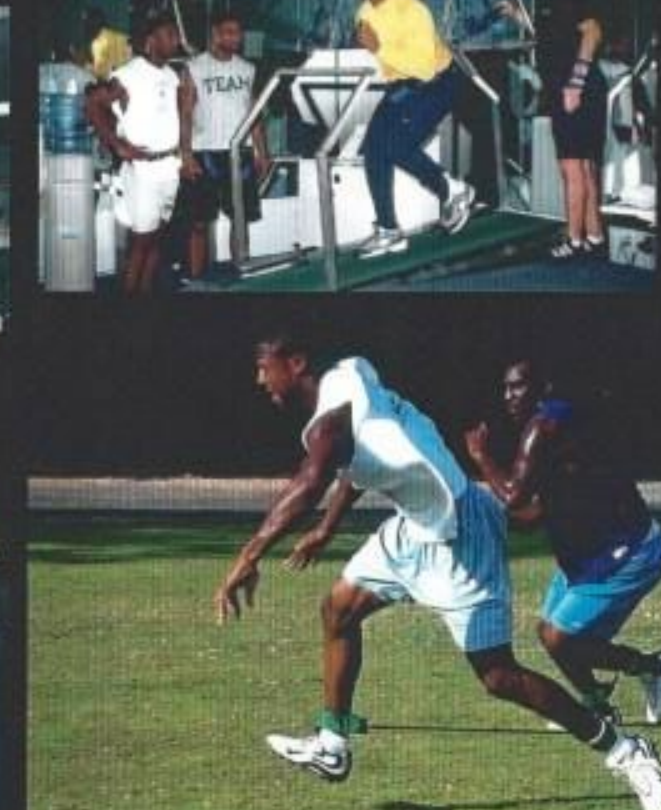
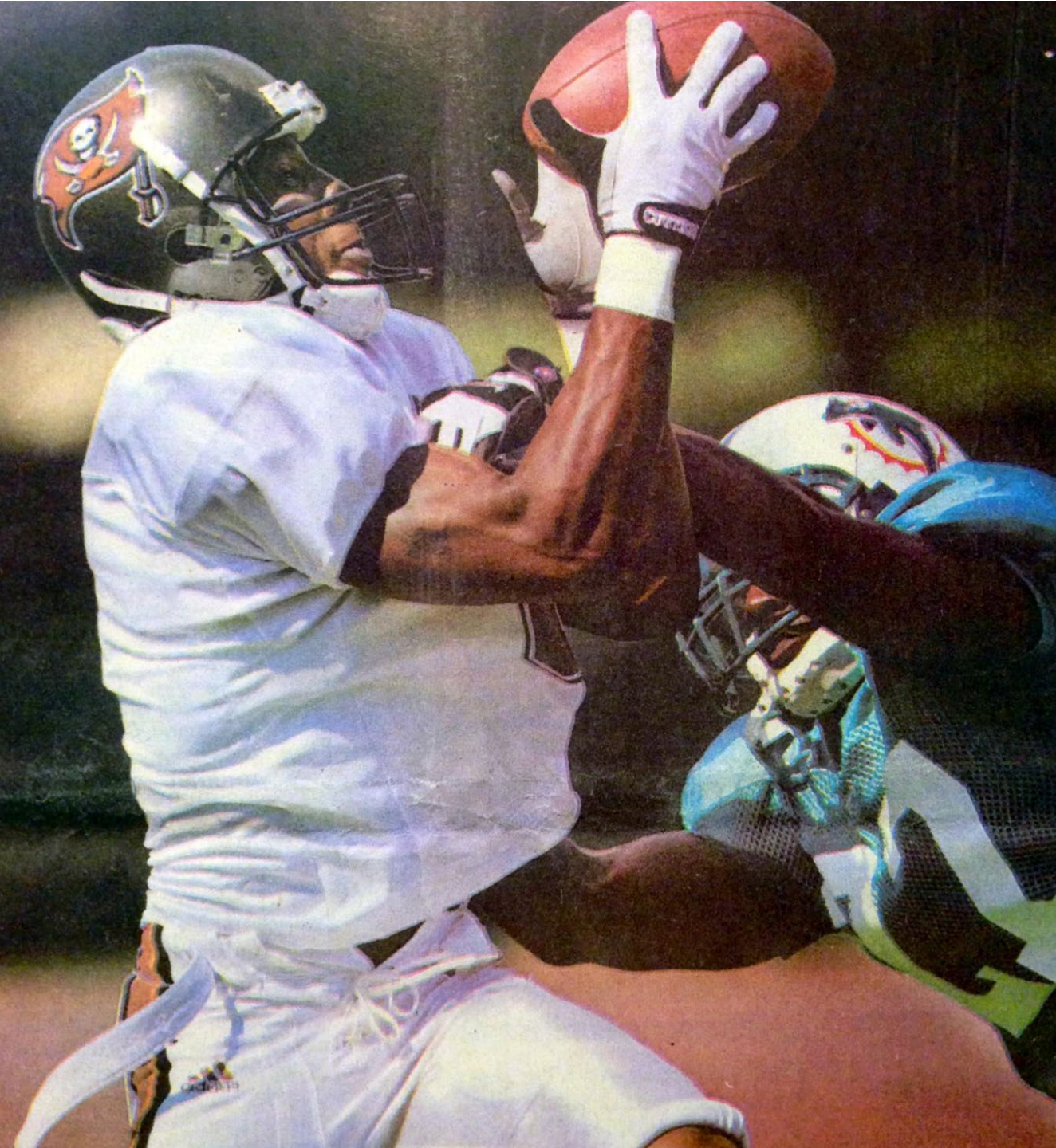
Hello
my name is

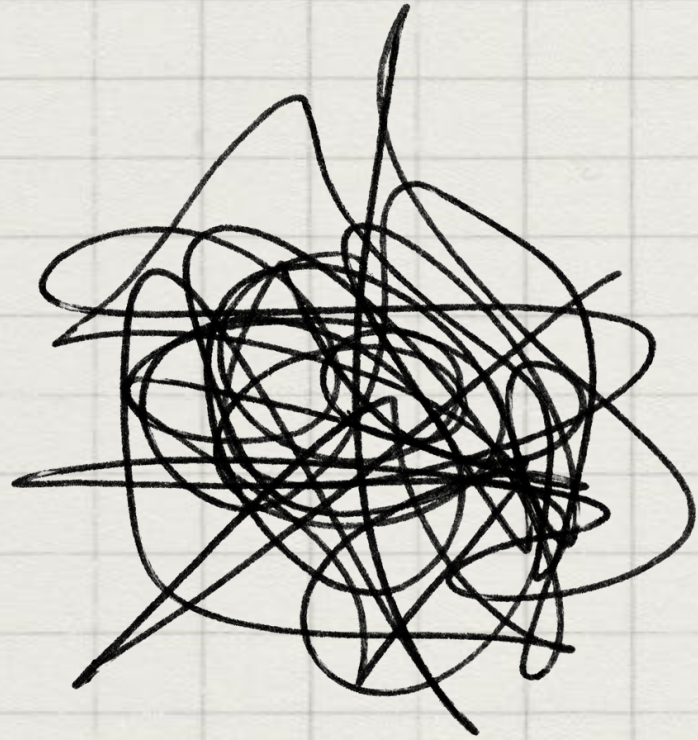
ALEX

.....AND I AM YOUR FRIEND



1996 National Champion
2000 Team Captain





Definition:

Discomfort in challenging conversations refers to the emotional and physical unease individuals experience when engaged in dialogues that involve conflict, criticism, or high-stakes topics. This discomfort can arise from the fear of negative outcomes, the anticipation of confrontation, or the anxiety of handling sensitive issues.

3 Levels of Stress in Challenging Conversations

Internal Stress

Personal emotions, fears, and anxieties that arise during difficult discussions

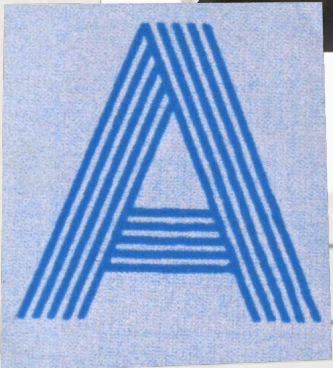
External Stress

Environmental and situational pressures like time constraints and stakeholder expectations

Philosophical Stress

Deeper concerns about ethics, values, and principles that may conflict during the conversation

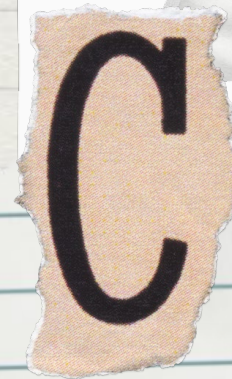
Anxiety
Trigger



Belief



Consequence



Ask Yourself

- **WILL THIS REALLY MATTER TOMORROW?
A WEEK FROM NOW? NEXT MONTH?**
- Is there another way to look at this particular event?
- What is the worst thing that could happen?
- Am I right to think on these lines?
- How important is it to give a reaction?



Labelling



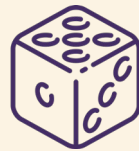
Catastrophizing

Mind
Reading



Should
Statements

Fortune Telling



Vengeance



What Irrational Beliefs Are You Walking Around With?

I must be liked by everyone

I must not ever make mistakes

People should agree with me

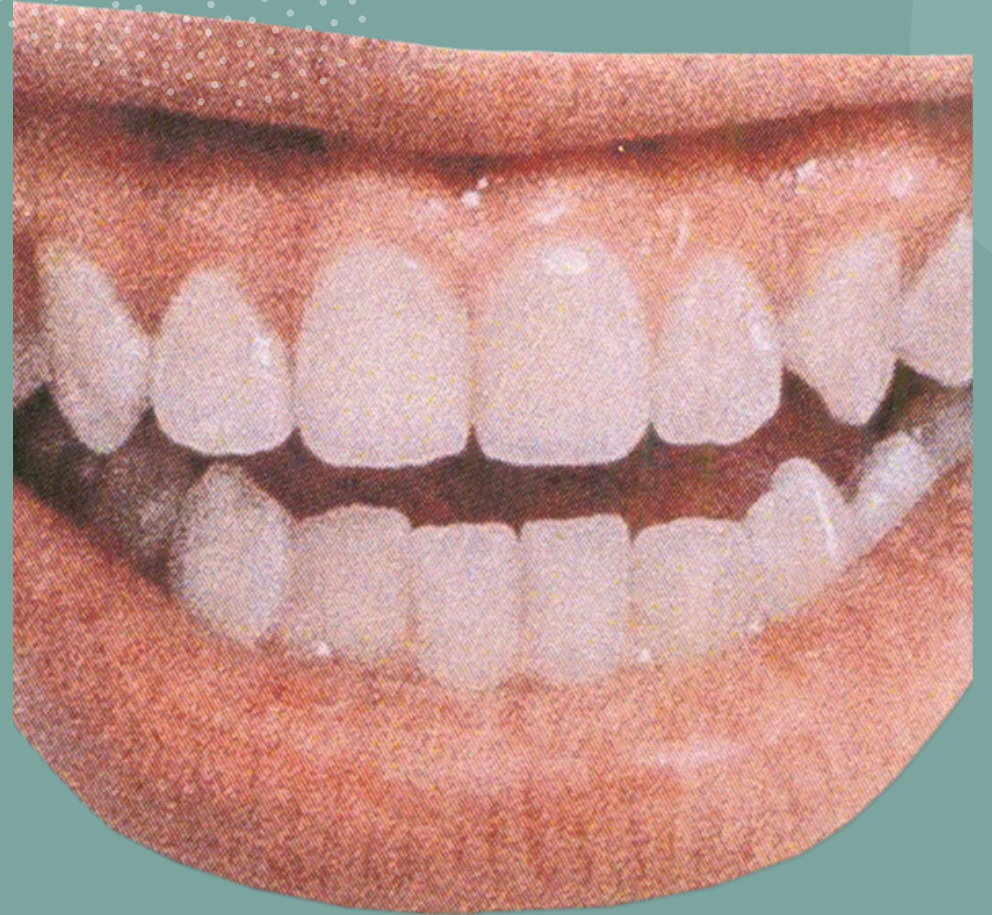
Other people should always act the way I think they should



Constructively and Assertively Expressing Your Feelings

To constructively express your feelings, you have to be motivated by a desire for at least one of the following:

- To communicate your feelings
- To change the situation
- To prevent a recurrence of the same situation
- To improve the relationship and increase communication.



An Assertive Statement to Express yourself Must Have 2 Thoughts:

1. The Fact that there is a problem and the reason
2. What you want the other person to do or how you want the situation to change

A simple form for such a statement is:

“I feel angry because I want you
to”

Focus on Behavior Not Personality

Personality statements are generally **JUDGMENTS** (positive and negative) about a person



EXAMPLE:

“You are a nice person”
“You are lazy”

Behavior statements **DESCRIBE** how a person is acting



EXAMPLE:

*“You make a point of saying hello to everyone every day”
“You don’t ask customers for all the information we need on the applications”*

Be Specific

VAGUENESS creates questions

EXAMPLE:

"We need to address some issues." "What kind of service?"

- What specific issues?
- Who is involved?



Behavior statements **DESCRIBE** how a person is acting

EXAMPLE:

"I noticed that during team meetings, you often interrupt others while they are speaking, which makes it difficult for everyone to stay focused and feel heard."



To Communicate Assertively, It Is Important to Use “I” Messages.

×“YOU” MESSAGES PUT PEOPLE ON THE DEFENSIVE:

Examples:

- *You made me angry when you said I was lazy.*
- *You are frustrating when you keep saying the same thing over and over again.*

✓ “I” MESSAGES TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR FEELINGS:

Examples:

- *I am angry because I heard you say I was lazy.*
- *I am frustrated because I think you are saying the same thing over and over again.*



I can understand how
this can be upsetting

That's fair

I hear you

I see



Acknowledge the Point

I can understand how
this can be upsetting

That's fair

I hear you

I see



Acknowledge the Point

Rules of Assertive Behavior



Maintain good eye contact



Notice your body posture



Notice your proximity and physical contact



Pay attention to your facial expressions



Pay attention to your gestures



Notice your voice, tone, volume, and inflection

Reflecting What Others Say

“It sounds like...”

“I believe ... is important to you.”

“You feel strongly about

“When you said..., I understood ...”

“So, for you it’s important to”

It's Important to Listen

- When we are angry, most of us have the need to be listened to
- So don't forget to listen not just listen but acknowledge





FOUR LENSES



LEARN TO ADJUST
YOUR LENSES.

Creating a Common Language
and Value System for Diverse
Perspectives





Understanding the Four Lenses

You'll be able to:

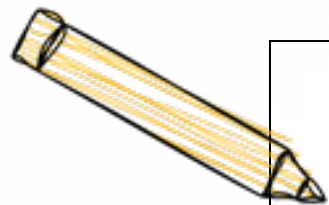
- Communicate effectively
- Motivate reluctant people
- Strengthen leadership abilities
- Reduce stress & conflict
- Teach challenging learners
- Create stronger relationships

UNDERSTANDING





DRAW YOUR
SCORECARD



1. A
B
C
D
2. A
B
C
D
3. A
B
C
D

	GOLD	GREEN	BLUE	ORANGE
STEP 1				
STEP 2				
STEP 3	D	B	C	A
TOTAL				



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	GOLD	GREEN	BLUE	ORANGE
STEP 1	3	1	2	4
STEP 2				
STEP 3	D	B	C	A
TOTAL				

SOME WORDS THAT DESCRIBE ME ARE:

Punctual,
practical,
sensible,
organized, stable,
thorough,
dependable,
conservative,
detailed, hard-
working, solid,
orderly,
consistent,
structured,
positive, and
reliable.

Scientific,
curious,
complex,
abstract,
independent,
ingenious,
intellectual,
inventive, fact-
orientated,
logical, cool,
calm, collected,
and theoretical.

Bold, entrepreneur,
generous, witty,
trouble-shooter,
spontaneous,
enthusiastic,
competitive,
performer, optimistic,
charming,
courageous,
independent,
fearless, adaptable,
easy-going,
mechanical,
persuasive, wild, fun,
and crazy.

Caring, humane,
artistic, spiritual,
subjective,
sympathetic,
insightful,
compassionate,
personal,
peaceful, sincere,
empathetic,
romantic, poetic,
sensitive,
accepting,
patient, giving,
and true.

	GOLD	GREEN	BLUE	ORANGE
STEP 1	3	1	2	4
STEP 2	4	1	2	3
STEP 3	D	B	C	A
TOTAL				

PREFERENCE SURVEY

When I have to make a decision, I like to:

- a. make it quickly and get on to other things.
- b. Take my time, gather the facts and think it through logically.
- c. See how others feel about it, then choose what's best for everyone.
- d. Consider what was done before and proceed carefully.

My friends can count on me to be:

- a. full of energy and ready to try anything.
- b. unemotional and full of facts.
- c. sensitive and willing to listen.
- d. dependable and hard working.

In a group of people, I'm usually:

- a. Right in the middle of the action.
- b. Off in a corner quietly talking with one or two people.
- c. Making sure everyone feels accepted and happy.
- d. Doing whatever is needed to make things run smoothly.

1. When I have to make a decision.....

____⁴ a.

____³ b.

____¹ c.

____² d.

Same process for 1-3

	GOLD	GREEN	BLUE	ORANGE
STEP 1	3	1	2	4
STEP 2	4	1	2	3
STEP 3	D 4	B 6	C 9	A 12
TOTAL				



**Relationship-Oriented
Caretaker**



Independent Intellectual



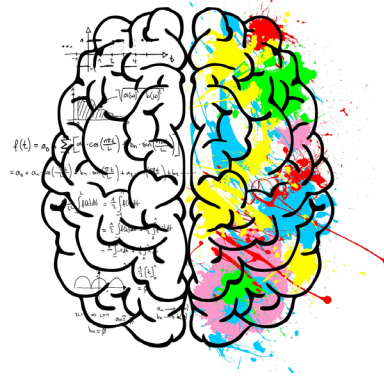
**Structure-Oriented
Natural Leader**



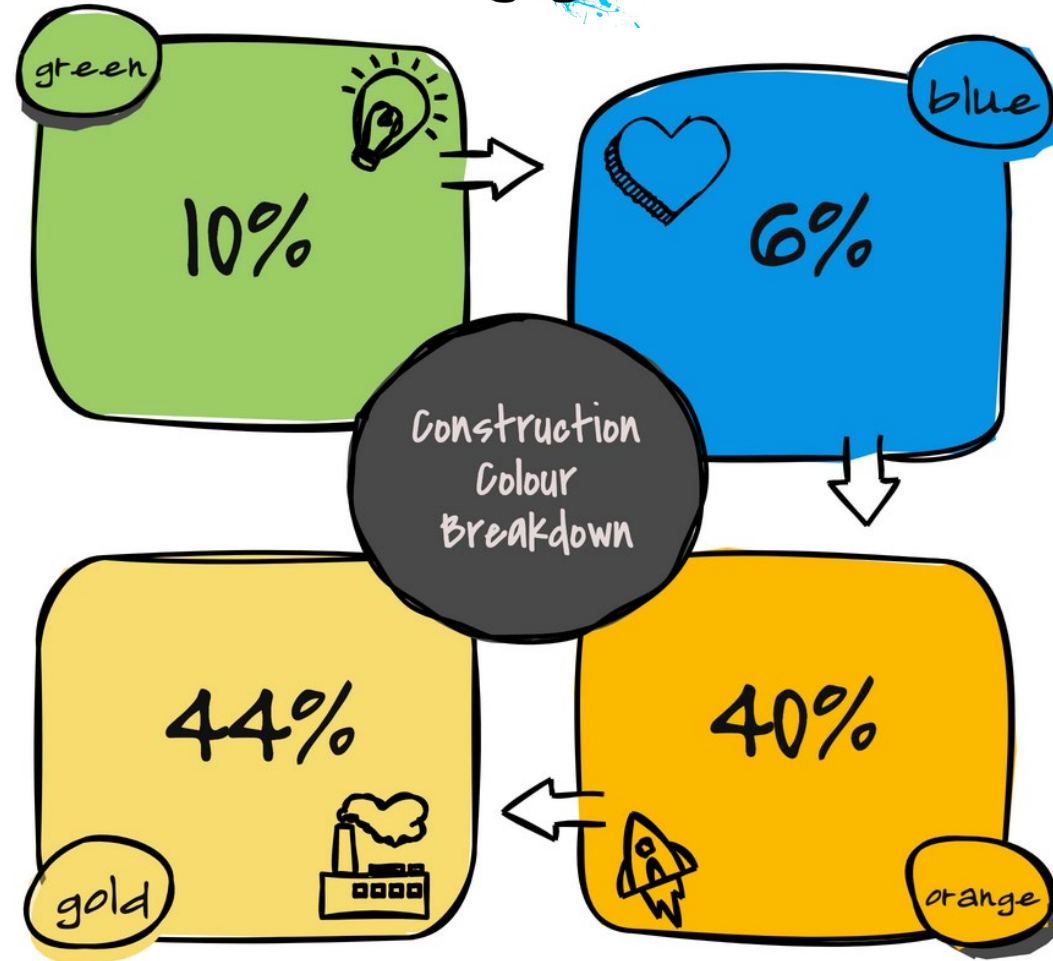
**Adventurous
Action Taker**



LEFT BRAIN
FOCUSED



RIGHT BRAIN
FOCUSED





Famous People

Mother Teresa
Mr. Rogers
Oprah Winfrey
Michael Jackson
Gandhi
Mohammed Ali

Relationship-Oriented Caretaker

Values

Compassion
Harmony
Integrity
Authenticity
Personal identity
Affection

Motivation

Self actualization
Need to be Genuine

Communication

Empathetic listener

Work

People centered
Interactive
Creative
Harmonious

Leadership

People focused
Interactive
Creative
Harmonious

Childhood

Creative & imaginative
Gentle & kind





Famous People

Albert Einstein
Brad Pitt
Steven Spielberg
Leonardo DiCaprio
Whoopi Goldberg

The Independent Intellectual

Values

Competence
Progress
Expertise & rational answers

Motivation

Analysis & ingenuity
Need to think

Communication

Skeptical & can appear distant
Dislike redundancy or small talk

Work

Analytical & creative
Perfect an idea & then continue

Leadership

Visionary
Solves problems
Surround themselves with competent, independent workers

Childhood

Independent
Ask a lot of questions
Experiment





Famous People

Henry Ford
George Washington
Florence Nightingale
Margaret Thatcher

Structure-Oriented Natural Leader

Values

Tradition
Dependability
Organization & responsibility
Security & structure

Motivation

Desire to earn a place in a system to be useful & reliable

Communication

Can be seen as bossy because focus is on what needs to be done & by whom

Work

Safe, stable & secure jobs
Values established guidelines
Dislike disorder

Leadership

Organization oriented
Highly accountable
Believe in rules
Standards & procedures

Childhood

Well mannered
Followed rules





Famous People

Donald Trump
Lucille Ball
Eddie Murphy
Elvis Presley
John F. Kennedy
Amelia Earhart

Adventurous Action Taker

Values

Freedom & excitement
Risk & physical stimulation
Challenge & competition

Motivation

Seek to bring fun & humor
into the workplace

Communication

Bold & aggressive
Apt to say what's on their mind
Charismatic & entertaining

Work

Unpredictable & lively
Works well under pressure
Risky jobs that don't squash
enthusiasm

Leadership

Action oriented
Flexible & dynamic
Wants to work with talented people
Skillful & energetic

Childhood

Noisy, spirited & fun loving
Trouble & on the go





Leadership Continuum



Question
Time