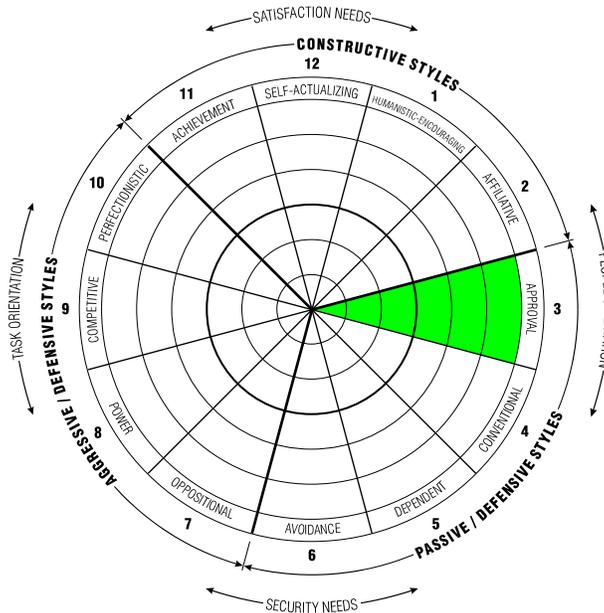


The Approval Mindset

Attitudes, Values and Beliefs for Working Effectively with People



Approval

Three o'clock position

Style Description: please others, agreeable, over-optimistic and spoil people with kindness

Measures our need to be accepted by others to increase or sustain our feelings of self-worth. While our desire to be approved of is natural, problems occur when approval-seeking becomes a need, and ultimately our standard way of interacting with others. When we need approval, we typically try to please everyone but ourselves. An excessive need for approval is essentially an “emotional give-away” - in the interest of being liked and accepted, we “give away” our beliefs, values, needs, goals, sense of personal worth, direction in life, and ability to make our own decisions.

You May Be Trying To Please Everyone But Yourself

Your high score on the Approval scale indicates that you may be seeking the approval of others to a degree that is ineffective and unhealthy for you. The way you described yourself suggests that you place too much importance on what people think of you; in fact, you may sometimes find yourself more concerned with the impression you are making than with forming healthy relationships. Rather than stating your own opinions, you tend to agree with whoever's approval you are currently seeking.

While you are cooperative and easy to get along with, your results indicate that you may become uncomfortable, possibly even worried, if your actions or decisions are not accepted. It is appropriate to recognize the opinions and preferences of others; however, an emphasis on others' (rather than your own) approval can give others undue influence over your sense of self-esteem. You may be inclined to undervalue yourself because your sense of worth increases only when you are liked and approved of. If this tendency becomes extreme and you allow others to dictate your thoughts and actions, you may risk losing your sense of self and all that makes you unique. While the desire to be liked and approved of is natural and healthy, problems occur when approval-seeking becomes a standard way of reacting to others. You run the risk of becoming vulnerable to mistreatment if you continue to pursue this course of thought and action.

This write-up will help you explore the series of choices you have made that result in this need for approval. It describes the characteristics of a need for approval, discusses the origins of such needs, and suggests ways you can reduce or eliminate this potentially ineffective approach.

How You May See Yourself

Your higher score on the Approval scale indicates that these characteristics may describe you:

- Reduced or low self-esteem / confidence.
- Preoccupation with the opinions of others.
- A concern with being "popular" and well-liked.
- A tendency to be agreeable, "wishy-washy" and compliant.
- Difficulties with conflict, negotiation and confrontation.

The Approval scale assesses feelings associated with a need to be accepted by others. These feelings range from the perfectly normal desire to be accepted by others to a very strong and misplaced emphasis upon the idea that a sense of personal worth is related to acceptance by others.

As a species, we can be distinguished by our strong desire to keep our position or status. Just below the surface of our everyday behaviour lies this need for the approval of others. Some individuals are quite aware of this need, and thus have greater control over their behaviour. For others, the need for approval is much more acute and they are not likely aware of it because it is so strong. When a person is not aware of this need for approval, it is likely to become a central theme in that person's life. Many distinct, observable results arise from this motivation. Most of them are not positive. There can never be enough approval to make up for what the person desiring approval feels he or she needs. The need for approval arises from an exaggerated fear of rejection. This fear encourages people who are inclined to be approval seekers to concentrate on making sure everyone accepts and likes them. Although it may feel just like affection, the need for approval only substitutes for genuine affection.

Many relationships that come to grief are formed based on this false interpretation. An excessive need for approval is a great emotional give-away: We give away our desires, sense of self worth, direction, integrity and decision-making capability. If we need approval so much that our very worth depends on it, we try to please everyone yet please no one, sacrificing our own beliefs, values and goals in the process.

Approval-based Thinking: Low Range 35% and Below (Most Effective)

In a leadership position, the need for approval can cause indecisiveness, procrastination, and failure to take action. Approval-seeking managers tend to delegate work inconsistently and resolve conflicts unsatisfactorily. While these managers may seek involvement in decision making, they do so not to achieve better results, but to avoid being held solely accountable for an “unpopular” decision.

You *appreciate* approval when it comes your way, but you do not *need* it. Not needing approval frees you to speak and act according to your own feelings, and to rely on your own judgment and instincts. Because you are not preoccupied with being accepted by others, you can concentrate on your own growth and fulfillment.

Approval-based Thinking: Medium Range 35% - 65% (Less Effective)

If you scored closer to the Low range, you are not as likely to have a strong need for approval. While you may occasionally “go along to get along,” you more often prefer to voice your own opinions, and tend to be guided by your own beliefs and values.

If you scored closer to the High range, you tend to feel it is important to be liked and accepted by others. Consequently, you sometimes go out of your way to gain approval, and may feel disappointed and resentful when you don’t receive it.

Approval-based Thinking: High Range Above 65% (Least Effective)

You typically work too hard to gain the approval of others. If you do not get people’s full acceptance, you tend to feel anxious. Although you may not always agree, you probably “go along” with others too easily and often.

Your Approval Style on the Job

As a manager, your high Approval score can be self-defeating. Others may see in you reduced ability to make decisions, delegate responsibility and resolve conflicts. You may not be very decisive and may bury your need for approval in the participative management techniques that are currently popular. What you might really want, of course, is not to have others participate to achieve better results, but so that you can avoid having to make the decisions yourself.

You may work too hard to gain the approval of others, but do not focus on your ability to give others any sense of worth. It is common to hear recommendations that managers recognize and give approval to subordinates. It is hard to disagree with this idea, but there are more effective means of helping others to grow and be more productive. Teach others to be approving of themselves. When a person does something well, say “You ought to feel good about yourself.” This type of recognition reduces dependency and begins to build self-esteem.



Decreasing the Approval Style

[https://podcasts.apple.com/au/podcast/137-the-approval-style/id1371885437?
i=1000522084226](https://podcasts.apple.com/au/podcast/137-the-approval-style/id1371885437?i=1000522084226)

Becoming More Effective: Steps to Change

Needing approval in order to feel worthwhile as a person creates unhealthy dependencies on co-workers, friends and family. Your Approval score is a good indicator of your need for acceptance from others.

If you feel that your behaviour reflects a need for approval, you can use the following suggestions to eliminate this need and learn to think and act in your own best interest.

- Recognize that you are a worthwhile person because you are you - not because people like or approve of you.
- Voice your own opinions. Learn to think and act for yourself. Accept the fact that not everything you say or do will be met with approval.
- Realize that you will not perish if others do not like you. Paradoxically, people who need excessive approval from others are often rejected and used by others because they build one-sided relationships.
- Practice facing confrontations instead of avoiding them. It may be easier to seek acceptance, but learning to handle conflict constructively enables you to maintain and build your sense of self worth.
- Discover the ideas you have about your own need for approval; think about where you adopted and developed this need. Who did you learn this from? Why did you accept it? Examine your self-talk.
- Talk to yourself when you encounter disapproval. Start telling yourself that the actions of another are just that: No more, no less. They have no effect on your feelings of self worth unless you allow them to.
- Pay close attention to your interactions with others. Instead of seeking their approval, can you think of things to say and do that communicate a healthy liking and respect for yourself.
- Write down what you hear yourself say. Learn to identify and change things that reflect a need for approval.
- Learn to recognize and believe in your strengths.
- Faced with disapproval, focus on what you are thinking. You will probably discover that you are telling yourself just how terrible it is to be disapproved of. Realize that it is not terrible: You can learn from it without feeling bad.

Changing Your Behaviour Can Result in These Benefits

- A healthier, more effective style of thinking.
- Increased feelings of self worth.
- Heightened interest in personal growth and development.
- A stronger sense of self.
- Belief that your opinions do count and that your effort makes a difference.
- More honest and meaningful relationships based on respect for one another's feelings and viewpoints.
- The ability to relax and be yourself around others.
- Increased confidence in your ability to be decisive and to deal effectively with conflicts and confrontations.
- Stronger, well-defined beliefs and convictions.
- Reduced levels of stress.
- More energy to devote to enjoying life with increased self-confidence.
- Enhanced integrity.

Approval Behaviours Defined

Core Thinking Patterns for Individual, Team and Organizational Effectiveness

An Approval Culture...

Characterizes organizations in which conflicts are avoided and interpersonal relationships are pleasant – at least superficially. Members feel that they must agree with, gain the approval of, and be liked by others. Though possibly benign, this type of work environment can limit organizational effectiveness by minimizing constructive “differing” and the expression of ideas and opinions.

Measures our need to be accepted by others to increase or sustain our feelings of self-worth. While our desire to be approved of is natural, problems occur when approval-seeking becomes a need, and ultimately our standard way of interacting with others. When we need approval, we typically try to please everyone but ourselves. An excessive need for approval is essentially an “emotional give-away” - in the interest of being liked and accepted, we “give away” our beliefs, values, goals, sense of personal worth, direction in life, and ability to make our own decisions.

Organizational (OCI) Behaviours of Approval-based Thinking

- switch priorities to please others
- agree with everyone
- back up those with the most authority
- make sure they are accepted by others
- do things for the approval of others
- be liked by everyone
- go along with others
- stay conscious of fashion

Group (GSI) Behaviours of Approval-based Thinking

1. did people tend to get along with the majority without much discussion.
2. did tactfulness inhibit direct communications and the questioning of others.
3. did some people seem to side with others in attempt to gain their approval.
4. were differences smoothed over rather than resolved.
5. did people “give in” without fully supporting their own opinions or viewpoints.
6. did it appear that being accepted by the group was an issue for certain members.

Individual (LSI) Behaviours of Approval-based Thinking

Seeks approval from others	Needs others' approval	Agrees with everyone	Forgives anything.
Needs to be liked by everyone	Upset if not accepted by others	Overly sympathetic	Vague and uncertain
Does things for approval relations	Generous to a fault	Spoils people with kindness	Naive
Friendly all the time	Over-optimistic	Upset by conflict	Wants to be liked
Accepts others' values easily	Want to be trusted, but it's hard	Thinks in terms of what others think	Dependent on family and family
Tries to please everyone	Cooperates to maintain others' acceptance	Feelings are easily hurt by others	

The Approval-based Mindset - What Can You Change?

You can't always change or influence the people around you, but you can control your reactions to them. These reactions originate in your *thoughts*, or the way you perceive and process information and experiences. Your thoughts are powerful resources; what you think defines who you are and what you do in every aspect of your life. By modifying what you think, you can change how you behave.

Using the LSI to Initiate Change in Your Approval Mindset

Completing and reviewing your LSI / LSI 360 is the vital first step in the process of changing your behaviour. The inventory has undergone over 45 years of extensive research, and has been established as a valid, reliable way to help you take an objective look at yourself.

You can use the LSI to:

- Understand what you were like now, and will cause you to be that way.
- Recognize the consequences of your behaviour and how it affects yourself and others.
- Pinpoint your own unique strengths, as well as any "stumbling blocks" to your effectiveness.
- Identifying more constructive ways of thinking and behaving.
- Decide what aspects of your behaviour you want to change.
- Develop a specific strategy to help bring those changes about.

Moving from Thought to Action

Merely completing the LSI / LSI 360 will do little to advance your desire to improve yourself in the Approval area. To receive the fullest benefit from the inventory, devote some time to interpreting your LSI / LSI 360 scores (by reading you customize leadership assessment report), thinking about what you learned, and setting goals around what you want to change.

Below are some helpful change guidelines to assist you, followed by a thorough plan of action you can complete to most effectively direct your efforts.

Approval Mindset Change Guidelines

1. Acknowledge and except all aspects of yourself. Remember, the question is not "am I a good or bad person?" but rather "what is preventing me from being more effective in the Approval area, and what can I do to improve?"
2. Recognize that your sense of self-worth *is not* connected to your LSI scores or the impressions others have of you on an LSI 360 assessment. You are worthwhile because you were a human being - tying your self-worth to outside factors can limit your ability to make positive changes in your behaviour.
3. Specifically define what you want to change about being less Approval-based and why. Clearly describing an aspect of your behaviour, stating the problems it creates for you, listing why you want to change it, and detailing the actions you plan to take will properly focus the change process.
4. Increase your confidence by concentrating on what you do well. Overcome your preoccupation with failure by focusing on your successes. Make a list of all you do well, and read it when you were feeling under confident.
5. Practice using more effective non-Approval-based behaviours in your mind. These "practice sessions" will gradually begin to affect your real-life performance in 1:1 or group interactions. Picture yourself deliberately changing what you decided to change. Then, imagine yourself as you will be after successfully making the change.

Changing Approval-based Mindsets - Action Planning Worksheet

Step 1: My score for the Approval Thinking Style is _____ (percentile)

Step 2: My score on Approval means I tend to believe that:

Step 3: Significant Influences

We think and behave as we do because we have been influenced by significant people and situations in our lives. Consider *your* life: try to identify and isolate the influences you've experienced that may be associated with the style.

Significant Person (or situation) _____

Ideas / Behaviours You Might Have Learned _____

Step 4: Consider the consequences of using the style and list them as indicated below.

Personally

Positive Consequences

Self-Defeating Consequences

Professionally

Positive Consequences

Self-Defeating Consequences

Step 5: Consider how your life would be different if you change your behaviour to be less Approval-based.

Some Positive Differences

Some Negative Differences

Step 6: Changing your Approval behaviours

Changing your Approval behaviour involves changing your mind regarding some ideas you hold around how you value and interact with people. Consider what you will have to give up and what you will gain. What cherished ideas must you challenge? Go back to your LSI leadership report and review both the words and statements that identify this style and your responses to them.

How would you like things to be different? (Same suggestions below)

Becoming More Effective: Continuing To Improve

Now that you have reviewed the Approval Style, review the following suggested actions, and rate them in terms of your perceived need for change, where 0 is little or no need and 3 is a strong need.

- Learn to tell others what I feel and think. 0 1 2 3
- Accept that my worth isn't related to what others think of me. 0 1 2 3
- Be less conscious of others and more aware of myself. 0 1 2 3
- Assert my own beliefs. 0 1 2 3
- Practice facing confrontations. 0 1 2 3
- Learn to be more decisive and stand behind my decisions. 0 1 2 3
- Think for myself instead of accepting others' values as my own. 0 1 2 3
- Do things to please me; not other people. 0 1 2 3
- Recognize that not everything I do will be met with approval. 0 1 2 3

Any statement that you have rated as a two or three you should integrate into your action plan "Process for Change".

Step 7: What barriers now exist to making this change?

- a) _____
- b) _____
- c) _____

Step 8: How can you overcome these barriers? Try to *challenge your assumptions* about your behaviours.

- a) _____
- b) _____
- c) _____

Step 9: What will you gain by making this change and becoming less Approval-based?

- a) _____
- b) _____
- c) _____

Step 10: What do you plan to do to bring this change about?

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

Step 11: Seeking Support

Depth psychologists know that our capacity for growth relates to our ability to internalize and take personal responsibility for the following three parts of our lives –

- a) Insight** (self awareness and internal motivation to grow and transform is essential here - LSI mindset assessment helps by providing a language and framework);
- b) Endurance** (courage and alignment with your core values helps here);
- c) Action** (moral strength and motivation to grow / learn helps here).

Seek support for your change efforts. Ask one or two trusted family members, friends or work members for their help. Solicit feedback from them on your progress.

With whom will you share your intentions and plans to change? _____

How can they best assist you? _____

Step 12: Accountability - By what date do you intend to take action? _____

The Approval Style in Management

An emphasis on gaining approval causes indecision. Approval seekers will violate rules and perfectly reasonable procedures to seek favour and transient approval. They will keep their mouths shut when they should speak and may colour the truth to make themselves look good. The need for approval is responsible for the bulk of poor communication in organizations. It is the origin of rumours, innuendoes and attempts to do and say things that distort the real situation. The need for approval is often at the very core of the need to lie and fabricate to others. It is a powerful need that can wreck a relationship or career. While this mode of thought is more common among the general population than in the business world, it is still evident in business and can be the root cause of weak and indecisive management. In managers and leaders, the need for approval can cause agonizing indecision, procrastination and failure to take action.

Your Approval Style on the Job

As a manager, your high Approval score can be self-defeating. Others may see in you reduced ability to make decisions, delegate responsibility and resolve conflicts. You may not be very decisive and may bury your need for approval in the participative management techniques that are currently popular. What you might really want, of course, is not to have others participate to achieve better results, but so that you can avoid having to make the decisions yourself. You may work too hard to gain the approval of others, but do not focus on your ability to give others any sense of worth. It is common to hear recommendations that managers recognize and give approval to subordinates. It is hard to disagree with this idea, but there are more effective means of helping others to grow and be more productive. Teach others to be approving of themselves. When a person does something well, say “You ought to feel good about yourself.” This type of recognition reduces dependency and begins to build self-esteem.

Becoming More Effective: Steps to Change

Needing approval in order to feel worthwhile as a person creates unhealthy dependencies on co-workers, friends and family. Your Approval score is a good indicator of your need for acceptance from others. If you feel that your behaviour reflects a need for approval, you can use the following suggestions to eliminate this need and learn to think and act in your own best interest.

- Recognize that you are a worthwhile person because you are you - not because people like or approve of you.
- Voice your own opinions. Learn to think and act for yourself. Accept the fact that not everything you say or do will be met with approval.
- Realize that you will not perish if others do not like you. Paradoxically, people who need excessive approval from others are often rejected and used by others because they build one-sided relationships.
- Practice facing confrontations instead of avoiding them. It may be easier to seek acceptance, but learning to handle conflict constructively enables you to maintain and build your sense of self worth.
- Discover the ideas you have about your own need for approval; think about where you adopted and developed this need. Who did you learn this from? Why did you accept it? Examine your self-talk.
- Talk to yourself when you encounter disapproval. Start telling yourself that the actions of another are just that: No more, no less. They have no effect on your feelings of self worth unless you allow them to.
- Pay close attention to your interactions with others. Instead of seeking their approval, can you think of things to say and do that communicate a healthy liking and respect for yourself.
- Write down what you hear yourself say. Learn to identify and change things that reflect a need for approval.
- Learn to recognize and believe in your strengths.
- Faced with disapproval, focus on what you are thinking. You will probably discover that you are telling yourself just how terrible it is to be disapproved of. Realize that it is not terrible: You can learn from it without feeling bad.