

Mindset Style # 7: Oppositional Leadership Styles You May Be Overly Judgmental

Your Oppositional score indicates that you tend to make a great many judgments about things. These judgments border on the critical or negative and are probably at times hostile. Because you do not tend to be easily influenced by the opinions of others, except to take the opposite view, you may periodically take a rigid stand on an issue.

Although you are capable of admitting your mistakes, you might place blame on others when feeling pressured or when things don't go your way. In a sense, this means that you sometimes see great fault in others, yet little in yourself.

You tend to take a skeptical stand toward the ideas and opinions of others. You may oppose things indirectly; as a consequence, it may sometimes be difficult for others to know exactly what you are thinking.

Scoring average on the Oppositional scale generally indicates that you most often take a negative view of life and other people and may consider yourself to be above others. Insecurity and self-criticism rests below the surface of this style.

Your tendency to occasionally be unforgiving and hold grudges can put strain on your relationships. Your possible reputation as a nay-sayer can build barriers to effective communication and keeps others away from you; in fact, keeping others away can be the primary motive behind use of the Oppositional style.

You may have produced an average Oppositional score because you are currently feeling angry and disappointed. Is there a particular group of people or specific situation that may be provoking these feelings?

Your score indicates the potential for problems in this area. This section of your report will help you to determine if a tendency to be oppositional is currently creating difficulties for you. It describes the characteristics of oppositional behavior, discusses the origin of such an idea and suggests ways you can reduce or eliminate this ineffective approach.

How You See Yourself

Your average score on the Oppositional scale indicates that these characteristics may describe you:

- The ability to be skeptical and objective.
- A tendency to seem aloof and detached from people.
- A need to be critical and look for flaws in everything.
- A negative, cynical attitude.
- A sarcastic sense of humor.

Your Oppositional Style on the Job

Co-workers may find it frustrating to work for you. Because you may have difficulty accepting anything at face value, you may assume the role of “watchdog,” attempting to keep co-workers on their toes by constantly questioning them, and being skeptical and sarcastic. Without strong Self- Actualizing (12 o’clock), Humanistic-Encouraging (1 o’clock) or Affiliative (2 o’clock) scores, you may be unduly critical, frequently questioning and shooting down peoples ideas.

You may be ambivalent regarding the issues confronting you. You may prefer to wait until a position is stated and then arbitrarily oppose it, occasionally without good reason. You may change your mind in mid-stream, and might sometimes go back and criticize those ideas with which you previously agreed. Although you may give the impression that even the highest quality work product isn’t good enough, your insecurities might work against your own capacity to be original and innovative - to you, it may be much easier (and safer) to criticize than to create.

Becoming More Effective: Steps to Change

If you lack high scores in the Self-Actualizing, Humanistic- Encouraging and/or Affiliative styles to balance your tendency toward oppositional behavior, you may want to take a close look at the way you use this thinking style.

If you agree that your behavior is overly oppositional, the following suggestions can help you learn to use opposition more constructively.

- Stop assuming that others admire you for your stands; it is usually just the opposite - they will see you as an obstacle to be overcome.
- Realize that this posture is quite self-defeating and does not increase your effectiveness.
- Realize that this style keeps others at arms length from you. Try to take a more positive approach to others: In other words, try to stop complaining and carping. Experiment with this approach for one week and you will notice a difference in others’ reactions to you.
- Withhold the urge to reject an idea until you fully understand it. If you don’t understand something, say so. Try asking thoughtful, constructive questions - and listen to the answers.
- Trust others. You may fear being close to others, but you can learn to rely on people by being more open and honest. If you share more of yourself, many will share in return. This helps encourage close relationships.
- Try seeing criticism in a more positive light. When someone is critical of you, evaluate what the person is saying. Is the criticism valid and constructive?

Can you gain something from this feedback to improve your performance? Remember criticism works only when the person accepts it.

- Praise others instead of putting them down. Give compliments more often. If you like something, say so. Don't reject something or someone merely out of habit. Try to catch people doing things right.
- Recognize that others have something valuable to contribute. Seek out others' opinions and consider them objectively. Listen more attentively to those around you.
- Use your oppositional tendencies to the benefit of yourself and others. Become the "loyal opposition": The person who asks appropriate questions to get others to think clearly. Try to refrain from questions that are self- enhancing.

Action Steps for Change

Now that you have reviewed the Oppositional 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.

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| 1. Be less cynical and more open to new ideas. | 0 1 2 3 |
| 2. Learn to work with people rather than against them. | 0 1 2 3 |
| 3. See constructive criticism as helpful and accept it less defensively. | 0 1 2 3 |
| 4. Focus on what is "right" rather than what is "wrong." | 0 1 2 3 |
| 5. Argue less; discuss more. | 0 1 2 3 |
| 6. Be less quick to judge others. | 0 1 2 3 |
| 7. Learn to trust others more. | 0 1 2 3 |
| 8. Improve my listening skills. | 0 1 2 3 |
| 9. Ask questions constructively, rather than attacking others' ideas. | 0 1 2 3 |

Changing Your Behavior Can Result in These Benefits

- A considerable improvement in the quality of your relationships.
- A more positive attitude.
- The ability to use your effective questioning techniques in a more productive, less antagonistic way.
- Less defensiveness in the face of criticism.
- Greater acceptance of your need to be closer to others.
- An awareness of the importance of knowing all the facts before giving an opinion.
- An increased appreciation for the benefits of a supportive approach to others.
- Improved listening skills.
- A more flexible attitude toward the input of others.