

How to Handle Difficult Conversations with a person who is Critical, Negative & Stern



The Critical person has many positive qualities. They are usually logical, factual, accurate and go by the book. They are continually looking for better ways to do things. Although introverted, they will speak up when they think something is wrong or needs to be improved. To be sure you're dealing with this type, let's take a look at some of their characteristics.

Here are some traits of a Critical person:

- Restrained
- Precise
- High Standards
- Analytical
- Sensitive
- Accurate
- Cautious
- Compliant

Research shows that only **14% of the population is Critical**. Of course there are some types of professions (accounting, engineering) and business areas (IT, Quality) where the percentage may be higher. In general though, this means that *86% of the population* may have challenges communicating with this personality type.

Let's look at some of those challenges. Because Critical people tend to express themselves in a negative, skeptical manner, it is difficult for others to deal with them. While other people may see possibility, Critical people look at what's missing. They are the "glass is half empty" people of the world.

While others might try to help them, they are usually resistant to suggestions. They might prefer to complain and bemoan their circumstances rather than believe that things can get better.

Even though they themselves are sensitive to criticism, they won't hold back their criticism of others. Critical people tend to live in a world that is black and white, right and wrong. They tend to be judgmental and may give the impression that they are "holier than thou".

Specific Tips for Communicating with the Critical Person

- **Do not be touchy-feely.** This style prefers to keep their distance and is uncomfortable with public displays of affection. So keep interactions professional and impersonal.
- **Don't disagree with them directly.** This will only make them defensive and have them dig in their heels. It's better to ask them if they can see the situation from a different perspective. Is it possible that there is a different interpretation. Because they don't want to be seen as narrow-minded (although they may be), they may try to come up with an alternate opinion.
- **"As-is" the conversation.** This means telling the Highly Critical person what it is like for you to communicate with them. When I have been hired to coach this type of person, they are usually resistant to suggestions. And yet they say they want my help. I have had to tell Critical people that I don't think I can help them because of their lack of willingness to consider other possibilities. Then I share a few examples of their resistance. Usually this has them become a bit more open – for a short period of time. So if all else fails, tell it like it is.

Here ye, here ye. From this day forward the DFTC Wizard declares that you shall alter your communication with a Critical person in the following manner. . .

Don't be disorganized or messy.

Prepare your case in advance

Don't be casual, informal or personal.

Approach them in a straightforward, direct way.

Don't force a quick decision.

Use a thoughtful approach. Build credibility by looking at all sides of each issue.

Don't be vague about expectations or fail to follow through.

Present specifics, and do what you say you can do.

Don't be abrupt and rapid.

Draw up an "Action Plan" with scheduled dates and milestones.

Don't appeal to opinion or feelings as evidence.

If you disagree, prove it with data, facts or testimonials from respected people.

Don't use closes, use incentives to get the decision.

Provide them with the information and the time they need to make a decision.

Don't touch them.

Allow them their space.

Don't try to use emotion to persuade them.

Use logic and reasoning to make your case.

Don't use humor to lighten the situation.

Approach the conversation with a serious demeanor.

General Tips for Communicating More Effectively with All Types of People

- With any interaction, the only person you can control is yourself. So there is no sense in wasting energy on trying to change the other person (as nice as that would be). Therefore, you must take 100% responsibility when communicating with others. It is your reaction to them and the conversation that will determine the outcome – far more than the conversation itself.
- Assume the best. Orient yourself to this person's good qualities. C'mon – you can find something if you look hard enough. Remember that everyone has some good qualities. Find something you like and respect about this person. Approach your next conversation with these qualities in mind.

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#1 Mistake Most People Make When Communicating with a Critical Person

Most people try to use emotion and personal persuasion when communicating with a Critical person. They believe that personal experience and the stories of others are compelling.

However a Critical person is persuaded by tangible facts, statistics, and valid research. Objective reasoning is more likely to get results than subjective information such as gut feelings and intuition. So leave your feelings and opinions out of the equation and just stick to the facts!

USE DATA AND EVIDENCE!

Action Plan

Now that you have learned more about the Critical behavioral style, take a moment and think of some people you know who may fit this description (customers, employees, work associates, family, friends or even casual acquaintances). Then, fill out the table below.

Name of Person	My challenges communicating with him/her	Possible tips for communicating more effectively

- The very next interaction you have planned with a Non-Emotional (email, phone, in-person) be calm, logical and sincere.

This report contained just one way to use DISC in your organization – understanding and dealing with others more effectively. Listen to the ways my clients have used the DISC process...

For hiring and selection...

We have been enjoying the DISC consultation for a long time and have had very accurate results. One in particular - the analysis showed that this one candidate had the potential to become very frustrated and would ultimately voluntarily terminate employment. We thought we could manage through the situation, however, we could not and the employee quit due to the stress around the job.

~ David J. Cecere, CPCU, Executive Vice President,
Tompkins Insurance Agencies, Inc., Batavia, NY

For supervisor and manager promotions...

We did indeed offer the supervisor position to the employee we assessed last month and she is doing a great job. She's also much happier in this new position...it's a much better fit for her. Not only has she commented on this, but many other co-workers have even passed along great compliments. So...you could say it's going very well! We really appreciate your insight and help in making this decision. Thanks again for your help.

~ Andrea L. Holland, Former Operations Manager, ExecuScribe, Inc., Rochester, NY

For leadership development...

These DISC assessments have been invaluable in assessing and addressing the specific behaviors of our key management team. This process has provided opportunities for professional growth as well as personal growth for our leadership team.

~ Terry Knapp, HR Director, Ultrafab Inc., Farmington, NY

For sales team development...

What a tool! I was amazed at the accuracy of the DISC assessment. It nailed the behaviors of a sales team member on the head!! Using the DISC assessment will definitely give you an idea of the type of behaviors you may be employing (or are thinking of employing). Certification made sense for us!

~ Alice Curry, HR Manager, Hammer Packaging



This isn't hocus pocus! DISC assessments have become recognized as a proven, powerful tool for many top organizations to solve many of their human resource challenges.

Now is the time to join our "secret society" so you to can become ...a behavioral wizard yourself!

<http://www.discwizardonline.com/disc Certification.html>

The DISC Wizard

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