

Written Transcript:

The i Style

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28:33

Alright, so let's take some time now to talk about the i style. So this is the influence style, people who are very talkative, enthusiastic. From a statistical point of view, actually one of the words, the adjectives, that most captures the essence of the i style turns out to be lively. These people really project a sense of energy, um, very social.

But, I want to take some time and dig a little deeper, find out what's going on beneath the surface, what's driving this behavior. And as we talked about earlier, we all have this very fundamental, human drive to be valuable. From the time that we're born, from the time that we're infants, we have this strong urge to know that we're good, that we're worthwhile, that we're valuable. And the trick is that we all make decisions about what's going to make us valuable. For some of us we're valuable because we get things right, because we're competent, because people like us, so on and so forth. And so, I want to take some time and look at the i, the influencing style, from this perspective.

So one of the core beliefs that we see in people with the i style—and I 'm talking about a belief that's really buried well beneath the surface, that for the most part we're not aware of—but it's this belief that I'm valuable if people like me. So what this looks like on the surface is that we have people who have some very, very strong social needs. Alright, most of us find relationships to be gratifying, but they're particularly rewarding for people with the i style. And I should say, they're particularly rewarding when they go well for people with the i style.

They get restless if they spend too much time alone. They mingle very easily. They have a, in terms of their presence, they show a strong openness to other people as opposed to a guardedness that we might see in a lot of other people. And in fact, a lot of other people, I think to some degree even people with D, C, or S, there's oftentimes a little bit of guardedness when you start up a conversation. You know, maybe it's very unconscious, but there's a little bit of a perception of a threat. With people with the i style, the perception of a threat, really on an unconscious level doesn't seem to be there. It's an opportunity, and they find it very easy to get lost in the conversation. They take responsibility for keeping things active in the conversation, they keep things moving forward and they really keep things from getting awkward. You know, if you're a reserved person going into a party where you don't know a lot of other people, it's really, really handy to have an i by your side.

This makes them really good networkers. They have a gift for making people feel comfortable, getting over the awkwardness. They create new friendships where other people would be content—or it would just seem obvious—to leave things as acquaintances. They really pursue it.

They have a particularly strong attraction to positive emotions. They usually come across as really pleasant. And they maintain optimism almost as a default. This can be overcome by negative emotion at times, but they usually seem very lighthearted and very passionate. When I say they have an attraction to positive emotion, it really is—it's that, but as well—repelled by negative emotion. And so, if you're looking for fun, if you're looking for a good time, they're very much attracted—I mean, we all like to have fun, right?—but, a friend of mine has joked, “attracted to shiny objects,” and they're a little more attracted to shiny objects than the rest of us are, and maybe a little more turned off by the dull objects.

And so, if we've got a task, for instance, that's very tedious, that maybe takes a lot of discipline to get the reward, oftentimes for many—not all—but for many people with the i style, they're going to shy away from this task. They're going to go more for the immediate gratification that comes, the immediate positive emotion that comes along with that, rather than someone with say a DC style who is going to push through that with determination towards the end goal. Oftentimes they're inclined to take the path of least resistance that maximizes the pleasure, the positive emotions, and minimizes those negative emotions. Now of course we're just talking about trends here, so this isn't true of every single person with the i style, but it is a pretty common theme.

So, I talked at the beginning about this belief that I'm valuable if people like me. And so a lot of this positive emotion is tied to relationship, tied to other people, and so love getting praise from other people and oftentimes people with the i style are very quick to give praise to other people. It feels good because they can cause another person's happiness, and it also, I think on an unconscious level, there's a recognition that it causes other people to like them more. They bask a little in the grateful feelings that the recipient has. They like to be the cause of another person's happiness. That contributes to their own self-esteem.

Now we've all been in situations where we've seen someone who uses praise a little bit too often, maybe indiscriminately, that it begins to lose its value a little bit. But it can also be a really useful tool in getting alliance with someone.

One of the most profound ways that we see of this need to have people like me manifest itself is in conflict. And one of the most common strategies for people with this i style is to just gloss over a conflict to avoid damaging the relationship. But because they care so much about the relationship, because this is such a strong source of self-esteem and happiness and value for them, they can be particularly sensitive to criticism or disapproval from other people, and consequently come across as being easily hurt.

For instance, if I don't really care about my car and it gets dinged in the parking lot, it's not going to be a big deal to me. But if I spend all my weekends washing it and waxing it, I'm going to be pretty upset by even a small ding that I get. And the same is true of people who really spend time maintaining and valuing their relationships, whereas someone else this may simply roll off their back, a critical comment, for them it's going to do a lot more damage.

Because they often tend to feel things more deeply, or are simply more aware of their emotional reaction and they like to express themselves, they're a lot more likely—if they're unable to gloss over the conflict—they're a lot more likely to have an outburst, to express those frustrations, sometimes in a pretty emotionally charged way.

So we talked about this need or this belief that people should like me, or I'm valuable if people like me. But a lot of us have that need or that belief. People with the i style take this one step further, actually take it a couple steps further, but we'll get to that a little later on. But they take it the next step, and there's also a belief that I see with a lot of people with the i style is that I'm valuable if people pay attention to me, if I keep people interested or entertained. And the opposite of that is also true. I'm not valuable or I lose my value if people don't pay attention to me or I don't keep people interested or entertained.

And one of the consequences that we see of this is a strong drive to express themselves. They have a very high need to express their emotions. And we have to put ourselves in the i style's shoes for a second here, and emotionally what's going on is that it's very, very gratifying for them to express what they're thinking and feeling. And on an emotional level, it's very rewarding for these folks. And that's definitely not true of everyone. Just like some people find it rewarding to solve a math problem and other people are indifferent to them or indifferent to it, for some people, expressing what you're thinking really is just a task, it's a means of communicating. But for people with

the i style, this can have a real profound sense of emotional happiness associating with this.

And paired with this drive to express themselves, we often see a lack of self-consciousness for people with this style. And perhaps because there's been such a drive to express themselves and so gratifying to express themselves throughout their lives that they've failed to develop the self-monitoring techniques that a lot of us have developed and maybe overdeveloped. But they're really less likely to see the threat in expressing themselves that a lot of us interpret from the environment.

I've got a good friend who does improv comedy, and you know it's comedy where you just get up there, audience members throw out suggestions, and you do something with it. And you know, one day I was talking to him and I asked him, "Aren't you even a little nervous or self-conscious going on?" And he kind of looked at me puzzled. For him it was all upside. There was no potential downside. It was all pure an opportunity to get attention, to have people hear you. There was nothing potentially negative about it, whereas most of us would probably very self-conscious. And that's not true of certainly all i's. There's a lot people with the i style who would be very nervous in that type of situation. But when you're just talking to them one-on-one they don't sense the potential for threat in expressing themselves the way a lot of other people do.

And so they're able to talk in sort of a stream of consciousness, which can be a pro and a con. A lot of people find it, you know on the other side of the coin, find it impossible to turn their filter off. Let's say people with the C style would have a very difficult time just letting go and completely creating a stream of consciousness, they're always monitoring what they're saying to make sure it's accurate or appropriate. So people with the i style without this filter can come across as very spontaneous and outwardly passionate. And it's this lack of a filter for words that often makes them so engaging, which makes them a really good, passionate storyteller. And this ability to speak stream of consciousness

can be an asset for them in some regards and a liability in others. A lot of us have difficulty speaking in a very stream of consciousness way, even if we wanted to, getting absorbed in the moment and just rolling things off our tongues. But, again, it can be a disadvantage in a number of respects as well.

People with the i style report experiencing their emotions in a very powerful way, in a way that's actually a little more difficult to regulate than we would find with someone who is not experiencing them on a conscious level in such a powerful way. If you take for example, you know use the analogy, of someone standing in the ocean and there's a wave coming at them and they're trying to stand their ground. Someone with the C style who has developed mechanisms for muting their emotions, whether they want to or not, that wave is going to be pretty small, that wave of emotion is going to be pretty small and so it's going to be a lot easier to stand your ground, maintain your composure. But if we have someone with the i style, who is again very much in the moment, that wave is going to be pretty intimidating. And, so if you just try to stand there in the same spot, the wave is really going to take you over, it's going to push you down, making it a lot more difficult to maintain that composure or to appear unaffected by the emotion that's coming at you.

And we can see this tendency to experience these emotions very deeply manifest itself in a lot of different ways. So, for instance, when we do research, and let's say we give people a statement and we ask them to rate "How important is this to you?" So, let's say on an empirical level, for instance, when we do research and we give people a statement and we ask them to say "How much do you agree or disagree with this?" or "How important is this to you?" People with the i style consistently give more extreme responses than people with the other styles. They're much more likely to say this is very important or I strongly disagree or I strongly agree than people with other styles are.

So then here we have people who tend to be very open, and they oftentimes don't have the same boundaries that other people have. Their boundaries are just a lot more permeable. And unlike a lot of other people, they don't have a fear of opening up too much or at least that fear is overridden by the satisfaction of expressing themselves. But if anything, they have the opposite fear. It's a fear that their feelings, that their thoughts, their opinions will be ignored. In essence, that their presence will be dismissed, that their significance will be swept aside. That's catastrophic. In the back of the mind, and it may not be consciously playing right up front in the mind, but in the back of the mind, that's really a catastrophic outcome. And this ties back to that belief that I'm valuable if people pay attention to me. I'm valuable if people are interested or entertained by me.

So sometimes as a consequence of this, we see people with the i style really give a much more dramatic presentation of their experiences or beliefs than we would expect other people to give. And, you know, sometimes this loses them a little bit of credibility with other people, especially people a little more emotionally reserved or skeptical.

Similarly, sometimes we can see people really monopolize conversations, talking about themselves, liking to have the spotlight, relating back what the other person says to themselves. You know, we've all been situations where you're telling a story about yourself and they say, "Oh yeah, that reminds me-" and they go on to talk about themselves.

There are certainly other people with the i style, my mom is one of them, who, you know, she can do her share of talking. She loves talking about her experiences and whatnot, but she also has a very keen interest in what's going on in everybody else's lives. She wants to know all the details. She'll ask question after question after question, she's just very interested in the relationship. But for those people who do focus the conversation and bring it back to themselves, it can come across as very self-involved,

pleasantly self-involved, relating people's stories back to themselves. But unlike, for instance, someone with the D style, they're more surprised to find out others might see them as a bit self-absorbed or egocentric, that they're failing to ask questions about others, that they're happy to talk about their own lives and ideas might be seen by others as a little self-absorbed.

Now, the i style really seems to take a lot of energy. And if we look at the research, there is a slight trend for people as they get older to show slightly lower scores on the i style, and people who are teenagers are more likely to come up high in the i style. This is consistent with actually research that's been out there for a while that people tend to get a little less extraverted as they get older. Perhaps they get a little more reflective, but perhaps there's also the energy necessary to be so outward isn't there as much.

They're often really willing to really jump into situations without a lot of reservation. And they may not describe themselves as risk-takers per say, but they have an openness to newness, to adventures. When they envision an outcome, their attention is usually focused on the positive outcomes rather than the potential negative outcomes, easily excited by new ideas. And for this reason, they can often come across as a little bit scattered. And there's a lot of people with the i style who describe themselves as very, very organized, but they can still seem a little scattered because they enjoy having multiple different projects going on at the same time. They see something exciting and they just immediately add it to their list of goals.

For that reason, people can see them as kind of big talkers with little follow through at times. Say I have someone with a high i, you have to what he says with a grain of salt. Now that's definitely not true of every person with a high i style, and I in fact know a lot of people with a high i who are very good at follow through, are very organized. But there is that energy that seems frantic sometimes to other people.

Along those lines, we often see the people with this style get bored easily, and so they're often multi-tasking, you know, may start things that they don't finish. When the luster or the lure of the project wears off, their attention drifts off with it, so they need a lot of stimulation a lot of the time. And because they're so strongly attracted to positive emotions, like excitement and fun, they show a lot less desire to get wrapped up in less interesting details or doing things systematically, which may require more discipline and doesn't have the immediate gratification we talked about earlier.

And I think one of the consequences of this is that, there are times when people with the i style can come across as shallow. Again, because they're attracted to those positive emotions and repelled by those negative emotions, they choose the path of least resistance. And what's important here is when you're systematically choosing the path of least resistance in the course of your development. Alright, that has consequences.

And so if you get in a pattern of not asking yourself the tough questions because it's unpleasant, not pushing through the challenges of let's say not getting it. So, on the other hand, if we have someone with let's say a DC style, who is reading an article and it's not coming to them, there's often a sense of determination and persistence to push through the negative emotion for the eventual reward of getting it. They take on the challenge. They have a very questioning style that keeps them pushing until they understand or until they find the answer. And there are some times when people with the i style will simply move on to something that's more immediately rewarding. And very often this is some sort of social endeavor. It's very rewarding, instantly rewarding, and they know they're skilled at it to work with other people, to have the fun of talking with other people.

And while we're on the topic of shallowness, there's a second topic that I want to talk about, and this is something I see, certainly not everyone with the i style, particularly with people who are underdeveloped in their personal development, who you might call

immature in their personal development, but there's a sense of shallowness where the person comes across as phony. And we're probably all familiar, we probably all could think of someone who is very high i, very high energy, loves to be around people, loves to talk, who comes across as a little bit phony.

And so I just want to take a second and hypothesize about what may be going on with that person. And what I've often found when I've—cause I've done work as a therapist—what I've often found with folks who have this problem or come across this way, is there is a very innate sense of insecurity, a profound sense of worthlessness. Now, the healthy developmental path is to choose a path where I will eventually value myself for who I am, learn to believe that I am inherently valuable. Alright, nothing can take that away, nothing I do is going to make me more or less valuable. But instead, the path that these folks often take is tying their value to some of these beliefs that I mentioned before—so this belief that I'm valuable if people like me or I'm valuable if people pay attention to me or if I keep people interested. And so, what they end up doing is really squashing down their true emotions, their true feelings, and they focus their energy on keeping people entertained, on keeping them engaged, making people like them.

And so, eventually what they learn to do is they learn not to trust their primary emotions. They still can feel things very deeply, but eventually they become less and less aware of what their true emotions are and more and more aware of what these pretenses that they have are, these artificial emotions, this stage that they're putting on. We all have this concept of the person who is putting on an act for the world to see. They put more and more of their attention and self-worth in that presentation and less and less attention gets paid to who they really are, what their real fears are, what their real insecurities are, what their real opinions are.

Now, in this state, I can certainly build some self-esteem, but it's false self-esteem. It's a self-esteem that's built on a foundation of sand. It's, in a sense, perpetuating a maniacal trap because the more I am rewarded by getting people's attention or having people like me or having people praise me, the message that's sending myself unconsciously is that my value is conditional on other people's reactions, it's conditional on me performing or me behaving or me achieving. And so that really heightens this sense of insecurity because my value can be lost as opposed to finding myself in a situation where we have very mature people, where there's a sense of humility and understanding and calmness, where I realize achieving is not going to make me more valuable. Achieving isn't-, getting people's attention is not going to make me more worthwhile. I'm inherently valuable. Nothing I do or say is going to make me more or less valuable.

For them it's this situation where there's this constant state of insecurity, a constant need to validate themselves. And as a consequence, we have someone who is in a very real sense disintegrated. There's no integration between who they really are—what they really feel—and the behaviors they're putting forth, the image that they're putting forth. And so what the rest of us see, what the rest of the world sees is phoniness.

And then finally, we've been talking about this idea that I'm valuable if...whatever. And so we started with this sense that I'm valuable if people like me. Let me take that up a notch and say I'm valuable, not only if people like me, but if they pay attention to me, if I keep people interested and entertained. And take that up even another notch that we, this belief system we really see deep down beneath the surface on a very unconscious level having some pretty concrete consequences, is a belief that says I'm valuable if I'm special. I'm valuable if I'm admired. Or, I'm valuable if I'm adored. And this operates to different degrees in different people who have this i style.

But, so, if we take for instance, let's say someone with the D style, this is someone who has a fundamental drive to be the best, right, I'm valuable if I'm on top. This is a necessarily competitive outlook. With the i on the other hand, this specialness, this desire to be admired or adored, isn't by nature competitive. Those ego needs express themselves differently in the high i person. There's a need to be loved to the extreme, the desire to be special, but not necessarily to be better than other people that we would see more in the D style.

So for instance, we see a strong, strong craving for public recognition, looks for recognition, really craves approval from other people; wanting to be popular, really wanting to be with the "in" crowd. They want to be with the exciting, dynamic group of people, the cool kids as you might say. And they're also a lot more likely to engage in self-promotion. They're okay promoting themselves and it's not quite as offensive as someone who is openly arrogant. It doesn't come across as necessarily arrogant where, where again there's that inherent sense of competition. What offends us about someone else being arrogant is if they're lifting themselves up, they're by implication putting you down. With a high i, when they're promoting themselves, it's not quite as offensive. It's lacking the inherent competitiveness that we might see with someone who is arrogant, where there's a subtext that I'm better than you. With the i though, they're simply communicating their belief that they're good, you know, very, very good, not necessarily superior, but this idea that I'm special.

Alright, so that's understanding the i style. Now of course there's the lingering question of, the practical question of working with the i style. How do I coach? How do I tell people to work better with their coworkers who are high in i? You know, all of those. And that's really, we'll talk about that in a later session, but that's really what the report is all about. The report drives that discovery and that's what it's meant to do on a practical level. But what we've been hoping to do here today is to just get a deeper understanding of what's going on beneath the surface.

