

Key Drivers Explanation – Transactional Analysis



Deepening your understanding of how your drivers shape your behaviour

People report that a situation will often cause them to either be at their best or be at their worst.

There are many factors which can bring about or contribute to “states” of high or low performance, such as energy levels, interest, motivation, knowledge and experience. These things can and do have a bearing on our ability to give of our best.

However, there are other factors that can have a major influence on our ability to do something well in one situation and our inability to do the same thing in a different situation.

For example, have you ever been in a situation where you’ve had to perform a task with a familiar audience and been able to perform the task effortlessly; you were “in the groove” and enjoyed the experience? Have you ever had to perform a similar task with a less-familiar audience and it hasn’t gone too well. You fumbled for your words, were distracted by something/someone or felt totally uncomfortable and definitely not “in your usual groove”?

Well the good news is you’re not on your own. We all have or do experience these situations at some time in our lives...

Psychologically there is a direct link between giving of your best and being free from anxiety or working under healthy, stimulating tension. Words such as “confident”, “courageous”, “positively challenged”, “stretched”, “self-belief” and “at ease” are often used to describe this anxiety-free state.

There is also a direct link between giving less than our best and the conscious or unconscious, sometimes real or imagined fear of what “is going” to happen to us. Words such as “failure”, “guilt”, “disappointment”, “rejection”, “imperfect” are often used to describe this fearful or anxiety-ridden state. The consequence of these states is that in some situation they can have a profound positive or negative impact on our behaviour.

When free from anxiety we are more likely to be able to tap into the more confident, self-assured part of ourselves and therefore more able to behave competently.

When anxiety or stress sets in then we are more likely to be swamped by the fear of what might happen, less able to tap into the more resourceful self and therefore more likely to behave dysfunctionally.

From a developmental perspective it makes sense that the more we can be in the anxiety-free state the more likely we are to be able to give more of the best of ourselves. One way of doing this is to become more consciously aware of when we are becoming or feeling anxious, what causes it, how we currently respond to it and finally what can we do to change it.

The questionnaire you have just completed is designed to help you better understand critical situations that get in your way and unhelpfully impinge on your impact and/or contribution. This is so that you can develop strategies to enable you to transition into more healthy, constructive and sustainable mindsets and behaviour patterns.

We all need a degree of each of the Universal Drivers; we need some “Be Strong” in order to be resilient and self-reliant in the face of the ever-changing environment around us. We need some “Be Perfect” in order to set standards that fit with our/others’ expectations, needs and wants. We need some “Try Hard” to enable us to strive to achieve. We need some “Hurry Up” in order to give some pace and urgency to our lives and what we are trying to achieve. Finally we also need a smattering of “Please Others” to enable us to function effectively as members of teams/groups/communities and in relationships with our partners/families.

In most situations where we feel secure and in control, these drivers kick-in appropriately and enable us to behave in a way that brings the best of who we are to bear in all that we do.

However, there are situations where our sense of security or control is diminished and we feel insecure. In these situations our drivers kick-in in a way that is intended to help us cope and get us back into feeling secure and in control. Unfortunately in these situations our drivers (in particular our dominant drivers) go into over-drive and the outcome is that our behaviour becomes defensive and, more often than not, unhelpful to either ourselves or to others.

The questionnaire you have completed identifies your dominant drivers. Take some time to have a read through these, particularly those definitions relating to your dominant drivers. It's also helpful to read the others too, as there may be some situations that surface some of the other Drivers. As you read the descriptions highlight what seems most like you/true/very familiar and what feels most unlike you.

The Beginnings of Stress – The Five Drivers

Values	Result in messages	Result in drivers
Achievement; autonomy; success; being right; getting it right	<p>Don't</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • make a mistake • take risks • be natural • be childlike 	Be Perfect
Consideration; kindness; service; compliance; being liked/valued	<p>Don't</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be assertive • be important • be different • say no 	Please Others
Speed; efficiency; getting things done	<p>Don't</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • take too long • relax • waste time 	Hurry Up
Courage; strength; dependability; self-sufficiency	<p>Don't</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • show your feelings • give in • ask for, or accept, help 	Be Strong
Persistence; diligence; effort; determination; doggedness	<p>Don't</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be satisfied • relax • give up 	Try Hard

The Five Universal Drivers - 'The ANTIDOTES'

BE PERFECT

I have the right to be myself.

I have the right to make a mistake.

To err is human. I am human.

The search for perfection leads to paralysis.

PLEASE OTHERS

I have the right not to be responsible for the feelings of others.

I have self-respect and consideration for my feelings, wants and needs.

I assume responsibility for my own feelings.

HURRY UP

I have the right to live in the present.

I have the right to take my time.

I have the right to achieve what I want.

BE STRONG

I have the right to express my feelings.

I have the right to be close to someone.

I have the right to be strong or weak.

I have the right to be open to others.

TRY HARD

I have the right to stop what I start.

I have the right to win or lose.

I have the right to achieve

Be Perfect

Language and Appearance Clues

People often use the following words and phrases when they are in the grip of a 'Be Perfect' driver.

"as it were"	"I should have"	"certainly"
"completely"	"possibly"	"not good enough"
"I can't" "probably"	"I must"	"I'm no good at...."
"one might say"	"could have been better"	

They speak in completed sentences, perhaps numbering off certain points. Their dress is usually very coordinated and elegant. Their language and appearance are all indications of their desire to be perfect. When expressing their thoughts, their own internal high standards or the perceived expectations of others may be evident.

Characteristics

People influenced by the Be Perfect driver set very high, exacting standards for themselves and they may also expect a lot from others. They prefer their surroundings to be neat and tidy and approach tasks in a highly organised way, using lists or established methods to get things done effectively and efficiently. Paying meticulous attention to detail, the Be Perfect driver can prompt people strongly influenced by it to repeatedly check their work and take the time to get things done 'just right'. Having a strong sense of responsibility and moral code, those influenced by the Be Perfect driver remain focused on the task at hand and get things done. They prefer working with detailed plans rather than broad strategic ideas.

Causes of Stress

Situations that interfere with the routine or structured approach to addressing tasks are likely to cause stress. People with a pronounced Be Perfect driver find disorganisation or low standards uncomfortable and prefer to see tasks through to the end before turning their attention to the next task. Perceiving themselves as out of control and in risk of failure in the face of competing demands. Requests they consider nonsensical, or tight deadlines, can trigger a stress response once the Be Perfect driver comes into play

Stress Behaviour

Once the Be Perfect-driven perceives a threat to their sense of control, they feel increasingly tense and make attempts to regain control. This may manifest in them compiling lists, prioritising, making detailed plans and devising structured means of organising the situation. They may become less involved in team work or appear distracted as they focus on what needs to be done. They may become irritable or sensitive if interrupted. Being goal-orientated, those with a dominant Be Perfect driver will focus on the detail of the task at hand and may overlook the bigger picture or be dismissive of the input, views or suggestions of others. They may avoid requesting help, working extra hard to satisfy their need for control, and to prevent them not meeting their high standards they may over prepare or avoid situations associated with increased pressure. This is due to negative predictions of their perceived inadequacy or poor performance being exposed. They will prefer to consider how their performance could have been improved rather than acknowledge what they have done well, and will discount positive feedback.

Ways of reducing the pattern of stress in self

- Accept praise by thanking people for their comments and acknowledging your efforts, rather than dismissing compliments.
- Make a point of communicating your feelings, talk to someone, ask for support if necessary, write down your concerns and ask yourself if they are realistic; “what would the worst possible outcome be?....what would be the best that could happen?... and what is the middle ground?”
- Make a conscious effort to acknowledge the values and opinions of others.
- Recognise any disparity between expectations for yourself and others and create some new, less demanding standards that enable you to use your skills and creativity.
- Be willing to laugh at yourself – others tend to feel more comfortable with imperfect people.
- Recognise the value of your mistakes in terms of learning.
- Prioritise – when under stress the tendency is to treat everything as important and so energy is poured into issues that are not of the utmost importance.
- Imagine performing the stress inducing activity in a calmer, more composed manner and observe what you would be doing differently, then set a goal to incorporate one small stress reducing behaviour at a time.

Ways of reducing stress in others operating under the influence of the “Be Perfect” driver

- Ensure they are clear about their roles and responsibilities.
- Be punctual and keep arrangements with them.
- Show your appreciation of their achievements e.g. “That report you produced was excellent because
- Never discount their worries; acknowledge and explore them.
- If delegating tasks, clearly explain the level of detail required.
- If you have to confront them, do it gently, firmly and calmly.

Please Others

Language and appearance clues

- Being apologetic when asked to state an opinion and using a soft, unsteady voice.
- Posture may include slouching shoulders, the mouth may be covered by one of the hands when speaking, physical distance may be kept from others and the gaze may be averted.
- The arms may be crossed for protection.
- Statements are turned into questions by using phrases like: "Is that OK with you?" or "What do you think about ...?"
- Comments such as "We'll do whatever you want" will be used.
- Being tentative when making requests i.e. "If it wouldn't be too much trouble ... er I ... um would likeyou to if you don't mind".
- Inauthentic smiles may be observed if the person is being criticised or expressing negative emotion; these are associated with fear. Genuine or "Duchenne" smiles involve the corners of the mouth turning up and crinkling around the eyes.

The tone of voice is often high, rising at the end of each sentence. The person with the strong "Please Others" drive will make a lot of effort to look attractive and will be fairly conservative in terms of appearance, avoiding unconventional attire so as not to make too strong a statement. If expressing their views they will attempt to be impartial. They will use introductory statements to justify their comments i.e. "I wouldn't normally say anything but....", and they will dismiss the value of their opinions e.g. "It's not important" or "It really doesn't matter".

Characteristics

People who are driven by a need to Please Others enjoy the company of other people and tend to feel comfortable and be talkative in social situations. When dealing with people they are happy to initiate conversation and are skilled at putting others at ease. Being keen to Please Others, people strongly influenced by this drive are very helpful, pleasant to everyone and co-operative. They are diplomatic, have a strong dislike of disagreement and are conscious not to say things that may be considered out of place. They pay close attention to their language and monitor their behaviour to avoid discord or upsetting or offending anyone. In situations where opposing views are expressed, those driven to Please Others take a back seat or make neutral suggestions and can be passive if in the company of more assertive people. Their obliging nature may prompt them to put the needs of others above their own.

Causes of Stress

People influenced by a drive to Please Others experience distress if criticised or if they perceive themselves as being overlooked or ignored, which may happen at times due their passivity.

Being concerned that they may be blamed or rejected generates tension and being pressed to express an opinion can prove stressful to those keen to Please Others, in case it is not congruent with the views of others. Lone decision making may prove challenging and having a marked need for external approval, not being valued or recognised for what they do results in elevated stress levels, as does being around more assertive people. Allowing others to make decisions for them can cause frustration.

Stress Behaviour

When pleasing others is a priority, any discord or difference of opinion will cause the person to become increasingly uncomfortable, passive and withdrawn, as they ruminate on what other people will think of

them and what they can do to placate others. They may take on too much so they can avoid having to say “no” for fear of being negatively evaluated, and will go out of their way to take action to protect others from blame or criticism or to avert a potentially heated situation. This behaviour helps them to feel valued in the short term although in the longer term this behaviour is disempowering for others, who are deprived of the opportunity to learn from their actions and gain a sense of achievement and satisfaction from meeting a challenge. Criticism will prove particularly difficult to receive and their response will be to take the feedback personally and become discouraged. Under stress they will become emotional and distracted and as their frustration builds they will seek reassurance from others.

Ways of reducing the pattern of stress in self

- Feeling highly responsible for others, people who are driven to please, expect others to reciprocate and look after them. In order to break through this it is important to be willing to acknowledge that you have some control over what happens to you and accept responsibility for what you do to others.
- Focus on the facts of the situation. Becoming passive or emotional is often based on assumptions that your point is not valid or that others do not like you or your behaviour.
- Avoid having unreasonable demands placed on you by stating your feelings, needs and thoughts.
- Acknowledge that people have the right to ask and you have the right to refuse. Saying “no” is refusing a request and is different from rejecting the person.
- Be assertive. Listen carefully to others and check that you have understood their message
- Make “I” statements, i.e. “I would like to suggest.....”, “I don’t like...” and be honest about your feelings with the voice clear, firm and appropriately loud for the situation.
- Use assertive body language, maintain eye contact and ensure the stance is open, erect and balanced.
- Learn to use constructive criticism that does not involve blame, e.g. “I feel irritated when you interrupt me” as opposed to “you irritate me”.

Ways of reducing stress in others operating under the influence of the “Please Others” driver

- Calmly explain to them that you would really appreciate their thoughts and that their input is valuable.
- Thank them politely.
- Never lose your temper.
- Deliver criticism constructively and clearly and normalise the discomfort people can associate with receiving feedback.
- If you have to confront them, do it with patience.
- Acknowledge them for being the person they are, e.g. “I really enjoy working with you”. This is a different form of acknowledgement than for the person with a “Be Perfect” driver, which is primarily for what they have achieved.
- Pay them lots of personal compliments. If you say “That report you did was really good”, the “Please Others” person will be thinking, “Okay, so the report was good, but does she really like me?”

Hurry Up

Language and appearance clues

“When will you finish that?”

“How are you doing?” (repeatedly)

“Quick”

“Get going”

“Hurry up”

“Don’t waste time”

“We’ll cross that bridge when we come to it”

“Let’s get started and think about the detail later”

They may speak and move very rapidly. Their appearance may be untidy and they will usually be doing more than one thing at a time. They will appear lively and talkative and will enjoy having a joke. In meetings where detailed plans are discussed or when they are required to follow set procedures they may appear bored, displaying a slouched posture, looking around or using fidgeting gestures such as finger-tapping, foot tapping or wriggling about in their chair.

Characteristics

These people will usually be cheerful, energetic and carefree. They will enjoy being in the midst of team or social activities and will be comfortable being in the limelight. Happy to entertain they will be enthusiastic and drawn to fun, stimulating situations and will be the “life and soul of the party” at social events. People influenced by this driver crave and seek excitement and will be keen to take on new projects. They will move quickly from generating ideas to setting about implementing them and will “get stuck in”, immersing themselves into tasks. Their enthusiasm may result in them taking on a number of tasks at once and their attention will be focused on the parts of the project that appeal to them. Their spontaneity will make it unlikely that they will persevere with repetitive tasks, which they will consider boring and they will prefer to tackle problems or obstacles if and when they arise rather than preparing contingency plans. They will pay little attention to detail; others may perceive their apparent disorganized, casual approach and their tendency to misplace things as chaotic. They will be flexible in the face of change and will view rules and procedures as stifling.

Causes of Stress

Environments that cause people with a strong “Hurry Up” drive to spend prolonged periods alone or in quiet environments will generate stress, as will being required to work in a very structured, prescribed way. Having little to do, only being required to work on one task at a time, or having to pay close attention to detail, will prove challenging for those who are stimulated by throwing themselves into things. Working on projects that involve prior planning will be unstimulating and will create a sense of demotivation. They will find waiting annoying and will become irritated if things don’t go to plan.

Stress Behaviour

They will find quiet environments dull and unappealing and in such situations their tendency to make their presence known and have a good time may be considered inappropriate. Under stress their already disorganised behaviour and appearance may be more pronounced. They may sometimes (although not always) look unkempt, turn up late to meetings or arrive unprepared. Being lively and talkative they may talk charismatically about the aspects of the task they have approached and overlook the more detailed elements. When deadlines loom these people may have to apply themselves by working longer hours to ensure the task will be completed. Their short attention span and need for creativity can prompt these people to talk over others or disregard their opinions and become easily distracted. If faced with unexpected obstacles the person driven to succeed may become very tense and others might find themselves on the receiving end of their frustration.

Ways of reducing the pattern of stress in self

- Organise your environment. An untidy work setting causes frustration and can result in tasks taking longer than necessary.
- Recognise that your worth is based on much more than what you can achieve and get done.
- Acknowledge that some tasks require your whole concentration and energy and work on one thing at a time.
- Rank your priorities and create structure – identify the times when you work best and schedule in the most demanding tasks for that time. Leave room for flexibility in your timetable; write lists to help establish routine and order.
- Set yourself goals and take time to create your action plan instead of just identifying the goal. Consider any potential obstacles and work out in advance how they might be practically approached. Build in rewards along the way to help maintain motivation and focus.
- Take time to reflect and take part in non-competitive activities that aren't time limited.
- Learn to enjoy the journey rather than just arriving at the destination. Make a point of identifying small things that you appreciate every day. Express your gratitude of others.
- Practice your empathy and listening skills.

Ways of reducing stress in others operating under the influence of the “Hurry Up” driver

- Channel their creativity and spontaneity by encouraging them to approach projects in stages and brainstorm at each step.
- Praise them for their input and efficiency.
- Acknowledge and compliment them for paying attention to detail, focusing on one task or taking time.
- Don't respond to or be intimidated by their outbursts. Be aware that it is most likely that these people enjoy the company of others and if they are left alone when irritable they will soon seek contact and be more personable.

Be Strong

Language and appearance clues

The “Be Strong” is conscious not to appear vulnerable, so they will appear cool and aloof. Their language will be distanced from feelings:

“That makes me sad” rather than “I feel sad” Words like “one”, “you”, “we”, “it” are used to replace “I”

Their attempts to resist revealing their feelings will result in them being very private and they will prefer not to discuss personal matters. They will be cautious when forming relationships or dealing with others, and to avoid being seen as weak they will reject offers of assistance. They will use phrases such as:

“I can cope”, “I can do that”, and “I don’t need any help”

Their reluctance to display emotions will also translate to their body language. The body may appear stiff, the face will lack expression and gestures will be kept to a minimum, and they will tend to distance themselves from loud, gregarious people.

Characteristics

Independence and self-sufficiency are characteristic of the “Be Strong” driver. People with a dominant “Be Strong” driver will be industrious, responsible, and comfortable working in environments that offer little support or social interaction. They will enjoy tasks that require attention to detail or repetition and will have a preference for autonomous decision-making. Being persistent and task focused they will be determined to continue progressing towards their goals in the face of obstacles, difficulties or discouragement. This can help those driven to “Be Strong” to develop a repertoire of practical problem solving techniques that make them capable, reliable and valuable. It is also likely that their achievements result in them being quietly confident of their ability. Quiet settings and interests will appeal to those strongly influenced by the “Be Strong” driver as they do not have a marked need for social contact and affiliation.

Causes of Stress

Stress will be caused if these people are placed in situations that require joint decision-making or if surrounded by people. They will experience discomfort if in the company of people who are overly friendly or familiar and will feel awkward if witnessing others display expressions of emotion, due to their own tendency to be restrained. A significant cause of tension is the fear of rejection they predict would take place if they were to express how they feel or expose their perceived weaknesses.

Stress Behaviour

In stressful situations the “Be Strong” driver prompts people strongly influenced by it to retreat, withdrawing from interaction with others, and they will have to be pressed to contribute to conversation. They will become serious, increasingly quiet, will be reluctant to share information and may appear detached and impersonal when dealing with others. Attempting to prevent their perceived vulnerabilities from being revealed, their focus on the task at hand will intensify to the degree where they may disregard the opinions and expectations of others. In extreme situations they may become angry, even aggressive, especially when they feel that their ‘weaknesses’ are under threat of being exposed.

Ways of reducing the pattern of stress in self

- Recognise that accepting help is not a sign of weakness. Learn to collaborate and receive help as well as using your skills to help others.
- Acknowledge that you have needs and feelings like everyone else and use “I” statements to express them, e.g. “I feel anxious” or “I need your help”.
- Practice observing how others are feeling by paying attention to their comments and use empathic statements to show you understand their emotions.
- Be aware that other people may not view what you consider to be weaknesses in the same way you do.

Ways of reducing stress in others operating under the influence of the “Be Strong” driver

- Acknowledge their input and make a point of praising them for consideration and kindness, as their characteristic withdrawal can result in them being taken for granted.
- Show your appreciation by giving them a surprise treat.
- Avoid grand, public gestures or over familiarity and match their restrained manner when communicating with them.
- Use irony to address their doggedness i.e. “I must say, you are the most unreliable person”.
- Maintain an even vocal tone and do not shout as this will prompt them to retreat even further.
- When delivering instructions ensure that they are clear and check they have understood exactly what is required of them.

Try Hard

Language and appearance clues

- Often the person with a prominent “Try Hard” driver uses the word “try” in conversation e.g. “I’ll try and get it finished” or “I’m trying my best”. This expresses their self-doubt and in practice usually means that the amount of effort that goes into trying prevents them from actually doing or completing the task.
- Other typical words and phrases used by those with a “Try Hard” driver are “I can’t”, “I don’t understand”, “it’s very difficult”, “must”, “should”, “ought” and “need to”.
- Often this person appears very tense and restless. They will find it difficult to relax, will fidget and frown and may seem distracted. They will present themselves in away that they consider fitting for their position and their language will reveal their rigid, quite demanding standards and strong moral code i.e. “It wouldn’t be right for me to do it any other way”.

Characteristics

The person with a strong “Try Hard” driver is often intense and has a strong sense of responsibility. They work very hard in a systematic and precise way and commit themselves to following correct procedure and protocol, which they rarely deviate from. They have high standards, and set themselves ambitious and sometimes unrealistic goals. They take on lots of tasks, which may in some situations not be completed. Being respectful of authority, status conscious and sensitive to how they are perceived by others, they will behave in a conservative, socially appropriate manner, keen to maintain their reputation. Their tendency to experience self-doubting thoughts results in feelings of insecurity and apprehension, which reinforces their beliefs about having to “Try Hard”. They assume that that their worth is associated with the effort expended, therefore their focus is on the process of carrying out the task correctly rather than completing it. These people are highly self-disciplined and will not be distracted from the tasks at hand by opportunities for immediate reward or gratification. They will have an interest in righting what they perceive as wrongs and may be drawn towards helping the underdog or getting involved with political or other causes.

Causes of Stress

Placing significant importance on how they are perceived by others, these people will find receiving criticism stressful. They also experience emotional tension if they consider themselves to be in a situation where their behaviour or performance could damage their reputation. Being in novel situations or facing challenges puts those strongly influenced by the “Try Hard” driver under pressure as a consequence of the apprehensive thinking style they tend to adopt. Demanding tasks that involve and rely upon joint working can generate stress for those driven to “Try Hard” as will facing obstacles or undertaking tasks that require the generation of creative, unorthodox solutions.

Stress Behaviour

The self-doubting thinking characteristic of this driver can be adaptive and can spur people on to persist where others may give up. However as stress intensifies this trepidation can manifest itself as indecisiveness and tentativeness. To address this, the person will work increasingly hard and will become more exacting, perhaps directing their efforts inappropriately. Under stress, they will become frustrated if faced with obstacles or with the efforts or input of others. Their response will be to take on more as they become more and more self-reliant due to their belief that “the best way to get things done is to do it yourself”. They will be easily discouraged by criticism, which they will take as a personal slight and their reaction may be to throw in the towel or display awkward or rebellious behaviour.

Ways of reducing the pattern of stress in self

- Become aware of how often you use the word “try” and use more concrete terms such as “I will” or “I won’t” instead.
- Recognise that your beliefs about what you “should” do are self-imposed. Challenge these by changing “should do” to “could do”.
- Before taking on extra work, check that it is realistic for you to do so and that you want to do it. If your schedule is full, decide what you will give up in order to take on the new job.
- Work on as few tasks at a time as possible and set realistic time limits and short-term goals.
- Focus on the things that are within your control to change.
- Stop comparing yourself to others – such comparisons are biased and more often than not inaccurate.
- Set realistic standards for yourself that are not based on competing with others – unrealistic expectations generate disappointment and guilt.
- Avoid predicting negative or catastrophic outcomes.
- Acknowledge your strengths.
- Remind yourself that others don’t evaluate your worth in the same way you do.
- Take part in pleasurable, relaxing, non-competitive activities.

Ways of reducing stress in others operating under the influence of the “Try Hard” driver

- Do not buy in to their competitiveness and biased comparisons of themselves to others. Do not get involved in arguments that are focused on comparisons e.g. “You don’t understand as much as I do”.
- Never let them off what they have committed themselves to do. If you do, the implication is that you don’t expect them to succeed and they will be encouraged to continue taking on tasks without completing them.
- Acknowledge and compliment them for finishing tasks rather than for trying hard. Encourage them to take on fewer tasks and achieve and complete more.