

USING DISC PERSONALITY ASSESSMENTS IN MEDICAL EDUCATION

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Family Medicine Focus

VIGNETTE

Denise, a third-year family medicine resident, has difficult interactions with Shirley, an intern. Shirley seems unsettled by Denise's requests and isn't as friendly with Denise as she is with the other residents. From Shirley's perspective, Denise never asks about her or her day; she just rattles off tasks. Denise and Shirley would like a better working relationship.

BACKGROUND AND HISTORY

Effective teamwork in family medicine education is critical, yet teams often struggle with communication due to diverse personality types. The DISC assessment, developed by psychologist William Marston, categorizes personalities based on two dimensions: outgoing vs reserved, and task-oriented vs people-oriented.¹ This results in four primary personality types: (D)ominant, (I)nteractive, (S)upportive, and (C)onscientious.

DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERISTICS

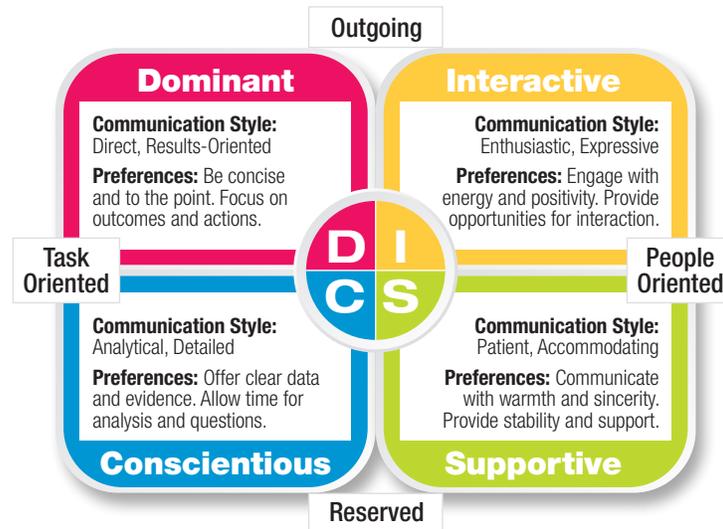
DISC provides actionable insights for improving interpersonal interactions.² Persons trained in DISC can usually easily identify another person's primary DISC type. Enneagram, another popular personality methodology, requires self-determination of type. Myers-Briggs and Enneagrams are often used for personal growth, while DISC is conceptually easier to comprehend and implement for enhancing team dynamics and conflict resolution.

APPLICATIONS IN MEDICAL EDUCATION

While the DISC assessment has been sparingly studied in medical education, it has been more robustly studied in the business literature.³ DISC type can evolve given external experiences, so regular reassessment ensures current insights into one's behaviors. DISC typing is also context-specific.³ By understanding communication preferences within a team, leaders can tailor their conflict resolution strategies, fostering a more collaborative environment.

USING DISC

Study of DISC has been limited among physicians and has anecdotally been described as a useful within work environment communication, productivity, and teamwork.⁴ To facilitate productive conflict, it is essential to communicate effectively with each DISC personality type:



TRAINING AND ACCESS

Effective use of DISC assessments requires proper training. Many organizations offer DISC certification programs and free assessments are online.⁵ Group training with facilitators is another option. Interpretation support and real-world use cases enhance the tool's effectiveness.

VIGNETTE

Denise and Shirley's residency program has incorporated DISC assessments into team-building exercises. Denise learned that her DISC type is Dominant, preferring direct communication, while Shirley's DISC type is Supportive, preferring warmth and harmony. Denise and Shirley tried to work together by communicating with one another according to their preferences.

DISC provided a structured approach to managing these personality differences. This understanding can lead to more harmonious interactions, better problem solving, and improved overall team performance. As teams navigate the complexities of medical training, these insights can promote a positive and productive learning environment.

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