

What Kind of a Defender Are You?

Not all of our communication is defensive, but each of us has a tendency to engage in either subordinate or dominant defensiveness. The following table presents twelve sets of choices that will help you see whether you tend to be more subordinate or dominant when you communicate defensively.

Complete the questionnaire by allocating 10 points between the two alternatives in each of the twelve rows. For example, if you never ask permission when it is not needed, but you do give or deny permission frequently, you may give yourself 0 and 10 points, respectively, in the third row. However, if you do each of these behaviors about equally, though at different times, you may want to give yourself 5 points for each alternative.

Add your total points for each column. Whichever number is larger, identifies your defensive style.

Subordinate Defensiveness

_____ Explain, prove, justify your actions, ideas, or feelings more than is required for results wanted.

_____ Ask why things are done the way they are, when you really want to change them. *Why don't they ... ?*

_____ Ask permissions when not needed. *Is it okay with you if ...?*

_____ Give away decisions, ideas, or power when it would be appropriate to claim them as your own. *Don't you think that ...?*

_____ Apologize, feel inadequate, say *I'm sorry* when you're not.

_____ Submit or withdraw when it's not in your best interest. *Whatever you say ...*

_____ Lose your cool, lash out, cry where it's inappropriate (turning your anger toward yourself).

_____ Go blank, click off, and be at a loss for words just when you want to have a ready response. *I should've said ...* (afterwards)

_____ Use coping humor, hostile jocularities, or put yourself down when "buying time" or honest feedback would get better results. *Why don't you lay off?*

_____ Use self-deprecating adjectives and reactive verbs. *I'm just a ... I'm just doing what I was told.*

_____ Use the general *you* and *they* when *I* and personal names would state the situation more clearly. *They really hassle you here.*

_____ Smile to cover up feelings or put yourself down since you don't know what else to do and it's nice.

_____ TOTAL Subordinate Points

Dominant Defensiveness

_____ Prove that you're right. *I told you so. Now see, that proves my point.*

_____ Give patient explanations but few answers. *It's always been done this way. We tried that before, but*

_____ Give or deny permission. *Oh, I couldn't let you do that.*

_____ Make decisions or take power as your natural right. *The best way to do it is Don't argue, just do as I say.*

_____ Prod people to get the job done. *Don't just stand there*

_____ Take over a situation or decision even when it's delegated; get arbitrary. *My mind is made up.*

_____ Lose your cool, yell, pound the desk where it's inappropriate (turning your anger toward others).

_____ Shift responsibility for something you should have taken care of yourself. *You've always done it before. What're you all of a sudden upset for now?*

_____ Use coping humor, baiting, teasing, hostile jocularities, mimicry to keep other people off balance so you don't have to deal with them. *What's the matter, can't you take it?*

_____ Impress others with how many important people you know. *The other night at Bigname's party when I was talking to*

_____ Don't listen: interpret. Catch the idea of what they're saying, then list rebuttals or redefine their point. *Now what you really mean is*

_____ Use verbal dominance, if necessary, to make your point. Don't let anyone interrupt what you have to say.

_____ TOTAL Dominant Points