

Why Do I Do This?

Destructive responses can range from immediate reactions in the heat of the moment to delayed or drawn-out responses that prolong the conflict. The following descriptions provide information about what's behind the behaviors, as well as some common automatic thoughts that might lead to each response.

ARGUING



Exchanging differing points of view in a heated or tense way

Arguing is unhealthy when it becomes about winning and losing, when the emphasis is no longer on getting at the truth or the best solution, when we try to protect our ego and put other people in their place. And so, like any competition, the "best" strategy is to give up as little ground as possible to your adversary. As a result, any chance for empathy goes out the window. Like others with the i style, you probably resort to arguing during conflict when you perceive an imbalance in the relationship, likely stemming from a belief that the other person isn't fully listening to you. So, in the midst of an argument, one of the most important things you can do is be honest with yourself about your motivation. What emotions are fueling me right now? How much is this about winning?

Automatic thoughts that may lead to this response:

- There's no way I'm backing down
- I don't get it/you; I'm obviously right

BELITTLING



Making someone or something feel unimportant

Similar to others with the i style, you may occasionally be tempted to belittle others during conflict as a tactic to quickly and sharply express your frustrations. By belittling someone, we create a demeaning, one-dimensional caricature of them. Not only does this make it easier to dismiss their opinions, but it can feel extremely satisfying. The power of belittling often comes from putting a label on someone that sums up all of the negative attributes we want to call out. It channels all of the frustrations we have into a single powerful word. And once that succinct label is out there, we can use it to easily dismiss anything else the person has to say.

Automatic thoughts that may lead to this response:

- I'm going to make you look like a fool
- I'm going to show you that your idea doesn't matter



CAVING IN

Giving in to something after originally opposing it

Caving in can be particularly tempting because it often feels like the absolute quickest way to end a disagreement. Even though it typically means sacrificing our legitimate rights, the pain of being in a conflict can be so excruciating that we take immediate shelter in this option. Of course, this short-term gain is often at the expense of long-term satisfaction and can eventually create very unbalanced, unhealthy power dynamics within a relationship. Like others with the i style, when your emotions become seemingly unbearable during conflict, making it difficult to clearly express your opinions, you may be tempted to cave in to quickly get out of the situation.

Automatic thoughts that may lead to this response:

- I don't want to upset anyone
- Putting up a fight just isn't worth it



DEFENSIVENESS

Becoming anxious or protective in the face of criticism

When we trust that things will be okay no matter what the outcome of the conflict, there's no reason to be defensive. We can be open to different opinions. On the other hand, at the heart of defensiveness is insecurity. We don't want to admit failure or shortcomings. When our brain is telling us that the stakes are incredibly high, we cover up any vulnerabilities or weaknesses. And for the i style in particular, feelings of defensiveness may come naturally when you sense that someone is suggesting that you are being rude, inconsiderate, or selfish. Even when you do recognize your defensiveness, it can still be difficult to ask yourself what, beneath it all, you're really afraid of.

Automatic thoughts that may lead to this response:

- I shouldn't be blamed for this
- This isn't my fault



DISMISSING OPINIONS

Treating other people's views as unworthy or unimportant

Dismissing opinions is a blocking strategy to win an argument, but is also a common way to protect our ego. Like others with the i style, in some conflict situations you may be prone to dismissing others' opinions to ensure that your ideas are fully expressed and heard. It's also tempting to dismiss opinions when we're scared of the thoughts or views expressed by another person. We are afraid to give them space to paint a picture that we don't like. And because we feel challenged, insecure, or fearful, we adopt the strategy of overriding the other person. We exude absolute certainty in our position and effectively relieve ourselves of any obligation to hear the other side of the story. And by making the conversation as one-sided as possible, we feel empowered and righteous.

Automatic thoughts that may lead to this response:

- Nothing that anyone says will change my mind
- There's really no other way to think about this

DRAMA



Displaying an over-the-top reaction to a situation

Melodrama may seem like a simple inability to rein in emotion, but it's often more than yelling or acting out. Given your need to express your thoughts and emotions, you, like others with the i style, may sometimes gravitate toward drama to call attention to something that's troubling you. Your natural response to internal chaos may be to process it out loud and have others acknowledge what you're feeling. And though what you share may, to some, come across as excessive, to you it may genuinely reflect your level of inner turmoil. You may find yourself becoming dramatic when it feels like others are keeping you from fully expressing yourself, or when you're seeking some measure of control in a situation where you otherwise feel powerless.

Automatic thoughts that may lead to this response:

Everyone hates me!
This situation is awful/hopeless

EXAGGERATING



Representing something as being worse than it really is

As someone with the i style, you may sometimes be tempted to exaggerate as a way to express the powerful whirl of emotions going on inside. You may omit those parts of the story that don't support your narrative, while overemphasizing the parts that make the other person look bad. Or you might turn to absolute terms like "always" or "never" to strengthen your case. Exaggeration can be a way of making the situation sound as awful as it feels. It can get others to notice and validate what you're experiencing. And to you, it may not always feel like exaggeration—it may seem like an accurate representation of the intensity of what you're going through.

Automatic thoughts that may lead to this response:

I need to get your attention
This needs to sound as bad as it feels

EXCLUSION



Deliberately leaving someone out

Like other people with the i style, you probably recognize just how valuable personal connections are in the workplace. Because of this, exclusion may feel like a particularly powerful way to subtly strike back at someone who's upset you. By alienating the other person from the group, this strategy not only hurts them emotionally, but is also a show of power. In fact, it's mostly likely to be used when we have greater social status than the other person. And once we've successfully excluded the other person, we can fully express our side of the story without it being contradicted or refuted. You may sometimes be tempted by this strategy because you recognize just how important it is to shape the way a group perceives a conflict situation.

Automatic thoughts that may lead to this response:

Maybe you'll get the message if I don't invite you
Leaving you out will prove that everyone's on my side

FINGER-POINTING



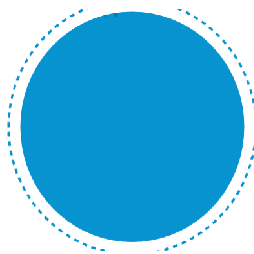
Blaming someone for a particular situation or issue

As someone with the i style, in the heat of conflict, you may let your emotions get the best of you and, as a result, point the finger at others despite the impact on the relationship. Finger-pointing feels like a very aggressive behavior, but it usually stems from defensiveness. We're diverting attention away from our own shortcoming or failure by pointing it out in someone else. Often, we'll home in on one particular action of the other person that contributed to a problem. The goal is to make this action seem as awful as possible, to make it seem like the *heart* of the problem. As a result, our contributions don't seem nearly as bad. By shifting the blame, we've saved our reputation in the short term, but may have also unwittingly damaged our integrity.

Automatic thoughts that may lead to this response:

- I shouldn't get in trouble for this...it's all their fault
- This is because of you, not me

GOSSIPING



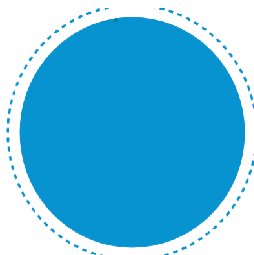
Engaging in idle talk about someone else's private affairs

Gossiping can feel good for a lot of reasons. First of all, venting frustrations can be cathartic. Not to mention, it can be deeply satisfying to have a go at someone who has hurt you. Because you, with your i style, tend to be naturally expressive, you may sometimes turn to gossip to share what you're going through and get reassurance from others that you're in the right during a conflict. But gossip is also about power. Since you probably have a good grasp of the social dynamics in your group, you may find gossip helps rally people to your side by shaping how they perceive the conflict. You gain control over a situation by getting your version out into the world first and most convincingly.

Automatic thoughts that may lead to this response:

- I'm going to tell everyone what so-and-so did to me
- I probably shouldn't say anything, but they deserve it

HYPERCRITICISM



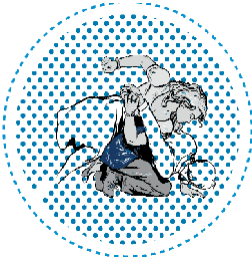
Becoming overly judgmental about someone else's work or actions

Hypercriticism is often an attempt to get back at someone. We decide that we'll make a point of objecting to as much about the person as possible. We shoot down their suggestions. We find holes in their logic. We scrutinize their output for mistakes. Basically, we try to punish the person. It's a strategy that's particularly appealing when we recognize that the thing we're *actually* mad about is a little on the petty side. We know we can't complain about it directly. And so, becoming hypercritical is a way of acting on our anger without having to admit that we're really angry. Like others with the i style, although you're usually more reassuring with people, you may become hypercritical as a way to subtly express your frustration.

Automatic thoughts that may lead to this response:

- I need to knock you down a peg or two
- I need to look like the smartest one here

OVERPOWERING



Overwhelming others with superior force

Overpowering involves drawing on all the sources of power at our disposal to defeat someone during a conflict. Sometimes that power is social or organizational authority, but sometimes it's simply using the force of a strong, vocal personality. For instance, your i style naturally tends to be very animated and dynamic, and this can be used as a way to control the direction of a tense conversation. Overpowering deliberately keeps others off balance and attempts to eliminate the possibility of a fair, even-handed discussion. This strategy is particularly tempting when we are overcome by a strong, almost primal, urge to "win" the conflict.

Automatic thoughts that may lead to this

response: I won't quit until I win; I
don't care what it takes I'll use
intimidation to get my way

PASSIVE-AGGRESSION



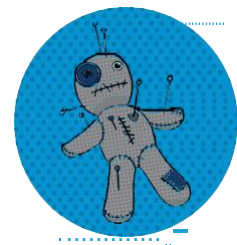
Expressing negative feelings in a subtle or indirect way

We can all think of occasions when we desperately wanted to express anger at someone, but didn't want a full-scale conflict. Passive-aggression can feel like the perfect solution. We get to subtly punish someone enough that they notice, but not so much that they can call us on it. Its many forms (e.g., ignoring, eye-rolling, nit-picking) make it endlessly flexible. Given your i style, this conflict strategy might be tempting because it balances two strong, sometimes opposing needs: the need to express yourself and the need to avoid outright friction. Passive-aggression can do both. It can also be used to bother someone enough that they initiate a confrontation, which invites us to let loose. But whatever the end goal, we may take more satisfaction from it than we care to admit.

Automatic thoughts that may lead to this response:

I'm going to make my point without looking like the bad guy
I don't want to talk about it, but I can't act like nothing happened

REVENGE



Looking to even the score or get retribution for a wrongdoing

Revenge in the workplace is usually fairly subtle, but we do it to restore justice and/or reassert ourselves. And even though taking revenge is technically an external action, it's usually the end result of some pretty deep internal rumination. We stew over being hurt or mistreated, and fantasizing about getting even can feel good—even if we don't like to admit it. Of course, acting on those fantasies takes things to a whole different level. Most of us recognize that overt revenge won't be tolerated, but this still leaves plenty of creative, backhanded, and petty ways to inflict damage on someone. Of course, given that people with the i style tend to be empathic and cheerful, revenge might only start to seem like a viable option when your judgment has been clouded by some very strong emotions.

Automatic thoughts that may lead to this response:

I need to get even
You're going to regret what you did to me

SABOTAGE



Deliberately obstructing or destroying someone's work

Sabotage is about making sure someone else fails. It can be social in nature (e.g., lying, spreading rumors) or can actually involve physical tampering. Sometimes we choose this extreme path when we lack the power to truly confront the other person and sometimes it's simply because we want to express our anger without a direct clash. Either way, there is usually a satisfaction in seeing the other person fail. Ultimately, sabotage usually requires us to suspend our normal understanding of right and wrong so that we can rationalize a behavior that, under normal circumstances, we would find reprehensible. And while sabotaging is an atypical response for people with the i style, when used, it's likely a last-resort behavior to express your anger.

Automatic thoughts that may lead to this response:

You should be punished for what you did to me
I have to regain the upper hand

SARCASM



Ridiculing someone using mockery or derision

In conflict, sarcasm is a close cousin to passive-aggression. It allows us to take a shot at someone or express our hostility without being too obvious about our real motivations. It's for when we're not quite committed enough to yell at someone, but still want to take them down a peg or two. And sarcasm is such a tempting tool in the midst of conflict because we can always claim that "I'm just joking...seriously, lighten up." In particular, we may feel like the "just kidding" excuse gives us immunity after subtly attacking or demeaning someone. And given your i style, sarcasm may actually be a form of restraint. You may be tempted to use it when you want to say something aggressive but worry it could cause some long-term damage in the relationship.

Automatic thoughts that may lead to this response:

That idea is obviously ridiculous
Why would anyone say something so stupid?

STONEWALLING



Refusing to answer, show emotion, or respond to someone

Given your i style, stonewalling may be most tempting when you've become flustered or exhausted in an argument and just can't see any path to resolving things. By stonewalling, we make it clear to the other person that communication is completely shut down. We deliberately let them know that their behavior is so unacceptable that we are unwilling to compromise or even discuss a resolution. And although we may hate to admit it, stonewalling can be gratifying. We get to punish the other person while telling ourselves that our behavior is strong and dignified. And, as a bonus, we don't have to wade through the untidiness of conflict. Therefore, this can become a self-preservation strategy when we feel overwhelmed by a swirl of uncomfortable emotions.

Automatic thoughts that may lead to this response:

- You don't get to know what I'm feeling
- I'm not responding to this



WITHDRAWING

Drawing back or removing oneself from a situation

Not many people actually enjoy conflict, but it is much more painful to some of us than others. We may not even know why conflict is so uncomfortable; we just know that it feels like a swirling jumble of anxiety, anger, insecurity, and danger. Every instinct is urging us to return to stability and safety. Withdrawing or clamming up can provide immediate relief by simply shutting out the emotional messiness. Given your i style, withdrawing from conflict may be a natural response when you've reached a certain level of frustration, perhaps feeling that your voice is not being heard or respected. Of course, this means you don't get to assert your own side of things. But in the moment, deliberately engaging in a conflict can feel overwhelming.

Automatic thoughts that may lead to this response:

- This needs to end as soon as possible
- I'm just going to stay quiet until this thing is over