

Hot Buttons: Introduction

Hot buttons are those irritations and annoyances that can provoke you into conflict. They are the situations or characteristics in others that aggravate and frustrate you, perhaps to the point where, despite knowing better, you instigate a conflict. Interactions with button pushers can leave you feeling demoralized, unmotivated, powerless, anxious, frightened, and angry (possibly enough to resort to sabotage or other destructive acts). In the workplace, hot buttons can lead you to be less productive, efficient, organized, and creative; they can also negatively affect your life outside of work and your physical and emotional well-being.

The Conflict Dynamics Profile (CDP) instrument contains a section dealing specifically with hot buttons. We've made portions of this section available so that you could try it out. The hot buttons represent only one portion of the CDP, which also deals with conflict behaviors, organizational perspectives on conflict, and practical recommendations for dealing more effectively with workplace conflict. We invite you to learn more about the CDP by visiting the Center for Conflict Dynamics website at www.conflictdynamics.org.

Hot Buttons: Questionnaire

Not only is it important to understand how people respond to conflict; it is useful to know what kinds of situations are most likely to create conflicts. This test presents a subset of frequently occurring hot buttons used in the Conflict Dynamics Profile (CDP). It is not meant to be a comprehensive examination of hot buttons, but rather a way of introducing and illustrating the concept. As noted, hot buttons are but one part of the CDP, which incorporates a comprehensive look at both constructive and destructive responses to conflict.

In this test, please indicate how upset you get when you have to deal with various kinds of people and behavior. These items ask you to indicate which situations produce the most and least irritation or frustration for you. For each of the following items, please indicate how upset you get in this situation by placing the appropriate number, using the rating scale below, in the space provided.

Definitions of Rating Scale

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|------------------|--|
| 1 = not at all | This situation does not upset me at all. |
| 2 = a little | This situation upsets me to a small degree. |
| 3 = moderately | This situation upsets me to a moderate degree. |
| 4 = considerably | This situation upsets me to a considerable degree. |
| 5 = extremely | This situation makes me extremely upset. |

How upset do I get when I have to work with someone who . . .

1. Believes he or she is always correct ____
2. Isolates himself or herself from others ____
3. Exploits others ____
4. Is abrasive ____
5. Seldom praises good work ____
6. Will not make changes based on input from others ____
7. Is self-centered ____
8. Focuses on the negative ____
9. Tries to undercut people at work ____
10. Is a "know-it-all" ____
11. Does not reward hard work and loyalty ____
12. Is arrogant ____
13. Cannot be trusted ____
14. Is not open with other people ____

15. Fails to give credit to others for their contribution ____

16. Is a brownnoser ____

17. Takes undeserved credit for others' success ____

18. Does not seek input from others ____

19. Is not appreciative of hard work by others ____

20. Is very sarcastic ____

Once you have provided answers for each of the twenty items, it is time to score your responses. To do this, add the numerical answers for each of the following five sets of items:

- a. Items 4 + 8 + 12 + 20 = ____ Hot button – Abrasive
- b. Items 2 + 6 + 14 + 18 = ____ Hot button – Aloof
- c. Items 1 + 7 + 10 + 16 = ____ Hot button – Self-Centered
- d. Items 5 + 11 + 15 + 19 = ____ Hot button – Unappreciative
- e. Items 3 + 9 + 13 + 17 = ____ Hot button – Untrustworthy

The group that has the highest score would be your “hottest” button among the five we are measuring. If you have two or more that tie for the highest score, treat each of them as one of your top hot buttons. If the highest score is less than 12, you would get only moderately upset if you encountered someone acting in that manner.

Once you have identified your top hot button you can begin to learn how to manage that hot button.

The information on the various hot buttons is taken from the book *Managing Conflict Dynamics: A Practical Approach*.

Find Out More About Hot Buttons and Conflict Behaviors

For more information on the Conflict Dynamics Profile® assessment that measures hot buttons and conflict behaviors, call 1-705-607-1058 or email – paul.bailey@3c-coaching.com