



MISUNDERSTOOD

Over the past several weeks, I've been struck by insights from two of my favorite writers: James Clear, the author of *Atomic Habits*, and Daniel Pink, the author of *When*.

The first thought-provoking statement comes from James Clear. He writes:

"You know yourself mostly by your thoughts. Everyone else in the world knows you only by your actions. Remember this when you feel misunderstood. You have to do or say something for others to know how you feel."

The second was from Daniel Pink's podcast, the Pinkcast. His most recent guest, Abby Falik¹, suggests creating a personal owner's manual to alert others how to best interact with you. The owner's manual consists of your answers to the following four questions:

1. **What gives and drains you of your energy?**
2. **What is the best way to communicate with you?**
3. **What are your pet peeves?**
4. **What do people misunderstand about you?**

When I think about all of the assessments that I have taken over the course of my career and all of the resultant labels –Operator (Predictive Index), Creative (DISC), ISTJ (Myers Briggs), Learner, Individualist, Maximizer, Relator, Strategist (Strengthsfinder) —they all have been right on the mark. But each one takes learning an entirely new vocabulary to understand yourself and others. They all work, but they all require translations. This owner's manual thing is appealing because of its simplicity. You don't need a decoder ring!

If you are feeling misunderstood, you might want to think about whether your actions are telling a different story from your thoughts. You might also get together with a few of your colleagues and share the answers to Abby Falik's four questions. I did just that and got some enlightening answers about some of my more misunderstood colleagues.

1. **What gives you and drains you of your energy?**

I GET ENERGY FROM

humor, exercise (weights, rowing, hiking, playing golf), sleep, nature, competition, solving problems, innovation, learning, growth, fun, positivity, teamwork, encouragement, recognition, winning, getting it done!

I AM DRAINED BY

disingenuousness, elitism, my Mom, socializing, crowds, getting slammed at work, juggling all of my obligations, manipulation, blind spots, complaining, loud talking, TMI, low EQ, brainstorming, passive aggressive behavior

2. What is the best way to communicate with you?

- Talk to me, face to face, in person
- Direct
- Calmly
- Email always – I need to think about it
- Text – it is the only channel I answer

3. What are your pet peeves?

- Multi-tasking
- Clutter
- Germs
- Crowds
- Small talk
- Lateness
- Gossip
- Stupidity
- Disrespecting others – elders, wait staff
- Unkindness
- Speeding cars
- Not cleaning up after yourself
- Reloading instead of listening
- Deliberation
- Rushing
- Complaining
- Being cut off – while talking, driving

4. What do people misunderstand about you?

- I am judging you... No, I am listening.
- I am tough... No, I am a pushover.
- I am a bro... No, I am kind-hearted.
- I am a robot... No, I am a techie, but still human.
- I know what I am doing... No, I really don't.
- I am incapable... No, I need time to think about it.
- I am disinterested... No, I am quiet.
- I have all of the answers... No, I am really a goofball.
- I am win/lose...No, I am win/win.
- I am annoyed with you... No, I just need to get something done.

Rather than assess and guess, have a conversation. We are so often wrong when interpreting others' motives and behavior. There are so many examples in past history and current news, Malcolm Gladwell wrote an entire book about it. He called it *Talking to Strangers*. It was a really good read, but I am still thinking about it.

¹Abby Falik is the founder and CEO of Global Citizen Year, a nonprofit encouraging high school students to take a step back from the usual transition from high school to college and spend a gap year immersed in an international community project. Ninety five percent of program graduates complete college in four years or less.



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Patricia M. Fuller has dedicated the last 20 years to designing and delivering wellness programs. Her events earn consistently excellent ratings for her holistic approach and her real world application.

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