

# Yin Leadership Challenge: Submissiveness and Passivity

Focusing on our strengths, building on them as opposed to our weaknesses is critical. I have found by experience, however, that there is a difference between building on strengths and ignoring areas of weakness. My honest opinion is that we benefit from both building and focusing on strengths and working to minimize obstacles and challenges.

One of the most common challenges for more introverted leaders is a tendency toward submissiveness, or even passivity. In the original theory that underlies the DISC assessment that I use to measure aspects of different behavioral styles, the D and the S were seen by William Marston as opposite ends of the dominance-submission continuum. By definition, those of us on the S end (an introverted trait) will tend more toward submission and away from dominance. It is in our nature to serve others, to submit to them as part of our strong internal desire for everyone to stay connected and to be in harmony as a team. High S introverts are all about holding the team together. They are the glue. One of the ways we seek to do that is through submitting to others.

In yin cultures (introvert-dominant), the idea of submitting to others is not seen as a weakness, but rather as a strength. This is a key point for us to grasp. The way we see these “strengths” or “weaknesses” is directly affected by the culture in which we live. Our submissiveness is actually an asset, most of the time.

The thing for us to watch in ourselves is our tendency to become passive, the “doormat” problem. Watch for signs of overagreeableness with others for the sake of trying to hold the team together. Realize that healthy teams have respectful

and rigorous debate over ideas and concepts, but they never turn the discussion into personal attacks. Learn to be more assertive, in a healthy confident way, so that the team around you can hear your great ideas. Continue to look out for and speak out about the solutions that are in the best interest of the team as a whole, avoiding the tendency to placate others. Placating and appeasing others comes too easily for us at times. Realize that actually caring about them sometimes requires giving feedback that may be difficult for them to receive. Master your ability to give and receive effective and constructive feedback to others.

The other problem with “doormats” is that when we let people walk all over us, we become deeply (though usually privately and quietly) resentful (or even passive-aggressive). Watch for evidence of resentment building up in your own heart. This is the telltale sign that you have become overly submissive and passive. Learn to deal with situations in a way that may be uncomfortable in the moment but far more comfortable in the days and weeks following. Get a safe accountability partner and be honest with them about your feelings of resentment. Let them hold you accountable to do the hard thing and work out your conflicts as they occur rather than stuffing your feelings.

Manage this challenge well and see how much better you feel, how your relationships with teammates improve and how your performance increases.