

The “Listening” Sensitive Man



The Listener

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The Counsellor

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The Diplomat

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The Conciliator

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Disclaimer

THE MAN MATRIX is an attempt to create a different set of axes on which to evaluate and assess men’s behaviour. It accepts the validity of individual men’s neurological and psychological makeup as something that does not need to be changed. It aims to generate a set of distinctions between men based on personality styles, along with a broader understanding of men’s psychospiritual development process—both for men themselves, and for women seeking to understand men.

The language and pronoun use focuses on cis-heterosexual men and assumes the interest of cis-heterosexual women, for reasons explained elsewhere. It may equally be used by parents, friends or colleagues of those men, and by people of any gender who find it useful and relevant.

The information in this report is intended as a reference, or map, that offers a particular way of assessing the landscape. No statement purports to be the absolute truth. It should be viewed holistically and as a means for supporting individual growth, not as “evidence against” nor as a means to “alter him”. You are invited to treat it in that way and to use it with intelligence and compassion.

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PERCEPTION

How people see you

THE ULTIMATE strong, silent type? Perhaps. Although your strength will be less the strength of forceful aggression and more the strength of calm stillness in the face of the former. You’re also less likely to be the target of aggression—who would want to or need to, you’re such a calm guy—than you are to be a witness of it. As a witness, you’ll be tempted, if not likely, to step in and try to sort things out.

Your air of calm stillness might lead some people to pay less attention to you. Let’s put it this way, you’re not going to be the life and soul of the party, nor the person who seeks attention. That said, some may find your relative silence intriguing—either to challenge it and shake it up, or to find out what secrets you’re hiding or wisdom you’re holding onto.

If there’s a decision to be made, you’re unlikely to be the one trying to steer it in one direction or another. Instead, you’ll wait and see what the majority want, and you’ll be inclined to go with that—after you’ve made sure the minority voices have been heard. Indeed, nobody will be surprised if you step in as an arbiter if things get heated. This can apply equally to a simple social decision about which club to go to after dinner, the deliberations of a board or committee, or even a whole political movement.

Although you might belong to political party, or favour an ideology, people won’t look to you as the militant who stirs things



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up. However, they will turn to you when they need someone to start a dialogue for peace, and seek common ground. The president of South Africa, Cyril Ramaphosa, provides the example here. He was the lead negotiator for the ANC in the talks that brought an end to apartheid. His actual presidency, which came two decades later, has been marked by his ability to maintain a relative balance between competing factions within his party.

On the downside, as Ramaphosa discovered, people might criticise you for not doing enough to press home your own advantage, for example by using your position to support your own faction, or your own agenda. Instead of “going for the kill”, you’ll go for “don’t rock the boat”. That’s a phrase people might hear you say quite often.

In fact, if anyone knows you personally, they’ll know that you tend to “not rock the boat” in all areas of your life. You tend to suppress your own preferences in favour of what your family or friends want. You’ll go where they want to go, and you’ll patiently follow while they go shopping, and hold the bags when they need you to. They’ll see you as reliable and steady in the way that you tend to create a groove for yourself through regular habits and familiar things (music by the same band, books by the same author). If it all gets too much, and especially if there is a conflict you have to deal with, they might find you going to take a nap.

BLIND SPOT

Why you drive people crazy

The “Listening” Sensitive Man Sometimes, your partner may want you to stand up for her, or for the kids—or stand up to her, or them. Yes, it’s possible that you might take the agreeability thing too far. There may be times when you need to negotiate, say, a better deal on the house you want to buy, or challenge the headmaster about the way a teacher treats your child. When you fail to do this, your partner may then realise how you also don’t stand up to her. She could find that annoying in this context, and possibly become contemptuous of it.

If that happens, she may lash out verbally and say it. However, knowing that you’re unlikely to “fight back”, she may instead mirror you and act in a passive-aggressive way. If she does that, she may unwittingly be trying to show you something else about you that bothers her: the fact that you don’t speak up and say no to things, but then you do them half-heartedly. For anyone who is not afraid of conflict and who doesn’t mind straight talk, that kind of behaviour will be highly annoying.

She might begin to wonder aloud whether you’d even bat an eyelid if you found out she was having an affair. In fact, if she doesn’t say that at this point, you might need to be careful that she doesn’t actually put you to the test on that. Other habits might also begin to annoy her, like your tendency to distract yourself with inessential activities, like crossword puzzles,



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when there are important decisions to be made, and your lack of originality in choosing new music, TV shows, or authors.

You may also be criticised at work or in the business context for not dealing with conflict decisively enough. You’ll either leave it, hoping it will sort itself out in time, or you won’t take a stand, even when there’s a clear-cut case of one party having been wronged.

Sometimes, you’ll be right; things will sort themselves out, and yours will turn out to have been the perfect approach. However, in the political and corporate world, there is often a demand for decisive action, and there are times when it’s absolutely needed—and fast. In those instances, you may find people “talking behind your back”. In such cases, they might be saying some things you really need to hear, but don’t want to.

If your colleagues, staff or bosses do try to push you in a direction, they’re likely to meet with a passive-aggressive reaction that looks a lot like stubbornness. Given that nobody can sustain such equanimity indefinitely—unless they’re enlightened monks, and you’re probably not one—they’ll begin to see you as possibly weak or even insincere. If that continues, it can develop into contempt, and lead to an uprising. In other words, your pacifist approach might bring about the very thing you strive to avoid.

DEVELOPMENT

Your journey through the four stages of maturity

The “Listening” Sensitive Man The journey to maturity for every man involves the establishment of the ego and its inevitable dark side, or shadow, followed—hopefully—by the integration of that shadow. As described in the Man Matrix introduction, a man’s shadow effectively contains the data belonging to that one element of life that he tries to avoid or escape from, and which he tries to deny in himself. As the “Listening” Sensitive Man, you probably try to avoid the conflict that you believe will arise if you express your own point of view, or your own wants, needs and feelings.

As a child, you probably found yourself as the middle child in amongst more aggressive siblings, or at the mercy of a domineering and aggressive parent. Going along with them, adopting their point of view, even arguing their case for them, was a survival strategy.

As an adult, you’ll try to deny the fact that you have any wants, needs, feelings or opinions by suppressing your inner voice, and instead put on a go-with-the-flow attitude while aligning—you could even say fusing—with the wants and needs of another person, or group. This will provide the theme of your rebellion during the red stage, and of your criticism of the world during your white stage. For example, you’ll criticise pushy, aggressive or conflictual behaviour in the world by passively



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withdrawing, becoming overtly silent, and other forms of passive-aggressive behaviour. Any assertive or aggressive behaviour by yourself will be disallowed or, if it ever occurs, denied.

As you mature, you’ll subconsciously gather evidence that proves you wrong—yes, wrong. In other words, you’ll accumulate data as a result of contradictory life experiences that the world is different from your childhood universe. At first you won’t pay too much attention to this data, but eventually it will start to break through. You’ll have some undeniable feedback from life in the form of people or experiences. Something in you will recognise that you no longer need to defend yourself in the way that you did back then.

In other words, it’ll gradually dawn on you that you no longer need to defend yourself by making yourself invisible, or suppressing your own wants, needs and opinions. You’ll begin to see that when you express your needs, people don’t reject or abandon you. In fact, it helps to improve and deepen your relationships. And, on the odd occasion when they do reject you, you’ll discover that it’s not the end of the world.

If you accept and integrate this, you’ll reach black as a powerful conciliator who can lead as much as you can follow – and we know what they say about great leaders being the ones who can do that.

Invite people to support your growth by sharing this information.



“Will you be my unicorn?”



What “I’ll alter him” shifts you can (and shouldn’t) expect from me

The “Listening” Sensitive Man As my partner, colleague, parent or friend, you’ll probably recognise and hopefully appreciate my calm, gentle, easy-going nature and my ability to bring peace, harmony and diplomacy to any situation. Yet, you might sometimes wish that I would somehow miraculously transform into a more active and lively, decisive and assertive, maybe even ambitious and driven, version of myself. These “missing” elements may lead you to compare me negatively with the types of men that do demonstrate those patterns of behaviour.

For example, you might wish that I would be more enthusiastic, lively and engaging in social settings, the way the “Optimistic” Ideas Man might be, instead of always “waiting my turn” and then still passing up the opportunity to speak. Or perhaps you might want me to be more quick, clear and decisive in stating what I want in any given situation, something that the Real Man has no problem whatsoever in doing. Then you might need me to be a little more motivated to succeed, even if it means elbowing someone out of the way, which is a marked trait of the “Winning” Best Man.

The bottom line is, I’m not going to “change” into any of those types of men. In fact, the more you try to “alter” me, or in other words try to get me to “change into” one of those types of men, the more likely I am to dig in my heels and resist.

That said, you might have a point, and so I might learn to take on one or two of those men’s behaviours, at times. Yes, I might try being less certain that my diplomacy is the only right answer to every situation,



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and see that sometimes it’s more appropriate to enter the fray and speak my mind. Nobody will die. Just as nobody will die if I make decisions and assert myself from time to time—when the situation really needs that—or if I put myself forward for a promotion even though it means going up against one of my colleagues.

While there’s some of this I could start doing right now, it will happen naturally as a result of maturity. It’s what the process of integration is all about. After all, maturing and integrating is about becoming less one-sided. It’s about not treating every situation in the same way, based on my own fears, but instead treating each situation on its own merits. So, if you’re supporting me on that journey, you can drop a few hints along the way, and be patient. :)

In the meanwhile, here are some things I’m going to keep doing, as well as things I’ll consider doing more of, and doing less of:

Things I’ll keep doing:

Things I’ll do more of:

Things I’ll do less of:

Get the full report!

Get the full report to learn more about:

1. How you see the world (your dominant worldview);
2. Why people like you (your gifts / offerings);
3. Your core fear (the underlying driver of much of your behaviour);
4. A full 8-page report on your journey through the four stages of maturity;
5. Two more “handouts” containing information you can share with others:
 - a. What you look for in a partner / colleague / friend and what they can do to “win you over”;
 - b. What you can ask of others to support you on your journey to maturity;
6. Plus a set of self-coaching questions.

Yes, take me there!



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