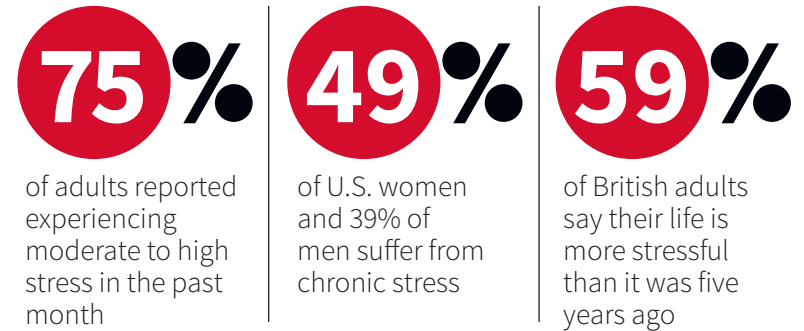


# 151 WAYS TO WRECK YOUR CAREER

## PEOPLE ARE STRESSED



## ESPECIALLY AT WORK



## SO WHAT?

Between demanding bosses, pressing deadlines, or mind-numbing monotony, the working world is full of stressors. The problem is, the way you act when the pressure is on could be wrecking your reputation, and, subsequently, your career.

# UNDER PRESSURE

Almost everyone tries to manage the impressions we make on others. We pay attention to our hygiene and appearance, we show up to work on time, and we do our best not to offend our coworkers. Bright-side personality describes how other people are likely to perceive us when we are at our best – whether we're ambitious, sociable, creative, self-controlled, etc.

Impression management is an important skill; research shows that individuals

who scored high on a measure of self-monitoring were more likely to get promoted and have a successful career than their less tactful counterparts. But the more time we spend under pressure, the less able we are to manage our behavior, and, eventually, our dark sides emerge.

Dark-side personality describes a group of characteristics that can be strengths under normal circumstances, but, when individuals aren't self-monitoring, can

become reputation-ruining interpersonal flaws. Under increased stress or pressure, a cocky salesperson can become overbearing, the careful accountant a micromanager.

“Dark-side characteristics are the ones that emerge when you're being yourself – when you stop self-monitoring,” said Dr. Jeff Foster, Hogan's VP of Science. “Even though they only tend to show up in times of increased stress or pressure, they can be extremely damaging to your reputation.”

The more time we spend **under pressure**, the less able we are to manage our behavior, and, eventually, our **dark sides** emerge.



**11**  
**WAYS**  
**TO WRECK**  
**YOUR**  
**CAREER**

Introduced in 1997, the **Hogan Development Survey (HDS)** was, and remains, the only personality assessment that identifies the dark side of personality.

The HDS measures **11 reputation-damaging, dark-side personality characteristics** that can be categorized into three groups based on how they react to conflict.

# MOVING AWAY

*People who respond to conflict by moving away from people manage insecurities by intimidating or avoiding others. This behavior is characterized by five HDS scales:*

**Excitable** – Some people are calm and level-headed under stress. Excitable people aren't. Prone to emotional swings, Excitable people typically react to stress with:

- Volatile emotions that are difficult to soothe
- Disappointment with people and projects
- Seeming directionless and regretting past decisions

**Skeptical** – The workplace requires a raised eyebrow here and there, but these people believe their coworkers will cheat, lie, and steal at the first opportunity. They react to stress with:

- Cynicism
- Mistrust of people and organizations
- Unwillingness to forgive offenses

**Cautious** – These individuals do more than look before they leap; Cautious people cling to rules and protocol and react to stress or ambiguity by:

- Avoiding people or situations outside their comfort zone
- Avoiding making decisions to escape criticism
- Letting themselves get pushed around

**Reserved** – Reserved people cross the line between being self-reliant and being reclusive, uncommunicative, and aloof. Under pressure, they:

- Become introverted and drop off the radar
- Act unsociable and limit close relationships
- Act indifferent to others' feelings

**Leisurely** – Leisurely people can smile even when they're privately angry or annoyed, and you'll only know their real feelings if you hear them from someone else. They react to stress by:

- Passive aggressively subverting requests
- Feeling underappreciated
- Getting privately irritated by interruptions, requests, or suggestions

Managing self-doubt  
by **intimidating** or  
**avoiding** others.

# MOVING AGAINST

*People who respond to stress by moving against people manage self-doubt by manipulating and charming others. This behavior is characterized by four HDS scales:*

**Bold** – You’ll always know a Bold person, if only because they spend most of their time making sure everyone knows who they are. They tend to handle pressure by:

- Demanding special treatment
- Being overly confident in their own abilities
- Asserting their belief that they are destined for greatness

**Mischievous** – Bond, James Bond. Mischievous people aren’t afraid to use their cunning and charm to get what they want. Under pressure, they:

- Take risks and deliberately bend or break the rules
- Act impulsively
- Use their charm to manipulate others

**Colorful** – Colorful people need to be the life of the party, and usually are, but they can also be self-absorbed and obnoxious. They tend to:

- Speak out of turn, and expect others to appreciate their performances
- Get distracted easily
- Grab the spotlight with dramatic displays

**Imaginative** – Bright and strikingly original, Imaginative people tend to get caught up in outside-the-box thinking, even when the situation doesn’t call for it. They deal with pressure at work by:

- Getting absorbed in novel, but often strange approaches to problems
- Asserting that they have a unique vision others don’t share
- Becoming easily bored and overconfident in their ability to solve problems creatively

Managing self-doubt  
by **manipulating** and  
**charming** others.

# MOVING TOWARD

*People who move toward others manage insecurities by ingratiating others and building alliances. This behavior is characterized by two HDS scales:*

**Diligent** – Meticulous and perfectionistic, Diligent people find it difficult to prioritize or delegate tasks. They react to stress by:

- Demanding unrealistically high standards for themselves and others
- Obsessing over the quality of work details of its completion
- Becoming inflexible about schedules, rules, and procedures

**Dutiful** – Dutiful people are agreeable and able to rise easily in organizations, but are so eager to please their bosses that they throw subordinates under the bus. Under stress, they:

- Have trouble making decisions or acting independently
- Tell their superiors what they want to hear
- Support their boss regardless of their personal opinion

People who move toward others manage self-doubt by **ingratiating** others and **building alliances.**

# WHY YOUR REPUTATION MATTERS

So what if you have a few bad days at the office; shouldn't your performance speak for itself? Researchers at the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Biology performed an experiment in which two types of information were available to participants: hard data and gossip. Participants invariably believed the gossip over the data or their own observations.

Gossip emerged over millions of years of human evolution as a social mechanism geared toward coming to a common agreement about whether or not an individual can be trusted. As lead author Ralf D. Sommerfeld noted: "If you know you already have the full information about someone, rationally, you shouldn't care so much what someone else says. It could be that we are just more adapted to listen to other information than to observe people, because most of the time we're not able to observe how other people behave. Thus we might believe we have missed something."

## A BAD REPUTATION CAN AFFECT YOUR JOB PERFORMANCE ON THREE LEVELS:

- **With your employees** – More than half of people currently in leadership positions will fail, most often because they are unable to build and maintain a high-functioning team. If you have a reputation for micromanaging or being emotionally volatile, your employees will be less likely to trust and follow you.
- **With your coworkers** – The ability to form productive relationships, or interpersonal skill, is critical in the modern workplace. A bad reputation can make your coworkers wary of dealing with you, which will hinder your performance.
- **With your boss** – As the previously discussed study showed, your boss is more likely to pay attention to your reputation than your performance data. A bad reputation can keep you from getting a raise or a promotion.

# CAN YOU DO? WHAT

For most people, the biggest step toward improving how they handle stress is simply understanding how they act when they're bored or under pressure. This kind of self-awareness, gained through use of objective measures of reputation like personality assessment, 360° feedback or otherwise, can help you recognize when you're going off the rails and adjust your behavior to protect your reputation.

The **biggest step** toward improving how you handle stress is understanding how you act when you're **under pressure**.