



# Why do you get so triggered?

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An introduction to the Ofman quadrant and Taibi Kahler's personality types

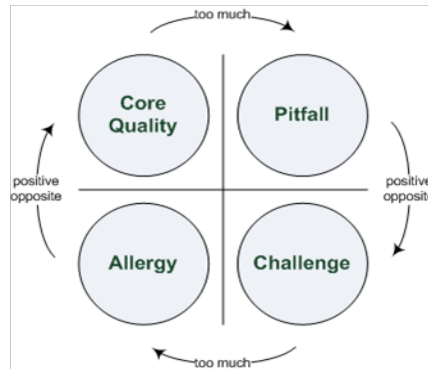
By Daniel Eppling, December 2012

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"I adored myself, I hated myself, and then we grew old together." Paul Valéry

Every human being is unique; a concept reflected in the differences in our core qualities. Core qualities are naturally-occurring positive attributes such as creativity, courage or caring. The Ofman quadrant<sup>1</sup> can help you identify your core qualities, pitfalls, challenges and allergies. You can use this model to find out what behaviors you should avoid (pitfalls) and what types of things you should make effort to do even though they don't come naturally to you (challenges). It also helps you understand why certain behaviors or characteristics in other people trigger a negative reaction in you (allergies).



- Too much of your "core quality" leads to a "pitfall."
- Having identified the "pitfall," you can find your "challenge," a resource quality which you need to develop (positive opposite of your pitfall).
- If you exaggerate your "challenge," you obtain your "allergy," which triggers a negative reaction in you.
- Your "allergy" is the total opposite of your "core quality."

It is easier to act your way into a new way of thinking than to think your way to a new way of acting.

*Edgar Schein, professor  
MIT Sloan School of  
Management*

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### Examples:

- An ambitious mountain climber mastering the icy peaks of the Canadian Rockies admits that sometimes he takes too many risks. In order to balance this pitfall (flippancy), he decides to be more cautious (challenge). However, if others were to constantly remind him to be more careful, this would probably trigger a negative reaction from him as fear is his allergy.
- A creative professional's pitfall can be chaos. His challenge is to restrain his creativity by limiting himself to a few alternatives. However, if this challenge is pushed to its extreme, the person may be faced with his allergy: a rigid and restrictive structure which is the opposite of his core quality (creativity).
- A goal-oriented person's pitfall may be that she is only looking at concrete results. The challenge might be to develop a complementary focus on how the results are achieved. However, being too focused on the process may turn into the allergy of going by-the-book which contrasts strongly with the individual's pragmatism.

### Conclusions

#### 1. Criticisms we receive reflect our core qualities

Your most common pitfall is the natural product of your best quality:

- Your manager appreciates your flexibility which might be due to your lack of structure.
- Your ability to resolve problems and make decisions is based on your 'pushy' side which is not always appreciated.

#### Be aware:

Criticism you receive may tell you about your core qualities that have gone too far...

#### Recommendation:

When you are confronted with a "don't be so..."

- Don't feel obligated to justify and defend yourself immediately.

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- Press the “pause” button.
- Concentrate on this question: “Which quality am I exaggerating?”

## 2. People who bother you show you what you need most

Let’s sum up the Ofman quadrant the other way around, starting with the allergy. An allergy is the exaggeration of a challenge. If we follow the logic of the quadrant, this challenge is nothing more than a resource quality to be developed when we are in a pitfall, for example: working too much (pitfall), taking a rest (challenge). If we apply this to interpersonal relationships, we see that the people we feel “allergic” to, have the attributes we need most. An empathic team leader reporting to a dictatorial division manager may admire the manager’s ability to express his opinion without hesitation, though he may dislike his excessive authority. A dynamic manager with a black-or-white attitude might also learn a lesson in tolerance.

## 3. Combining core qualities and challenges makes pitfalls and allergies disappear

Daniel Epling and Gérard Franses developed the “3rd quality (resource quality)” which stimulates the core quality with its positive opposite (challenge). If we use the Ofman quadrant not only alternating between quality/pitfall or between challenge/allergy, we can combine and integrate the two complementary aspects. Going back to our example of a creative person’s pitfall, this approach would imply developing “structured creativity” in order to avoid chaos or restrictiveness. It’s about finding the right counterpoint for each individual’s qualities to enable these to last without turning into pitfalls.

## Taibi Kahler’s six personality types

In 1978, Taibi Kahler<sup>2</sup> was asked by NASA to prove the efficacy of his model for rapid psychological diagnosis (“Miniscript”) in connection with the astronaut recruitment process. NASA’s lead psychiatrist hired Dr. Kahler commenting that 10 minutes of using his approach revealed as much or more about a candidate than a standard psychological interview of several hours. The six personality types (reactor, workaholic, persister, dreamer, promoter, rebel) outlined in the “Miniscript” are valid for most of the general population. Each of these personality types perceives the world differently from the others, prefers a specific style of communication and management, has unique character strengths, has defined psychological and motivational needs and consistent and predictable pattern of distress behaviors.

In the following matrix, the different personality types and their specific traits are applied to the Ofman quadrant:

Core quality	Pitfall	Challenge	Allergies
<b>REACTOR</b> Warm, sensitive, compassionate, considerate	Extremely emotional (has difficulty making negative comments to others) Dramatic (may become hysterical) Dependent (over adapts, neglects own needs, seeks to satisfy the needs of others)	Saying NO Giving direct feedback Satisfying own needs Being assertive	People focused on the task without any ‘warmth’, who aren’t concerned about personal feelings, managerial types in the ‘dictator’ phase
<b>WORKAHOLIC</b> Organized, logical, responsible, concerned about time/deadlines	Rigid (prefers to do it on his own) Fussy (over detailed, controls everything) Routine-minded (sticks rigidly to rituals) Sense of humor gets lost	Delegation Focusing on the essential Accepting that nobody is perfect Being laid back	Things that are ‘shambolic’, disorganization, unclear thinking, incompetent people
<b>PERSISTER</b> Dedicated, reliable, loyal, tenacious	Excessively demanding (expects perfection) Suspicious (doesn’t trust people) Intolerant (campaigning) Touchy (oversensitive to criticism)	Listening to others Being tolerant and accepting the other person’s point of view Accepting faults and mistakes Asking for feedback	Unethical actions, lack of values, people ‘with no convictions’, people who don’t make a contribution
<b>DREAMER</b> Calm, imaginative, reflective, cooperative	Timid (doesn’t put himself forward) Solitary (withdraws) Passive (waits to be stimulated) No appetite for competition	Sharing emotions and points of view Getting involved	Excited people who move about and/or talk all the time Frantic pace
<b>PROMOTER</b> Adaptable, persuasive, charming, resourceful	Impulsive (wants to rush in all the time) Irresponsible, individualistic (doesn’t stick to the rules)	Learning from mistakes Taking the time to think and connect with others	Lethargic people and those who are too emotional, people who spend their time in meetings

	Arrogant (sarcastic, looks down on others)		
<b>REBEL</b> Spontaneous, creative, fun, full of energy	Finds fault (rejects blame) Provocative (tests the limits) Restless (looks for their dose of contact) Pushes others into thinking or doing instead of them	Being able to stop before the joke goes too far Accepting rules and procedures Structuring their work	People who are hung up, narrow-minded, don't have a sense of humor, too serious

**Summary:** Using the Ofman quadrant and Kahler's personality types may help you

- reflect on your behavior and reactions
- create rapport and connection with others
- find the most appropriate communication style for exchanging with someone - tones, postures, gestures, words that result in a productive interaction
- understand how stress is created and how to avoid situations and behaviors that are likely to lead to it
- recognize behaviors and speech patterns that signal oncoming stress
- discover a person's psychological needs and motivations and use that knowledge to predict and influence his or her actions and decisions

<sup>1</sup> Developed by Daniel Ofman, Management Coach and Consultant

<sup>2</sup> Taibi Kahler, Ph.D., Clinical Psychologist, The Process Therapy Model - The Six Personality Types With Adaptations, Taibi Kahler Associates, Inc., Little Rock, Arkansas: 2008, President and CEO of Kahler Communications, Little Rock, Arkansas

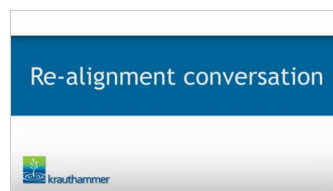
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## Research

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