THE FOUR TENDENCIES QUIZ

Detailed Report: Obliger

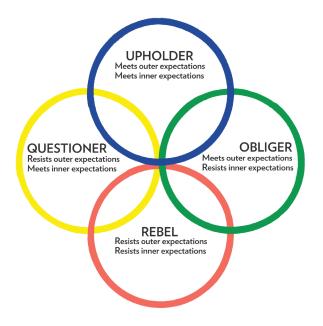# Obliger

According to your answers, your dominant Tendency is Obliger.

The "Four Tendencies" framework describes how we respond to expectations. We all face two kinds of expectations:

- outer expectations, such as meeting work deadlines or observing traffic regulations, and
- inner expectations, such as quitting napping or keeping a New Year's resolution.

UPHOLDER
Meets outer expectations
Meets inner expectations

QUESTIONER
Resists outer expectations
Meets inner expectations

OBLIGER
Meets outer expectations
Resists inner expectations

REBEL
Resists outer expectations
Resists inner expectations

UPHOLDER:

"I do what others expect of me—and what I expect from myself."

QUESTIONER:

"I do what I think is best, according to my judgment. If it doesn't make sense, I won't do it."

OBLIGER:

"I do what I have to do. I don't want to let others down, but I may let myself down."

REBEL:

"I do what I want, in my own way. If you try to make me do something—even if I try to make myself do something—I'm less likely to do it."

So what does it mean to be an Obliger?

Obligers meet outer expectations, but struggle to meet inner expectations. They're motivated by external accountability; they wake up and think, "What must I do today?"

Obligers excel at meeting external demands and deadlines and go to great lengths to meet their responsibilities, so they make terrific colleagues, leaders, family members, and friends.

Others rely on them, but because Obligers resist inner expectations, it can be difficult for them to meet their aims for themselves, in the absence of external accountability—to work on a Ph.D. thesis, to attend networking events, to get their car serviced.

Obligers depend on external accountability, with consequences such as deadlines, late fees, or the fear of letting other people down.

In fact, Obligers need external accountability even for activities that they *want* to do. If you want to read more, join a book group.

When a person says, "I give 110% to my patients, so of course it's impossible for me to exercise" or "Because I'm so busy meeting other people's needs, I have no time for self-care" or "I'm always on the road managing five remote teams so all I can eat is fast food," that's an Obliger.

Behavior that Obligers sometimes attribute to *self-sacrifice* or l*ack of self-esteem*—"Why do I always make time for other people's priorities at the expense of my own?"—is often better explained as *need for accountability*.

The weight of outer expectations can make Obligers susceptible to burnout, because they often have trouble setting limits or telling people "no." They may, in fact, reach the point of "Obliger-rebellion," a striking pattern in which they abruptly refuse to meet an expectation. Obliger-rebellion may take a form that's small and symbolic, like deliberately being late to work. Or Obliger-rebellion may be dramatic and far-reaching, like abruptly quitting a job, getting a divorce, or ending a long friendship, with the feeling, "I've had it. This is over. You're dead to me."

As outlined in *Better Than Before*, my book about habit change, Obligers may find it difficult to form a habit, because often we undertake habits for our own benefit, without others' oversight.

For Obligers, the Strategy of Accountability is the crucial strategy of habit formation. For instance,

if you're trying to exercise more, you might:

- Hire a fitness trainer, coach, nutritionist, or other accountability partner
- Team up with a friend who will be disappointed if you don't follow through, or take a class with a teacher who will notice if you don't participate
- Consider yourself as a role model to children, employees, friends, and the like, to be an example of fulfilling commitments, showing respect for yourself, or modeling good behavior
- Think about your duty to your future-self

When we understand ourselves and how our Tendency shapes our perspective on the world, we can adapt our circumstances to suit our own nature—and when we understand how other people's Tendencies shape their perspective, we can engage with them more effectively.

The Four Tendencies explain *why we act* and *why we don't act.*