

Nutshell Guide

TO GRETCHEN RUBIN'S *THE FOUR TENDENCIES*

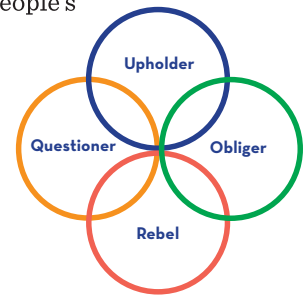
In just about any role we play—as manager, health-care professional, team member, H.R. staff, teacher, coach, spouse, parent, device manufacturer, to name a few—we find it helpful to know other people's Tendencies.

It's hard to grasp just how differently other people see the world. But when we can see other people's perspectives, we understand why, from their point of view, their actions make sense.

It's not possible to know someone's Tendency from observing their actions; we must know why they're acting that way. A Questioner might refuse to meet a deadline because he thinks it doesn't make sense; the Rebel, because she wants to show that "you're not the boss of me."

What follows is a summary guide to the Four Tendencies. In a nutshell, to persuade someone to follow a certain course, remember:

- **Upholders** want to know what should be done.
- **Questioners** want justifications.
- **Obligers** need accountability.
- **Rebels** want freedom to do something their own way.



DEALING WITH AN UPHOLDER

- They readily meet external and internal expectations
- They're self-directed, so they can meet deadlines, work on projects, and take the initiative without much supervision
- They enjoy routine and may have trouble adjusting to a break in routine or sudden scheduling changes
- They hate to make mistakes, and because of that . . .
- They may become very angry or defensive when you suggest that they've dropped the ball or done something wrong
- They put a high value on follow-through. Don't tell them you're going to do something, and then not do it
- They may need to be reminded that, unlike them, others aren't necessarily comforted or energized by getting things done
- They may have trouble delegating responsibilities, because they suspect that others aren't dependable

Likely Strengths	Possible Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Self-starter• Self-motivated• Conscientious• Reliable• Thorough• Eager to understand and meet expectations (rules, regulations, performance targets, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Defensive• Rigid• Inquisitor• Uneasy when it's not clear what the rules are• Impatient when others need reminders, deadlines, or supervision• Demanding• Over-scrupulous

Key strategy for habit change: [Strategy of Scheduling](#)

DEALING WITH A QUESTIONER

- They question all expectations; they meet an expectation only if they believe it's justified
- They put a high value on reason, research, and information
- They follow the advice of “authorities” only if they trust their expertise
- They follow their own judgment—sometimes when it flies in the face of experts who (allegedly) know more
- Their persistent questioning may make them seem uncooperative or defiant
- They hate anything arbitrary—anything like “Five garments to a fitting room”
- They may dislike being questioned themselves; they consider their actions carefully so they find it tiresome or even insulting to be asked to justify their decisions
- They may have trouble delegating decision-making, because they suspect that others don't have a sufficient basis for action

Likely Strengths	Possible Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Data-driven• Interested in creating systems that are efficient and effective• Willing to play devil's advocate or buck the system if warranted• Strong-willed	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Can suffer “analysis paralysis”• Impatient with what they see as others' complacency• Crackpot potential• Unable to accept closure on matters that others consider settled• Defy expectations that others find fair, or at least non-optional, such as traffic regulations• May resist answering others' questions

Key strategy for habit change: **Strategy of Clarity**

DEALING WITH AN OBLIGER

- They readily meet outer expectations, but struggle to meet inner expectations
- They put a high value on meeting commitments to others—“I'll do anything for a client/patient/family member”
- They require deadlines, oversight, monitoring, and other forms of accountability
- They may have trouble setting limits on others' demands
- They may be exploited by people who take advantage of them, and because of that . . .
- They may feel resentful and fall into Obliger-rebellion
- They may have trouble delegating, because they feel that some expectations attach to them personally
- They must have systems of external accountability in order to meet inner expectations

Likely Strengths	Possible Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reliable• Responsible• Team player, good boss, responsive leader• Feel great obligation to meet others' expectations• Willing to go the extra mile• Highly committed	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Resentful about what's being asked of them, and of those who “put themselves first”• May show the destructive pattern of Obliger-rebellion• Exploitable• Have trouble saying “no” or imposing limits• Need outer accountability to meet inner expectations

Key strategy for habit change: **Strategy of Accountability**

DEALING WITH A REBEL

- They resist both outer and inner expectations
- They put a high value on freedom, choice, self-expression, and authenticity
- If someone asks or tells them to do something, they're likely to resist, and because of that...
- They may be easy to manipulate by using their spirit of resistance: "I'll show you," "Watch me," "You can't make me," "You're not the boss of me"
- They may choose to act out of love, a sense of mission, belief in a cause
- They have trouble telling themselves what to do—even when it's something they want to do
- They may love to meet a challenge in their own way, in their own time
- They don't respond well to supervision, advice, directions, or routines, schedules, or doing repetitive tasks
- If they're in a long-term relationship in work or romance, their partner is probably an Obliger

Likely Strengths

- Independent-minded
- Able to think outside the box
- Unswayed by conventional opinion, willing to buck social conventions
- In touch with their authentic desires

Possible Weaknesses

- Resistant
- Struggle with repetitive or mandatory tasks
- Act as though ordinary rules don't apply to them
- Restless; may find it difficult to settle down in a job, relationship, city
- Repelled by routine and planning

Key strategy for habit change: **Strategy of Identity**



The Four Tendencies framework isn't meant to make us feel boxed in to a particular identity, but rather to act as a spotlight that can illuminate hidden aspects of our nature.

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 perspectives, we can engage with them more effectively.

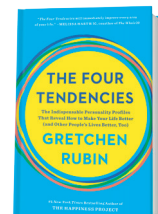
One of the big daily challenges of life is: "How do I get people—including myself—to do what I want?" The Four Tendencies make this task much, much easier.

I hope that knowledge about the Four Tendencies helps you to understand yourself and other people better.

Gretchen

Learn more at GretchenRubin.com

To discover your Tendency, take the quiz at happiercast.com/quiz



Harmony Books