Understanding your style and your image—or how you come across to others—is important; however, the ability to adapt to others’ styles and to be flexible in any given situation is more important. Flexibility is your ability and willingness to adapt to the situation, as well as to the individuals with whom you are communicating or working. You can be flexible or inflexible.

Imagine a sheet of ice stretching between you and another person. If you are highly flexible, the ice is smooth and slippery, making it easy to glide to another person’s comfort zone. If you are not flexible the ice is broken and rough, making it difficult to glide to another’s comfort zone.

Most flexible people exhibit the following characteristics:

- good listeners,
- curious,
- tolerant of others’ behaviors and mannerisms,
- open and excited to learn,
- resilient,
- sensitive and caring,
- energetic,
- positive,
- creative and open to change,
- respectful of individual differences,
- trusting of others, and
- knowledgeable about communication styles and willing to go more than half way to get into the other person’s comfort zone (that is, they slow down or speed up speech, are more or less formal, are more creative or more analytical, focus on the big picture or details, or socialize or focus on business).

How do you rate on these characteristics?