# Profiles of Underachievers

## Rebel underachievers

### Feelings & attitudes

* Negative attitude to school and all educational activities.
* Do not make links between school and the ‘real world’.
* Choose careers that are ‘unrealistic’ and do not see school as being beneficial for them.

### Behaviours

* Power struggle between them and the adults around them.
* Deliberately do not produce at school to maintain ‘power’.
* Often take risks outside of the educational arena.
* They do not know what they are ‘for’ but it vocal in what they are ‘against’.

## Conformist underachievers

### Feelings & attitudes

* Do not want to get top marks as then parents and teachers expect it all the time.
* May seeing being ‘smart’ as being a ‘nerd’ or a ‘geek’ and therefore would affect their popularity.
* Girls may believe that they will not be popular with boys if they appear too ‘brainy’.

### Behaviours

* Will take a long time to complete work that they should be able to finish quickly.
* Actively conceal their abilities.
* Believe that giving a mediocre performance is better than delivering their best.
* Hide from the demands on adults who recognise that they are not giving her best.
* Try to protect themselves from peer ostracism.

## Stressed underachievers

### Feelings & attitudes

* Are perfectionists.
* Love to be the ‘best’ and berate themselves for any failures.
* Set impossibly high standards for themselves.
* See the alternative to perfection as failure.
* Experience more punishments than awards.
* At risk of anger issues, eating disorders and depression.

### Behaviours

* “Should haves” will be frequent in their vocabulary.
* Distrusting of positive comments if they feel their work is not up to their high standards.
* May refuse to hand in work if they feel it is not ‘perfect’.
* May stop completing work as they feel it will never be ‘good enough’.
* Will not attempt work that seems too challenging.

## Struggling underachievers

### Feelings & attitudes

* Found earlier stages of schooling ‘a breeze’ and never learnt study skills.
* Are frustrated that work has now become ‘difficult’.
* Suffer from test anxiety.
* Believe that they have ‘lost’ their intelligence rather than not having the skills needed to complete the work.
* Are afraid that parents and teachers may realize that they are no longer ‘smart’.

### Behaviours

* They are not equipped to deal with tertiary study and lack study skills and organization.
* Find it difficult to focus on course content and constantly compare themselves to the others in the class.
* Their self esteem drops and they are ‘at-risk’ of dropping out, depression or suicide.

## Victim underachievers

### Feelings & attitudes

* Reluctant to accept responsibility for their grades.
* Have a range of excuses.
* Thrive on negative outcomes.
* Likes the control that manipulation brings.

### Behaviours

* Often find a ‘sympathetic ear’ to receive reassurance about their intelligence, social skills or self confidence.
* Do not take ‘risks’ or make attempts to improve their self confidence.
* Insist that adults manage their workload for them rather than taking responsibility themselves.
* Often manipulate adults into achieving their aims.
* Allow adults to ‘own’ the problem of their underachievement and make no effort to change it themselves.

## Distracted underachievers

### Feelings & attitudes

* Give other tasks precedence over schoolwork.
* May have personal or emotional problems that they are not willing to share.
* School is irrelevant compared to what else is going on in their life.
* Will only give 100% to the areas of their life where they are “winners”.
* Do not see that underachieving is narrowing their career options.

### Behaviours

* Are overcommitted and cannot find enough hours in the day.
* May have additional responsibilities in the home that are more important than academic success.
* May thrive in competitive activities, be sociable and personable.
* May claim that school work does not ‘drive’ them and does not give them passion.

## Bored underachievers

### Feelings & attitudes

* May genuinely want more advanced and challenging work at school.
* May see school as not meeting their needs in creative areas.
* May say that they are bored when they are really afraid of failure.
* Believe that failing by not doing the work is better than doing the work and failing.

### Behaviours

* May have bad work habits and learning patterns.
* May be struggling students who are using boredom as an excuse to not work.
* May be ‘at-risk’ of substance abuse to gain ‘excitement’.

## Complacent underachievers

### Feelings & attitudes

* They are satisfied with their effort at school and the grades that they receive.
* Often have high self-esteem that is not grade related.
* Do not value high achievement.
* They may see the goals that adults set for them as being unrealistic.

### Behaviours

* They may fight back when pushed by teachers and parents that they are not meeting their potential.
* They may appear to agree with adults but then internally ignore their opinion.
* Continue on their own achievement pattern unless they discover something that ‘sparks their interest’.

## Single sided underachievers

### Feelings & attitudes

* Have unwavering opinions.
* Have passion for selected areas.
* Motivated by subject matter, teaching style, or learning activities in the class where they achieve.
* See the classes they do not achieve in as being irrelevant or boring.

### Behaviours

* Are rigid in their actions.
* Will focus on one area and not take risks that could allow other areas of talent to be discovered.
* They deliberately choose to achieve in some areas and underachieve in others – they are selective consumers.