

## PERSONALITIES: IT TAKES ALL TYPES

It comes as no surprise when I tell you that a person's individual personality plays a big part in all his or her relationships. Each one of us has to get along with any number of people in a variety of settings. Just think about all the people we deal with in our daily lives --- spouse, children, extended family, co-workers, friends, neighbors, classmates, business people, delivery people, store clerks, bankers, travelers --- you get the picture. They come in all shapes and sizes, with attached individual personalities. It's almost mind-boggling!

Family relationships are the training ground for getting along with each other. In an ideal setting, every family member gets along with each of the other members. In reality, that does not happen. There will always be personality clashes, misunderstandings, miscommunications, or days when nothing seems to go right and no one goes to bed happy. Hopefully, those days and situations are the exception rather than the norm.

Personality typing involves different ways to classify the qualities and characteristics that make each person unique. Psychologists and neuroscientists have created assessment tests to classify and categorize how and why people behave the way they do. It can actually be very eye-opening to take a personality test, either on your own or given by a professional.

I'm going to introduce you to three different approaches to understanding personality types. There are actually a dozen or more ways to classify personalities, but these are among the most recognized and most used in the fields of education, business, and science.

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**Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI):** You are probably familiar with the terms "extravert" and "introvert" used to describe someone who is either outgoing and comfortable around people --- an extrovert --- or the opposite, someone who is rather shy, more tuned inward on a regular basis --- an introvert. There are 4 categories of either/or traits.

E / I --- Extraversion / Introversion: Described above. It is certainly possible to have traits of both extraversion and introversion in your personality. But one will be more obvious than the other. It is the trait that you are most comfortable with.

S / N --- Sensation / Intuition: As defined here, someone who leans more toward the sensation trait would be practical, fact-oriented. Think sensible. A person with the intuition would be more interested in possibilities than in facts. A professor once described it this way --- the N personality is the architect, the S personality is the contractor.

T / F --- Thinking / Feeling: The person who leans toward the thinking trait would be very objective, logical, when making decisions and taking action. Think Mr. Spock from *Star Trek*. The person who follows the feeling trait would be more likely to make value judgments or consider personal feelings when faced with choices and decisions.

J / P --- Judging / Perceiving: The person who leans toward the judging trait would essentially be organized in his or her thinking and actions. Think goal-oriented and list-making. The person who leans toward the perceiving trait likes to leave herself open to possibilities. Whereas the J personality would make a list of errands and carry them out from farthest point back to home, the P personality would think about what she needs, look in 3 or 4 different stores hoping to find it, and then stop for an ice cream cone, whether she completed her errands or not.

The 4 different either/or classifications, when sorted and combined, allow for 16 different personality types. A good book that goes into the various personality types is written by David Keirsey and Marilyn Bates, entitled *Please Understand Me*. There is a personality quiz included in the book.

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**The Platinum Rule ® --- Dr. Tony Alessandra:** In Dr. Alessandra's work, the Golden Rule is taken one step further. His Platinum Rule is "Treat others they want to be treated." It is very similar to one of the 7 Habits that Dr. Stephen Covey explained in his book, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*: "Seek first to understand, then to be understood."

Dr. Alessandra classifies personality types into 4 categories. The way to get along with people, both at home and in the workplace or wherever else you may be, is to understand how they function and then work with them in a way that is meaningful to them.

The Director: Needs to be in control. Needs to achieve. Goal-oriented.

The Socializer: Needs to be involved in the action. Outgoing. Impulsive.

The Thinker: Cautious. Detail-oriented. Involved in the process. Orderly. Analytical.

The Relator: People-oriented. Avoids confrontations. Good team member. Plans ahead.

There are strengths and weaknesses associated with each personality type. Dr. Alessandra suggests that once we understand the traits and behaviors that go with each personality, we can adapt ourselves to their needs and avoid a lot of unnecessary personality clashing.

As with the MBTI, the traits in the 4 categories can be combined into primary and secondary types. A person may be a Thinker/Socializer, perhaps, or a Relator/Director. We have all the traits available to us, but what makes the difference is how we use them in our decision-making and in how we process information and how they show up in our behavior and actions.

Dr. Alessandra's website is <http://www.alessandra.com/abouttony/aboutpr.asp>.

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**The Color Tests for Personality:** There are several versions of color tests for personality analysis. Although I am less familiar with these, they have actually been used in various ways for several decades. The color classification has less to do with what your favorite colors are, but more to do with personality traits that are organized into color categories. Various tests use different sets of colors. Some tests use red, yellow, green, and blue. Some use blue, orange, gold, and green. One test I found used red, orange, blue, purple, yellow, pink, indigo, brown, black, white, and gray.

Usually one color is the leading one for your personality type, with a second color classified as your "secondary" set of traits. With the variety of tests available, however, a "blue" personality from one test may not mean the same thing as a "blue" personality from another test.

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Within any of the personality types, it's easy to see how there are many ways people can either get along with each other or end up with a personality conflict. A goal-setting, task-oriented, high achiever would probably feel impatient, frustrated, or annoyed working with a laid-back social butterfly. A detail-oriented accountant would have a hard time understanding decisions made on a hunch or because something "just feels right."

Yet these kinds of people can end up getting married to each other, raising families, and doing a fine job of getting along with each other. A little understanding can go a long way.