**Personality types and communication**

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“In the Word is involved the unity of humanity, the wholeness of the human problem, which permits nobody to separate the intellectual and the artistic from the political and social, and to isolate himself within the ivory tower of “cultural” proper.”
- Thomas Mann

The preferences we exhibit in how we perceive the world and make decisions are demonstrated in how we communicate. If we are moving toward individuation, our communication patterns should reflect that movement. Through periods of differentiation and periods of integration our preferences dictate the tides of communication in gentle ebb and flow as we seek always to communicate our connectedness with those around us. Psychological type theory provides an avenue by which we can come to better understand these communication differences.

Whenever people differ, the possibilities for misunderstanding increase. Moreover, communication, at times, seems to point to the chasm between the differences. Yet, we can attain communication skills that empower us to exchange ideas and resources powerfully and accurately.

In order to serve a useful purpose, communication needs to be listened to, understood, and considered without hostility in a spirit of resolution and reconciliation. It is human nature to ignore messages if we have the impression that what is being said is going to be irrelevant or unimportant. We condition each other quite quickly to expect either important information or unimportant information.

Any communication needs to establish immediately that it promises something of worth. The trouble is that what is considered worthwhile varies from type to type. This is especially true in the differences between extraverted types, who are energized by others, and the introverted types, who are energized by ideas and introspection. The extravert is likely to say something of worth at some point - because they try to communicate everything. They need to be mindful to get quickly to the important aspects of the message. The introvert, on the other hand, may hesitate too long in any interaction. Consider trying to share a lengthy, exciting story with someone like Austrian author and poet Rainer Maria Rilke who once stated, “the necessity to be alone, alone for a long time, builds in me everyday... People (whether it be my fault or theirs) wear me out”. If we do not appreciate the sources of energy of different people we are not likely to grasp the true meaning of the messages they send.
We also have found that communications frequently carry concurrent messages both about what is perceived and about judgments of the perceptions. While this makes communication lively and interesting, it also creates problems. For example, a mother and her fifteen-year-old daughter came in for counseling. In the course of the conversation the counselor asked the mother to identify one thing her daughter was doing that she would like to change. The mother said, "She is totally irresponsible." The daughter was quick to react to the statement, saying, "That is not so." The counselor pointed out to the mother that she was asked to identify what the daughter did, not what she thought the daughter was doing it. The mother then said, "She thinks she is the only one in the family." Again the daughter responded, "That is not so." Again the counselor pointed out to the mother that she was giving an evaluation or judgment, not an identification of what her daughter did. The mother thought for a minute and then said, "That is hard to do. Everything that comes to mind is an evaluation." This is not surprising, especially if the mothers' dominant function is thinking or feeling (one of the judgment functions).

Learning to differentiate among the functions is not always easy. We must strive to express clearly our perceptions, both sensing and intuition. And we ought to be sensitive and fair when we communicate our judgments, both thinking and feeling. Mixing up what we observe with how we evaluate or place worth is easy to do. Our language is an important instrument which invites us to talk about stability and constants, about similarities. Yet we try to symbolize with this language a world of process, change, differences, interactions, and complexity. Indeed, we face a challenge whenever we attempt to communicate.

We can learn, however, to interact in more interesting ways. No person has to be good at everything. But, if you are able to use your own strengths and preferences, and in turn appreciate the other person's strengths and preferences, it is possible to truly make use of a wider range of human resources. Together, thanks to our differences, we can all extend our abilities. We realize the importance of recognizing that individual differences affect interpersonal communication and thus affect the tasks and relationships at hand.

Assuming that we first can distinguish and can learn to differentiate those communications intended to share perceptions from those which articulate judgments, we recognize that there will be specific preferences for how perceptions are shared. A person with a preference for sensing places high faith in what is actual and factual, and will communicate clear and precise information. When presented with an idea, the sensor's natural reaction is to concentrate on the specifics and, frequently, identify what is missing. Sensors will identify particular realistic ramifications as to why an idea may not work. They are literal, and will be looking for the concrete data in any communication. They might find it helpful if you use phrases such as "it might work if..." and "have you considered using..." before bringing up the objections that experience suggests. You should anticipate the specific questions that the sensor is sure to ask. For example, sensors will tend to ask questions such as; "What would you do about Mr. Schmidt? He weighs 300 pounds, and we have only 15-inch metal folding chairs?" Then they will listen carefully for your response.
When communicating with a sensor, it is wise to clarify and articulate the details. Define your terms, be clear about facts, and have a definite plan of action so that the sensor can get right to work. You will receive specific answers to any specific questions. We are communicating perceptions and receiving information, no judgments or evaluations are made.

The person with a preference for intuition is by nature an idea person. When an intuitor comes up with a blazing new insight, the natural course often is to present it in a rough and sketchy form. When listening to an intuitive type, concentrate on the main point - if you can identify it - and ignore the incomplete details. Again, perception here, no judgments please.

When presenting an idea to an intuitive type, know your main point. Remember, they are not literal like the sensor, they are relational. Do not list a million details and facts; intuitors are not interested in all of these details, unless, of course, you want to try to link them. If you need help with an idea, ask “Generally speaking, what would you consider doing in this instance?” The intuitor will happily expend time and energy to help you think through the myriad possible obstacles.

Just as perceptions are communicated in radically different terms, so, too, judgments are expressed in quite distinct manners. Thinkers decide logically and may forget to reckon with the seemingly illogical human motives and reactions that are part of any interpersonal situation. They, therefore, tend to state their positions bluntly, without particular concern for the feelings of the other people involved. A thinker needs to be reminded, calmly and matter-of-factly, how other people feel. They then can count people's feelings among the causes to be factored into the decision, and identify appropriate actions accordingly.

Feeling types, on the other hand, set great value upon harmony and good will in their decisions, and are very aware of the likes and dislikes of people around them. They may assume that others are equally aware of feelings. This is often a faulty assumption and a feeler may find calm assertive communication skills useful when presenting the feeling aspects of the situation.

A thinker talking with feelers should remember that feelers prize harmony and would prefer to agree, if given a chance. Therefore, with feelers we might begin the discussion by mentioning the points of agreement. Once this tone is set, points of difference can be carefully presented, discussed, negotiated, and, finally, celebrated.

A feeler talking with thinkers should remember that thinkers value logic and rationality. Thinkers do not have to agree always. They can differ greatly if rules of logic are honored. A feeler may initiate a discussion by outlining a logical progression, and then allowing the thinkers to debate the issues without coming to consensus.
When communicating perceptions consider:

- Sensing types take facts more seriously than possibilities; they want an explicit statement of the problem before considering possible solutions.
- Intuitive types want the prospect of an interesting possibility before they buckle down to the facts.

When communicating judgments consider:

- Thinkers demand that a statement have a beginning, a logically arranged sequence of points, and an end. They especially need an identifiable objective, and are impatient with repetition and rambling detail.
- Feeling types are interested mainly in matters that have a definite effect on people; if you start with a concern for people, they listen.

When compromise between opposite types is necessary, the best position is one that considers what each type holds as important. The sensing type wants the solution to be workable; the intuitive wants the door left open for growth and improvement. Thinkers want the solution to be systematic; feelers want the solution to be humanly agreeable.

A good idea can be presented from any one of these angles if we are sensitive in our communication. All types will feel justified in attacking something that seems wrong to them. The trouble here is that any attack is likely to provoke a posture of defense and a breakdown of communication between individuals, instead of a united celebration of differences and enriched communication patterns.

When presenting, influencing, or trying to understand:

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<td>be factual</td>
<td>give global scheme</td>
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<tr>
<td>document successful applications</td>
<td>don't let opportunity pass</td>
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<td>reduce risk factors</td>
<td>use confidence and enthusiasm</td>
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<td>thoroughly work out details in advance</td>
<td>indicate challenges</td>
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<tr>
<td>show why it makes sense</td>
<td>point out the future benefits</td>
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<td>be logical</td>
<td>tell who else is for the idea</td>
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<tr>
<td>state principles involved</td>
<td>be personable and friendly</td>
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<td>stress competent handling of issues</td>
<td>indicate how it helps others</td>
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<td>be well organized, moving logically from point to point</td>
<td>say it is the &quot;right&quot; thing to do</td>
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<tr>
<td>list costs and benefits</td>
<td>tell why it is valuable</td>
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Communication

Talking with Extraverts
- Show energy and enthusiasm
- Respond quickly without long pauses to think
- Allow talking out loud without definite conclusions
- Communicate openly focusing on the external world of people and things - do not censure

Talking with Introverts
- Include time for them to get to know and trust you
- Encourage response with questions like, "What do you think about...?" but don't expect immediate answers to questions (sending agendas before meetings helps)
- Have more individual or one-to-one activities than group activities
- Do not assume an introvert in uninterested, they may just be taking time to process the information

Talking with Sensors
- Show evidence, i.e. facts, details, and examples
- Define your terms before getting too far into the conversation
- Be practical and realistic, and document successful applications
- Have a well-thought out plan with the details worked out in advance
- Show how your suggestion is a continuation of what is, not a radical change
- Be orderly - show the steps involved

Talking with Intuitive Types
- Present global schemes, the total concept - give the main idea first, do not give lots of details unless asked
- Indicate the challenges, the possibilities, and the differences your ideas will bring
- Delineate the future benefits
- Show the aspects that are non-routine
- Be aware that ideas may come in bursts and spurts, not in an even flow
- Let intuitive types dream and do not burst their bubble - encourage imagination
Talking with Thinking Types
- Be brief, concise, logical, and do not ramble
- List the pros and the cons of each alternative
- Be intellectually critical and objective
- Be calm and reasonable
- Do not assume feelings are unimportant - they are just valued differently
- Present emotions and feelings as facts to be weighed in the decision

Talking with Feeling Types
- Get to know the person before getting down to other tasks at hand
- Be personable and friendly
- Demonstrate empathy by presenting areas of agreement first
- Show why the idea is valuable to people and how it will affect them
- Be aware that feeling types may have difficulty being critical and giving negative feedback
- Pay close attention to the process, the way you are communicating, not just what you are saying - watch body language and non-verbal signals

Talking with Judging Types
- Present a timetable and stick with it
- Try not to surprise J's, give warnings of coming changes when possible
- Allow time to prepare
- Show that you also accomplish things and can be counted upon to follow through
- Show your achievements - your results
- Take a stand, make a commitment

Talking with Perceiving Types
- Allow for things to flow, not to follow your time and action calendar
- Bring in new information and ideas
- Allow time for thorough discussion - complexity is desirable
- Allow for options and changes
- Encourage autonomy
- Realize any change in direction is not necessarily impulsiveness
COMMUNICATION BY FUNCTION

Sensing Types

- Want information step by step
- Attend to what is said and done
- Want concrete examples
- Want brief responses
- Seek the bottom line
- Get right to the point
- Might be abrupt
- Might seem impatient
- Will have own agenda
- Like action
- Want to move straight ahead

Intuitive Types

- Want the big picture
- Read between the lines
- Like abstraction and symbols
- Focus on concepts
- Might ramble
- Might sound aloof
- Like to see patterns
- Absorb information at a glance
- Like variety and challenge
- Can be easily distracted
- Like creativity
- Dislike detail

Thinking Types

- Present information logically
- Want consistency and validity
- Prefer principles and laws
- Can be analytical and critical
- Cover the point thoroughly
- Clarify by questioning
- Tend to be “business” like
- Tend to be blunt
- Want a lot of detail
- Like a formal approach
- Want organization
- Seek truth

Feeling Types

- Take comments personally
- Have difficulty giving unpleasant feedback
- Trust and accepts people
- Respond to human values
- Like personal associations
- Tend to be warm and friendly
- Might overreact to feelings
- Does not go directly to the point
- May have difficulty saying no
- Focus on people
- Like spontaneity
- Need to be treated personally
COMMUNICATION TECHNIQUES

Paraphrasing
Restating what someone has said just to make sure you understood it. For example, “Did I hear you saying...,” “It sounds like...,” “It seems like...”

Reflecting
Crystallizing what a person is saying to let him or her know you are connecting. Reflecting is generally used to mirror the emotion or feeling that the speaker is experiencing. For example, “You are really pleased about that.”

Open-ended Questions
Using questions phrased in such a way that they require more than “yes” or “no” for an answer. They let people open up and tell you more. They allow you to get more information, clarify things, and obtain feedback. These types of questions are formulated by using words like, “what,” “where,” “how,” and “why.”

Headlining
Capturing an idea in a few succinct words before expanding on it. This signals to a listener where the speaker is headed and the point he or she wants to make so that the listener’s attentions is more focused.

Reacting with benefits before concerns
Looking at the strong points of an idea first, before looking at an idea’s flaws helps to nurture ideas and move past the acceptability threshold, where the ideas become useful and viable.