

Your personality style is your organizing principle. It propels you on your life path. It represents the orderly arrangement of all your attributes, thoughts, feelings, attitudes, behaviors, and coping mechanisms. It is the distinctive pattern of your psychological functioning- the way you think, feel, and behave- that makes you definitely you.

**Personality Self-Portrait:
Why You Think, Work, Love,
and Act the Way You Do**

Our personality is the lens through which we see life and our relationships through. It affects how we interpret information and how we react. This directly impacts our relationships, our work, and how we perceive the world.

While some of those attributes are ones we are born with, some of them are developed over time. In other words, it is a combination of nature and nurture that determines who we become. Behaviorists like BF Skinner believed that children are shaped by pure behavioral reward. Modern day psychologists are showing more and more how much biology shapes who we are.

Even with this understanding it is still shocking when our spouse or child says or does something that is so wildly different from what we expect. Often times it can shake us to the core to see someone we love and feel so close to react so differently to the world. The more we are aware of our own personality and are able to understand those around us, the better equipped we are to have healthy relationships and to parent our children.

There are almost as many theories of personality as there are personalities in the world. In this article I will examine a few well-known theories in the hopes



Personality Theory:

What You Need to Know in Order to Better Understand Yourself and Your Loved Ones



of giving insight into the way people work.

Myers-Briggs

The Myers-Briggs Personality test was designed based on the theories of Carl Jung to help determine one's cognitive style using four different personality dimensions. This test is often used to help people determine what type of new career they might be suited for. This test examines four different continuums. They are:

- Extraversion _ Introversion*
- Sensing _ Intuition*
- Thinking _ Feeling*
- Judging _ Perceiving*

It has been said that children begin to display signs of their personality traits as early as age three or four. A parent who has an awareness of their child's type can better prepare him for his first day of school or even the best ways to study for his personality type.

Proponents of this test look at the personality combinations, which are spelled out by using the letters of the dominant characteristics, in order to better understand the personality of the test taker.

Personality-Style Categories Based on the DSM

This is one of my favorite theo-

ries to help understand personality. Created by John Oldman, M.D. and Lois Morris this theory looks at personality on a continuum. The creators break down personality into thirteen categories based on personality disorders in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual. This is not to say that everyone has a personality disorder. But everyone does have traits that in their extreme are personality disorders. For example, a person with Obsessive Compulsive disorder may be so debilitated by the disorder that she cannot get out the door without organizing herself repeatedly, but if a person does not have *any* OCD traits, she will not be organized enough to get out the door at all! This theory looks at personality on the following continuums:

- Conscientious _ Obsessive Compulsive*
- Self-Confident _ Narcissistic*
- Dramatic _ Histrionic*
- Vigilant _ Paranoid*
- Mercurial _ Borderline*
- Devoted _ Dependent*
- Solitary _ Schizoid*
- Leisurely _ Passive-Aggressive*
- Sensitive _ Avoidant*
- Idiosyncratic _ Schizotypal*
- Adventurous _ Antisocial*
- Self-Sacrificing _ Self-Defeating*
- Aggressive _ Sadistic*

We all have traits from all thirteen categories, which determine how we perceive and react to the world. It can be helpful to understand the different categories in order to respond to ourselves and to those around us.

The Enneagram

The theory behind the enneagram is that we are all a members of one personality type, which is our basic personality type. But no one is a purely one type. Most people are influenced by at least one or two others, which