

# Temperament & Personality

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## Temperament

- Temperament is God-given, enduring, and results from a combination of heredity, neural, and hormonal factors.
- Temperament can be defined as the “*biologically-based individual differences in emotion, motor reactivity, and self-regulation that demonstrate consistency across situations and over time.*”
- These factors then affect how an individual responds to the environment.

Rothbart & Derryberry, Development of Individual Differences in Temperament 1981

### Some Aspects of Temperament

- The following are commonly identified in childhood and are found to endure into adulthood.
  - **Activity level:** The degree of activity a person inherently possesses; how active or passive he or she is.
  - **Predictability:** The degree to which someone’s lifestyle is characterized by regular routines and functions versus being more irregular and unpredictable.

Chess & Thomas, Temperament 1996

### Some Aspects of Temperament Cont’d

- **Threshold of responsiveness:** The intensity level of a stimulus required to get a response from someone. Some people are very “touchy” while others require significant “prodding” to get them to respond.
- **Distractibility:** How the person responds to the effects of distractions and interruptions. Some people are highly focused, while others’ minds wander easily from topic to topic. Also, some people don’t mind interruptions while others are greatly bothered when something or someone disrupts them.

Chess & Thomas, Temperament 1996

### Some Aspects of Temperament Cont’d

- **Persistence:** The length of time an activity is pursued by an individual; especially, how long a person can continue working on an activity in the face of obstacles.
- **Approach or withdrawal:** The nature of a person’s response to new things and experiences in life (e.g., trying new things, meeting people, etc.).
- **Adaptability:** The speed and ease with which a person can “shift-gears” in response to a change in the environment or circumstances.

Chess & Thomas, Temperament 1996

### Some Aspects of Temperament Cont’d

- **Intensity of reaction:** The amount of energy used in the expression of moods; how intensely someone expresses his emotions.
- **Quality of mood:** Positive mood (pleasant, joyful, friendly) versus negative mood (unpleasant, blue, critical).
- *Within limits*, temperament can be *moderated* by environmental factors, the responses of others, and personal choices.

Chess & Thomas, Temperament 1996

## What is Personality?

- “Personality refers to a distinctive set of traits, behavior styles, and patterns that make up our character or individuality. How we perceive the world, our attitudes, thoughts, and feelings are all part of our personality.”
- “Personality is relatively consistent and enduring over time. It is a result of both predispositions that individuals are born with (i.e., temperament) and more flexible characteristics.”

Mental Health America, 2007

## Do Personalities Change?

- **Enduring:** Each one of us has personality characteristics that are generally established early in life, are long-lasting, and are difficult to change.
- **Some Flexibility:** Other personality characteristics are shaped by life experiences and may change with time.
- **Wanting to “Fix”:** It is not unusual to want to change some aspects of another person’s personality or to think it is in your power to do so.

## Do Personalities Change? Cont’d

- **Acceptance vs. Change:** However, generally speaking, personality is not something you can change about another person. Rather, it is something you learn to live with and accept.
- **Acceptance vs. Rejection:** Because each one’s personality is such a fundamental aspect of the self, striving to change someone’s personality or requesting that type of change can be interpreted as rejection.

## Do Personalities Change? Cont’d

- **God’s Vessel:** Each person’s unique personality is an avenue through which God demonstrates His power and ability to bring glory to Himself.
- **Submission to God:** Each one of us will need to grow in our ability to relate or respond to others in a more Christ-like manner.

## Examples of Acceptance and Change

- **Intentional Shifting is Possible:**
  - Example: If you are someone who normally keeps your thoughts and feelings to yourself, then you may need to work on growing in your ability to share your thoughts and feelings with others.
- **Trying to Force Change Doesn’t Work:**
  - Example: Trying to force an introvert to become an extrovert is not a realistic expectation.

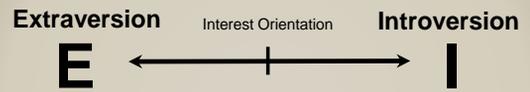
## Personality Profiles

Using the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator

## Personality in Four Dimensions

- How we interact with the world and where we direct our energy. (E-I)
- The kind of information we naturally notice. (S-N)
- How we make decisions. (T-F)
- Whether we prefer to live in a more structured way or a more spontaneous way. (J-P)

## E-I Preferences: Source of Energy



### Outer world

"Like to focus on the outer world of people and activity. They direct their energy and attention outward and receive energy from interacting with people and from taking action."

### Inner world

"Like to focus on their own inner world of ideas and experiences. They direct their energy and attention inward and receive energy from reflecting on their thoughts, memories, and feelings."

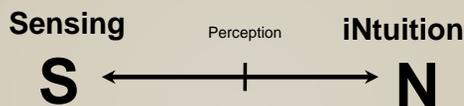
## Extraverts are More Likely to:

- Prefer action over reflection.
- Talk things over in order to understand them.
- Prefer spoken communication.
- Share their thoughts freely.
- Act and respond quickly.
- Extend themselves into the environment.
- Enjoy working in groups.
- Put themselves in the foreground.

## Introverts are More Likely to:

- Prefer reflection over action.
- Think things through in order to understand them.
- Prefer written communication.
- Guard their thoughts until they are (almost) perfect.
- Consider and think deeply.
- Defend themselves against external demands and intrusions.
- Enjoy working alone or with one or two others.
- Stay in the background.

## S-N Preferences: Taking in Information



### Concrete Data

"Like to take in information that is real and tangible – what is actually happening. They are observant about the specifics of what is going on around them and are especially attuned to practical realities."

### Big Picture

"Like to take in information by seeing the big picture, focusing on the relationships and connections between facts. They want to grasp patterns and are especially attuned to seeing new possibilities."

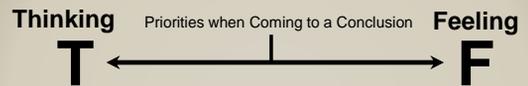
## Sensing Types are More Likely to:

- Like hearing facts and details first.
- Prefer the tried and true.
- Emphasize the pragmatic.
- Desire predictability.
- See problems as needing specific solutions based on past experience.
- Focus on the practical applications of a situation.
- Want to know *what is*.
- Value realism.

## Intuitive Types are More Likely to:

- Like hearing general concepts first.
- Prefer the new and untried.
- Emphasize the theoretical.
- Desire change.
- See problems as opportunities to innovate based on inspiration.
- Focus on the future possibilities of a situation.
- Want to know *what could be*.
- Value imagination.

## T–F Preferences: Decision Making



### Logic

"Like to look at the logical consequences of a choice or action. They want to mentally remove themselves from the situation to examine the pros and cons objectively. They are energized by critiquing and analyzing to identify what's wrong with something so they can solve the problem. Their goal is to find a standard or principle that will apply in similar situations."

### Relationships

"Like to consider what is important to them and to others involved. They mentally place themselves into the situation to identify with everyone so they can make a decision based on their values about honoring people. They are energized by appreciating and supporting others and look for qualities to praise. Their goal is to create harmony and treat each person as a unique individual."

## Thinking Types are More Likely to:

- Seek logical clarity
- Question first
- Have an interest in data
- Know when logic is required
- Prefer things to be objective
- Remain detached when making a decision, weighing the pros and cons
- Search for the flaws in an argument
- Strive to be fair

## Feeling Types are More Likely to:

- Seek emotional clarity
- Accept first
- Have an interest in people
- Know when support is required
- Prefer things to be personal
- Remain personally involved when making a decision, weighing values
- Search for points of agreement in an argument
- Strive to be compassionate

## J–P Preferences: Lifestyle



### Clear Order

"Like to live in a planned, orderly way, seeking to regulate and manage their lives. They want to make decisions, come to closure, and move on. Their lives tend to be structured and organized, and they like to have things settled. Sticking to a plan and schedule is very important to them, and they are energized by getting things done."

### Flexibility

"Like to live in a flexible, spontaneous way, seeking to experience and understand life, rather than control it. Detailed plans and final decisions feel confining to them; they prefer to stay open to new information and last-minute options. They are energized by their resourcefulness in adapting to the demands of the moment."

## Judging Types are More Likely to:

- Want things to be settled and structured.
- Finish tasks *before* the deadline.
- Like goals and results.
- Try to limit surprises.
- Draw conclusions.
- Quickly commit to plans and decisions.
- See routines as effective.
- Prefer to trust the plan.

## Perceiving Types are More Likely to:

- Want things to be flexible and open.
- Finish tasks *at* the deadline.
- Like to see what turns up.
- Enjoy surprises.
- Stay tentative.
- Reserve the right to change plans or decisions.
- See routines as limiting.
- Prefer to trust the process.

## Type Preference Continuum

Extraversion	E	V	M	S	S	M	V	I	Introversion
		E	O	L	L	O	E		
Sensing	S	R	D	I	I	D	R	N	Intuition
		Y	E	G	G	E	Y		
Thinking	T	C	A	H	H	A	C	F	Feeling
		L	R	A	A	R	L		
Judging	J	E	T	T	T	E	E	P	Perceiving
		A	T	T	T	A	A		
		R	E			R	R		

## Distribution of Preferences in the U.S. National Representative Sample

Preference	Percentage	Preference	Percentage
E	49%	I	51%
S	73%	N	27%
T Overall	40%	F Overall	60%
Males	56.5%	Males	43.5%
Females	24.5%	Females	75.5%
J	54%	P	46%