

# 4 | WHAT A CHARACTER!

*The Four Different  
Temperaments*

You don't need us to tell you that people have different natures. But did you know that everybody can be divided into just four basic human temperaments?

Suppose your cousin is intense and excitable, but your neighbor is a Steady Eddy. This is in large part due to differences in their innate temperaments. If your cousin the thrill seeker takes a number-crunching job at an insurance company, chances are he'll be bored out of his head. Big mistake. If, however, he works for the same company doing field investigations of buildings that have burned to the ground, he has a better chance of being interested in his work — and therefore satisfied with it. And what about your dependable neighbor? He might be perfect for the number-crunching job!

Throughout history, philosophers, writers, psychologists, and other observers of humanity have noticed that there are four distinct "natures" into which all people fit. As far back as 450 B.C., Hippocrates described four different dispositions, or temperaments. In the Middle Ages, Paracelsus described four natures whose behavior was influenced by four kinds of spirits. The American Indian Medicine Wheel suggests four spirit keepers, similar to the temperaments, and Hindu wisdom postulates four central desires.

Psychologist David Keirsey was impressed that these four different temperaments, observed independently by people from diverse cultures and from different periods of history, all described remarkably similar characteristics. When he learned about Type through the work of Isabel Briggs Myers, he became intrigued with the relationship between Type and temperament. Many different labels have been used to identify the four temperaments. The names we use in this book, some borrowed and some original, were chosen because we feel they best describe each temperament's most central characteristic.

Keirsey determined that four combinations of type preferences correspond to

the four temperaments people have posited throughout history. The four combinations are:

"Traditionalists" (SJs) are people who prefer both **Sensing** and **Judging**.

"Experiencers" (SPs) are people who prefer both **Sensing** and **Perceiving**.

"Idealists" (NFs) are people who prefer both **Intuition** and **Feeling**.

"Conceptualizers" (NTs) are people who prefer both **Intuition** and **Thinking**.

Each of the sixteen personality types falls into one of these categories. In this book when we refer to temperament, sometimes we use the names, and other times the letter combinations (e.g., "Traditionalist" and "SJ"). We do this because some people find one easier to remember than the other. But *both* labels apply equally well. One way you can determine your temperament is to check the letters of your type. With SJs and SPs, they are the second and fourth letters. With NFs and NTs, they are the middle letters.

Traditionalists (SJs):	ESTJ	ISTJ	ESFJ	ISFJ
Experiencers (SPs):	ESTP	ISTP	ESFP	ISFP
Idealists (NFs):	ENFJ	INFJ	ENFP	INFP
Conceptualizers (NTs):	ENTJ	INTJ	ENTP	INTP

People with the same temperament have a great deal in common and tend to share certain core values. However, they are *not* all the same! People of each temperament come in four varieties. Their other preferences — Extraversion or Introversion, Thinking or Feeling, and Judging or Perceiving — give them very different personalities. Think of a particular temperament as a family of instruments. All stringed instruments, for example, have many important features in common, and yet there are obvious differences between a violin, a viola, a cello, and a double bass (not to mention a guitar and a piano). And they are *very* different from wind instruments.

Since it's important to find a job that suits your nature, we are now going to discuss the four human temperaments and how they best fit into the workplace. Within each discussion you'll find specific information regarding temperament-based strengths and weaknesses. This will help you see how different personality types flourish in different settings, and it will help you begin to focus on the kind of work you would find personally satisfying. You may want to mark (or highlight, or copy) your particular section once you've found it, for easy reference.

Even if you are already certain of your personality type, we suggest that you read about all four temperaments before deciding which one best describes you. For the time being, *do not* concern yourself with whether or not the letters of the temperament you choose match those of your personality type. There's a good chance they will — but there's also a possibility they won't.

### Traditionalists (**Sensing Judgers**)

ESTJ ISTJ ESFJ ISFJ

Approximately 40 percent of the American population

You will recall that Sensors trust facts, proven data, previous experience, and the information their five senses bring them. Judgers prefer a structured, orderly world and are driven to make decisions. Taken together, these two preferences create a "Sensing Judger," a type of person who is down-to-earth and decisive, and whom we call a "Traditionalist."

The motto for Traditionalists might well be, "Early to bed, early to rise." Traditionalists are the most traditional of the four temperaments. They value law and order, security, propriety, rules, and conformity. They are driven by a strong motivation to serve society's needs. Traditionalists respect authority, hierarchy, and the chain of command, and generally have conservative values. They are bound by their sense of duty and always try to do the right thing, which makes them reliable, dependable, and above all else, responsible.

Now because Traditionalists come in both Thinking (STJ) and Feeling (SFJ) varieties, there are clearly differences between them. Frequently, ESFJs and ISFJs won't identify as strongly with the Traditionalist description as their ESTJ and ISTJ friends do. For ESFJs and ISFJs the connection with others and the people-oriented criteria for decision making are critically important. So while most Traditionalists (regardless of their judgment preference) are happiest in occupations where the structure is clear and the expectations explicit, those with a Feeling preference will strive for harmonious affiliations with others and seek opportunities to do work that lets them help others in tangible ways.

#### Traditionalists at Work

Traditionalists need to belong, to serve, and to do the right thing. They value stability, orderliness, cooperation, consistency, and reliability, and they tend to be serious and hardworking. Traditionalists demand a great deal of themselves on the job and expect the same of others.

**Strengths.** Traditionalists are practical, organized, thorough, and systematic. They pay attention to regulations, policies, contracts, rituals, and timelines. They are excellent at guarding, monitoring, and regulating. Traditionalists prefer to deal with proven facts and use them to further the goals of the organization to which they belong. They take great pride in doing something right the first time and every time. They are good at seeing what needs attention and at getting the job done with the available resources as efficiently as possible. Once they've committed themselves, Traditionalists always follow through. At their best, Traditionalists are solid, trustworthy, and dependable.

**Potential Weaknesses.** Traditionalists are not particularly interested in theories or abstractions, and the future doesn't attract their attention as much as the present. Long-range planning usually is not one of their strengths. Traditionalists sometimes make decisions too quickly. They tend to see things in black and white, rather than in shades of gray. They run the risk of being unable to change

or to adapt quickly, and they tend to resist trying approaches that are new, different, or untested. They are likely to want to see proof that a solution will work before seriously considering it. At their worst, Traditionalists can be inflexible, dogmatic, and unimaginative.

**A good job** for a Traditionalist might be one that involves a relatively high level of responsibility within a stable company that has a clear-cut chain of command. Since they like structure, they are generally comfortable in organizations that have a fair number of rules and standard ways of doing things. Traditionalists prefer working in an environment where both regulations and rewards are certain. (They *don't* like positions or organizations where everything is in a state of flux or confusion!) They prefer colleagues who share their dedication and respect for authority and who pull their own weight.

Traditionalists usually make good managers. They appreciate the need for structure and are often the mainstays of organizations, either in leadership or support positions. The role they most often play is that of the stabilizer — the maintainer of traditions and the status quo.

Remember how we said that people of all types can find satisfaction in all fields? For the purposes of this chapter, let's use the field of law enforcement as an example. Some temperaments are more likely to gravitate to law enforcement than others, but all can find satisfaction in this area if they find a way of meeting their individual needs.

It's not unusual for Traditionalists to become police officers. In fact, in some studies, over 50 percent of police officers in a given area fit this temperament! This line of work appeals to them because a high priority of theirs is protecting and serving society. They find enforcing social rules, maintaining order, and aiding those in distress intrinsically satisfying.

Many police officers are also Experiencers — the next temperament we'll discuss — but they are attracted to law enforcement for different reasons, as you'll see.

### Experiencers (Sensing Perceivers)

ESTP ISTP ESFP ISFP

Approximately 30 percent of the American population

Sensors, you'll remember, concentrate on what can be seen, heard, felt, smelled, or tasted, and trust whatever can be measured or documented. Perceivers like to stay open to all kinds of possibilities and prefer to live in a flexible way. Taken together, these two preferences create a "Sensing Perceiver," a type of person who is responsive and spontaneous, and whom we call an "Experiencer."

The motto for Experiencers might well be, "Eat, drink, and be merry!" And they are the most adventurous of the four temperaments. They live for action, impulse, and the present moment. They focus on the immediate situation and have the ability to assess what needs to be done *now*. Since Experiencers value freedom and spontaneity, they seldom choose activities or situations that impose

too much structure or too many rules. They are risk-taking, adaptable, easy-going, and pragmatic. They admire skillful execution in any field or discipline. Many, but not all, are thrill seekers who like living on the edge.

### Experiencers at Work

Experiencers need to be active and free to act on their impulses. In their work, they focus on what can be accomplished in the here and now. They value heroic deeds and masterful acts and like moving from one challenge to the next.

Like Traditionalists, Experiencers also come in two varieties, STPs and SFPs. Like their SFJ friends, some SFPs don't fully agree with the description of Experiencer temperament because it doesn't include their natural desire to help others or make decisions that are congruent with their values. So while all Experiencers are typically most satisfied in careers that are relatively free of excessive rules, planning, and structure, SFPs usually want to respond primarily to the needs of others and feel their work is making a difference to people in ways that are immediate.

**Strengths.** Experiencers can see clearly what is happening and are agile at seizing opportunities. They are excellent at recognizing practical problems and approach them with flexibility, courage, and resourcefulness. They are not afraid to take risks or improvise as needed. Because they are not invested in tradition the way Traditionalists are, Experiencers enjoy making changes in response to some immediate need or crisis. However, like Traditionalists, they prefer to deal with facts and real problems rather than theories or ideas. Experiencers are keen observers of human behavior and can be good negotiators. They are efficient, and use an economy of effort in achieving their goals. Many Experiencers (but not all) are especially skillful with tools and instruments, things they can physically manipulate and which require precision. At their best, they can be resourceful, exciting, and fun.

**Potential Weaknesses.** Experiencers often are not predictable to others, and they sometimes fail to think things through carefully before acting. They are not much interested in the theoretical, abstract, or conceptual, and they may fail to see important connections or patterns linking events. Experiencers tend to lose enthusiasm once the crisis phase of any given situation is over. Since they prefer to keep their options open, they don't always follow established rules and they sometimes avoid commitments and plans. At their worst, they are irresponsible, unreliable, childish, and impulsive.

**A good job** for an Experiencer might be one that provides autonomy, variety, and action. They prefer work that brings immediate results, and they enjoy being able to execute tasks skillfully and successfully. Since they like to have fun, whatever they do must give them a high degree of pleasure if it is to be satisfying.

Although they are not naturally drawn to structured organizations, Experiencers can find a niche in the role of corporate "firefighter"—the person who notices and responds to crises. And they are often involved in occupations that allow them to use acquired skills, often involving tools, independently and spontaneously.

Now that you're familiar with this temperament, can you guess why many Experiencers are drawn to law enforcement? According to some studies, as many as 25 percent of many United States police forces are Experiencers. Many become police officers because of the excitement, the unpredictability, and even the danger that can await them with every new door they knock on or car they pull over. For many Experiencers, the job of police officer satisfies their need for action, spontaneity, and fully experiencing the moment.

### || Idealists (iNtuitive Feelers)

ENFJ INFJ ENFP INFP

*Approximately 15 percent of the American population*

Intuitives, you'll recollect, are interested in meanings, relationships, and possibilities. Feelers make decisions based on personal values. Taken together, these two preferences create an "Intuitive Feeler," a type of person who is concerned about personal growth and understanding for themselves and others, and whom we call an "Idealist."

The motto of Idealists might well be, "To thine own self be true." They are the most spiritually philosophical of the four temperaments. It's as if they are on a perpetual search for the meaning of life. They place a very high value on authenticity and integrity in people and relationships and tend to idealize others. Idealists focus on human potential and are often gifted at helping others grow and develop, a task that gives them great satisfaction. They are often excellent communicators and can be thought of as catalysts for positive change.

#### *Idealists at Work*

Idealists enjoy using their natural ability to understand and connect with other people. They are naturally empathetic and focus on the needs of the people involved in their work — for example, employees, colleagues, patients, or clients.

**Strengths.** Idealists know how to bring out the best in others and understand how to motivate others to do their best work. They are excellent at resolving conflicts and at helping people work together more effectively, and have the ability to help people feel good about themselves and their jobs. When they praise a job well done, they usually praise the individual, rather than just the accomplishment. Idealists are good at identifying creative solutions to problems. They communicate well in speech and writing and can generate enthusiasm for their ideas and actions. At their best, they are charismatic, receptive, and accepting.

**Potential Weaknesses.** Idealists have a tendency to make decisions based exclusively upon their own personal likes and dislikes. They have trouble staying detached. They tend to take other people's problems to heart and can become too involved and overwhelmed as a result. Sometimes they are too idealistic and not practical enough. Idealists are not particularly good at disciplining

or criticizing others, although they have a great capacity for self-reproach. Sometimes they will sacrifice their own opinion for the sake of harmony. At their worst, they can be moody, unpredictable, and overemotional.

**A good job** for an Idealist is one that is personally meaningful, rather than simply routine or expedient. They value harmony and do not flourish in a competitive or divisive arena. And they prefer organizations that are democratic and that encourage a high degree of participation from people at all levels.

Idealists gravitate toward organizations that promote humanistic values or toward jobs that allow them to help others find fulfillment. They are often found in human resources or personnel positions, as well as in teaching, consulting, counseling, and the arts.

Where do you suppose Idealists fit into the field of law enforcement? Studies show that they make up well under 10 percent of most police forces, and they usually don't end up "on the beat." Instead, they almost unfailingly find their way to the human resources department, community outreach programs, or training or development programs where they can use their natural gifts in reaching out to others.

### || Conceptualizers (iNtuitive Thinkers)

ENTJ INTJ ENTP INTP

*Approximately 15 percent of the American population*

By now you know that Intuitives look for meanings in all things and focus on implications, and you'll remember that Thinkers make decisions impersonally and logically. Taken together, these two preferences create an "Intuitive Thinker," a type of person who is intellectual and competent, and whom we call a "Conceptualizer."

The motto for Conceptualizers might well be, "Be excellent in all things." They are the most independent of the four temperaments, driven to acquire knowledge and set very high standards for themselves and others. Naturally curious, Conceptualizers usually can see many sides to the same argument or issue. Conceptualizers are excellent at seeing possibilities, understanding complexities, and designing solutions to real or hypothetical problems. Their role is often that of the architect of change.

#### *Conceptualizers at Work*

Conceptualizers enjoy using their abilities to see possibilities and analyze them logically to solve problems. They are interested in constantly acquiring knowledge, either for its own sake or for a strategic purpose.

**Strengths.** Conceptualizers have vision and can be great innovators. They can see possibilities as well as the big picture, and they can conceptualize and design necessary changes within an organization. They excel at (and enjoy) strategizing, planning, and building systems to accomplish their goals. Conceptualizers understand complex, theoretical ideas and are good at deducing principles or

trends. They enjoy being challenged, are demanding of themselves and others, and can usually accept constructive criticism without taking it personally. At their best, they are confident, witty, and imaginative.

**Potential Weaknesses.** Sometimes Conceptualizers can be too complex for others to understand. They have a tendency to overlook necessary details. They can be deeply skeptical and often challenge rules, assumptions, or customs. They also sometimes have trouble with authority and can be seen as elitist. Conceptualizers often fail to see how they affect others, and they may not be interested in either harmony or the importance of feelings. They can be fiercely competitive and will sometimes not bother with a project or activity if they don't think they will excel at it. At their worst, Conceptualizers can be arrogant, remote, and in a world of their own.

**A good job** for a Conceptualizer might be one that provides autonomy, variety, plenty of intellectual stimulation, and the opportunity to generate ideas, and they must find their work challenging to be satisfying. Since they can be impatient with others whom they consider less competent than they, Conceptualizers need to be surrounded by very capable supervisors, colleagues, and employees. Many Conceptualizers value power and gravitate toward powerful positions or people.

Because their need for competence is so strong, Conceptualizers are often found in leadership positions. They show up in college-level teaching positions, in upper management, in the sciences or computer fields, and in medicine or law in great numbers.

You can probably guess where Conceptualizers end up on the police force. Although not found in law enforcement in large numbers, they can represent as much as 20 percent of upper management. High-level positions give them a chance to tackle complex problems, the opportunity to apply their vision and logic to long-range strategic plans, and the power they enjoy.

### *Temperaments in a Teapot*

A peek into a staff meeting at a hospital will illustrate the strengths of each of the four temperaments. You can see that the department heads have very different concerns, but that each makes a vital contribution to the meeting.

Susan, the director of planning and marketing, is a Conceptualizer (Intuitive Thinker). She presents a proposal for a new Women's Health Services unit at the hospital. A potentially lucrative source of revenue, the unit would offer a wide range of medical services exclusively for women. It would provide both diagnostic and surgical services and would offer procedures and equipment on the cutting edge of technology. Susan's plan includes marketing the unit's expert, well-respected staff of physicians and technicians; she thinks it's very possible that the unit would create a competitive environment among hospitals, putting them in a position to choose the best personnel and to be seen as a leader in health care.

Ross, the director of finance, is a Traditionalist (Sensing Judger). He recommends a full investigation of comparable centers around the nation to determine

their operating costs and to establish realistic start-up costs for the new unit. He cautions the group about starting too quickly before feasibility studies and certificate-of-need applications have been fully researched and documented. If the data supports the creation of the new unit, Ross recommends that they commit only to a three-year trial operation to reduce the overall risk to the hospital's fiscal stability. He cites the need for cost comparison studies to determine the best pricing strategies, and cost containment plans to keep overhead low while maintaining a realistic operating budget.

Rachel, the director of operations, is an Experiencer (Sensing Perceiver). She suggests that a task force be mobilized immediately to begin gathering information about the staff, materials, and equipment already on hand that could be appropriated for the new unit before any new purchases are made. She recommends that bids be solicited from construction and contracting firms, and she suggests that all negotiations be handled through her office. Rachel is concerned that if the hospital does not open the new unit relatively quickly, it will lose its opportunity to be an innovator as other hospitals try similar approaches. She encourages the group to work expediently and efficiently without an excessive number of meetings and without a lot of memos—in other words, to strike while the iron is hot.

Mark, the director of human resources, is an Idealist (Intuitive Feeler). He is enthusiastic about the new unit and recommends that it be designed to serve women of all social and economic backgrounds. Mark reminds the group that some employees and members of the community may see the new unit as a threat to their jobs. He points out the need for employee and community support for the project, and recommends that the hospital make continuous efforts to maintain enthusiasm for the unit through a variety of communication activities, including employee meetings, individual questionnaires, and a public information campaign to the residents and neighboring hospitals. He also recommends groundbreaking ceremonies, grand opening tours, and similar community-oriented events.

### *Which Temperament Are You?*

By now you have probably identified which of the four temperaments you relate to most closely. Which one suits you best?

Traditionalist (SJ) \_\_\_\_\_ Experiencer (SP) \_\_\_\_\_

Idealist (NF) \_\_\_\_\_ Conceptualizer (NT) \_\_\_\_\_

What personality type did you think fit you in Part 1? \_\_\_\_\_

If your type is consistent with your choice of temperament, this is further verification that you have found your true type.

If your personality type is *not* consistent with your choice of temperament, there's a chance that you did not correctly identify your true personality type in Part 1. For example, let's say you thought you were an ENFP, but you relate strongly to the Conceptualizer temperament. It's possible that you really *are* an

ENTP and not an ENFP. We suggest that you go back to Chapter 3 and read the Verifying Type Profiles for both ENFP and ENTP to see which one sounds most like you.

Suppose you reread the Profiles in Chapter 3 and still think you're an ENFP. Don't despair! There's another possible explanation for your conflicting results. As we grow older, we all naturally "round out" our personalities by developing our weaker preferences. This process is called **type development**, and we explain it in detail in Chapter 7. Briefly, in this situation it means that you really could be an ENFP, but that you are busy developing your Thinking, which leads you to relate more strongly to the Conceptualizer temperament. By the time you've finished Chapter 7, you should have a good idea of how type development works, which will help you make your final decision about your true personality type.

Much of our own general knowledge about temperament has come from the excellent resource *Introduction to Temperament*, by Louise Giovannoni, Ph.D., Linda Berens, Ph.D., and Sue Cooper, Ph.D.

# 5 WHO'S ON FIRST?

## *Identifying Your Innate Strengths*

The second ingredient in the "Fourmula" for Career Satisfaction is understanding which aspects of your personality are strongest and which are weakest. Although all of your preferences play important roles, certain preferences within each personality type are more powerful than others. Since you want to operate from a position of strength while you're at work, it makes sense for you to identify carefully which preferences you use most easily and most successfully.

### The Type Functions

You will recall that Extraversion and Introversion are the two different ways we interact with the world, and that Judging and Perceiving are the two different ways we prefer to construct our lives. These four preferences are reflected in the first and last letters of your personality type. We refer to them as the **attitudes**. The attitudes are discussed more fully in Chapter 6.

You'll also remember that Sensing and Intuition are the two different ways we take in information, and that Thinking and Feeling are the two different ways we make decisions. These four preferences are reflected in the two middle letters of your personality type. We refer to them as the **functions**. The functions are the core of Type, and in this chapter we'll show you why.

