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Personality Styles | Parent/Teacher

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An acorn is capable of becoming a mighty oak, but it will never become a giant redwood—no matter how hard you push it. Discover your child's nature, and then nurture that nature.

—Jim Cathcart

Over the years, a number of personality inventories have been developed using Carl Jung's "forced-choice" approach. If you have ever taken such an inventory, you might have had difficulty making choices between two opposites. For example, would you classify yourself as an introvert or an extrovert? Your choice may be more representative of one but not to the complete exclusion of the other. Therefore, any inventory that uses a forced-choice approach is an artificial attempt to categorize and describe. If we keep this in mind and do not pigeonhole people by the results of such an inventory, the descriptions can be very useful.

STYLES

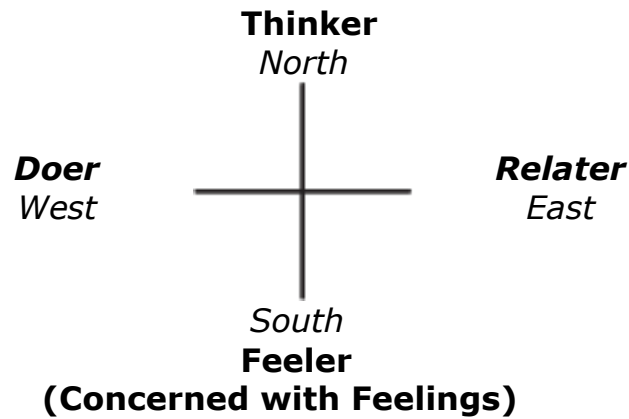
The Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung was the first to categorize behavioral or personality styles. No style is good or bad, right or wrong. Neither is one style better or worse than another; they are just different. Jung articulated a theory of personality behavior styles that he believed are genetically determined. Styles can be discerned by watching young children. You will discover that they process experiences in different ways. Jung postulated that every individual develops a primacy in one of four major behavioral functions: intuiting, sensing (our senses), thinking, or feeling.

A PERSONALITY STYLES INVENTORY FOR PARENTS

Personality inventories are available with a number of different forms, descriptors, and titles. I have taken twelve such inventories and created the one described below. I wanted one that would be easy to use and could be implemented immediately. Although the inventory is included in this chapter on parenting, it can be used to understand people in the workplace, as well as family members and others in social situations.

From all the research into personality styles, four descriptors emerge to help parents understand and relate more successfully with their children.

An image of a directional scale will help you picture and remember the styles. Visualize a *thinker* in the north, a “*feeler*” in the south, a *doer* in the west, and a *relater* in the east.



A *thinker (north)* analyzes and can be described as someone who processes information using a great deal of thought. A *feeler (south)* can be described as being more directed through emotions rather than through cognition. A *doer (west)* is orientated toward results, while a *relater (east)* requires relationships.

Since directions are not limited to north, south, east, and west, think in terms of general areas or neighborhoods, such as the north and west, south and east, etc. My styles are predominantly in the thinker and doer areas. I am cognitive (thinker) and project-oriented (doer). So I am in the *Northwest* area. My wife is a writer (thinker) and enjoys social interactions (relater). She is in the *Northeast* area. However, our daughter is guided by her feelings (feeler) and has a great desire to be with people (relater). So her style resides in the *Southeast* neighborhood.

Knowing our daughter’s styles allows my wife and me to be much more understanding of her decisions and her behavior. A parent who is aware of styles has a decided advantage in rearing and relating to the child. The same holds true for a husband and wife. Just knowing that my wife wants time to relate prompts me to redirect my impulse of “getting on with a task.” I deliberately take time to listen.

Think of an acorn. If planted well, nourished, and given the proper setting, the tiny acorn will grow into a giant oak tree. It will never become a palm tree. If your child has the nature of a palm, it is useless and even counterproductive to try to make your child into an oak. Parenting becomes so much more enjoyable when you *nurture your child’s nature*.

Being aware of styles enhances communications and relationships. When you observe a youth's style and start relating with this understanding, you will experience less stress and more joy in your parenting.

To learn more about your child's styles, go to <http://WithoutStress.com> and link to *PARENTS*; then scroll down to *ASSESSMENTS*.

Parents who have more than one child readily admit that each child is different. It does not take much social sense to notice differences at even very young ages. The question then arises as to how your understanding of each child's nature can reduce stress. If you are a father with a daughter, there will generally be a tendency to "fix" her problems. However, if your child has more of a feeling nature, your trying to "fix" her problems may not be successful. The situation may be that your daughter listens but doesn't relate to what you are saying. A situation like this prompts stress on the parent who becomes frustrated, as well as the youngster who believes the parent does not understand her.

Listening with an understanding of a child's styles increases the likelihood of more pleasurable parenting—and with less stress. Just as you would not want a youngster's teacher to be frustrated with your child's learning, why would you want your child to be frustrated and stressed by a parent? After all, parents are a child's first teacher.