

The Natural Differences Feedback Process

It is hard to overstate the extent of Carl Jung's contributions when it comes to understanding the actual meaning of individual differences in human behavior. One (of many) was an insight he came to during the brief period that he and Sigmund Freud were close friends.²⁹ During this period of collaboration they would take turns interpreting each other's dreams. Although both were NTs, Jung noticed that a number of Freud's interpretations were projections, interpretations that fit Freud's extraverted-structured NT nature rather than Jung's introverted, open-ended NT nature. This observation led to Jung's conclusion that clinicians must have a clear understanding of their own type as well as the type of clients that naturally differed from them. Without this knowledge Jung believed the clinician type bias could disrupt the therapeutic process.³⁰

Consequently, the first step for a psychotherapist that wants to use a natural differences model is to:

- Have a clear understanding of the characteristics and traits inherent to their own personality and
- A clear understanding of the natural and normal traits and characteristics inherent to clients that naturally differ from them.

²⁹ After a few years, natural differences that neither understood led to an acrimonious end to their relationship.

³⁰ My experience since I began using type profiling with all clients in 2000 strongly supports the importance of clinicians being aware of natural differences in type orientations. Ninety-two percent of the clients I have seen over this period have differed from me on at least one of the four dichotomies. Fifty-five percent have operated from the perceptual frame of reference of a different temperament. Understanding the existence and meaning of these differences has allowed me to mirror my client's perceptual frame of reference rather than my own.

To identify your own temperament specific personality type lease visit www.NaturalPersonalityInstitute.com³¹ and fill in the Natural Personality Questionnaire® (NPQ) found there.³² The four-letter code derived from your score is then used for gathering specific information from this book with regards to your:

Natural response orientation for each dichotomy.

As a general rule, the stronger your natural response orientation is toward one pole of a dichotomy, the more comprehensively accurate the descriptive information for that dichotomy-specific pole will be. The more evenly-divided your response orientation is, the more of an "it depends..." profile you will have.³³ Once you have studied the automatically-triggered processes inherent to your response orientation on a dichotomy, take note of the automatically-triggered processes inherent to the response orientation for individuals who naturally respond from that dichotomy's opposite pole. This is very important; clients that respond from the opposite pole of a dichotomy from your own will be automatically absorbing, processing, and responding from a very different perceptual frame of reference for the same reality. An extravert, for instance, will usually automatically talk about what they are thinking or feeling. The driving force for this behavior comes from their natural requirement for external affirmation to feel settled with what they are thinking or feeling. An introvert, on the other hand, will usually think about what they are thinking or feeling until they have come to a conclusion regarding its meaning. Their conclusions are experienced as factual givens, so external acknowledgement is not required.

³¹A more comprehensive alternative type questionnaire can be found on Ross Reinhold's excellent website for information on the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® and core temperaments, www.PersonalityPathways.com.

³²The NPQ is also found in Appendix One at the end of this book.

³³A near-even score on a dichotomy is comparable to being ambidextrous, rather than right or left hand dominant.

Unless someone directly asks them what they are thinking or feeling it may not even occur to them to share their conclusions.

Your temperament.

Each newborn arrives with one of four possible temperaments already in place. For reasons as yet unknown, a newborn's temperament may differ from that of one or both parents. Each of these temperaments is governed by perceptions, priorities, values and meanings that differ in key areas from those of any other temperament. Choice is not an option. Individuals who naturally differ cannot change their natural temperament-driven perceptual frame of reference or get someone with a different temperament-driven frame of reference to adopt their own.³⁴ Consequently it is essential that a clinician have a clear understanding of the traits and characteristics inherent to their own temperament, as well as the traits and characteristics inherent to clients whose temperaments differ from their own.

There are four temperaments: iNtuitive-Thinking (NT), iNtuitive-Feeling (NF), Sensing-Judging (SJ) and Sensing-Perceiving (SP). The following procedure is used to identify an individual's two letter temperament code.

- The first letter of a temperament code is found on the *Sensing-iNtuition dichotomy* (second column from left on the Natural Personality Questionnaire (NPQ). If the first letter is **S** for Sensing, the second letter is found on the *Judging-Perceiving dichotomy* (last column on the right). If your letter code on the Judging-Perceiving dichotomy is **J** for Judging, your temperament is **SJ** (*Sensing-Judging*). If your letter code is **P** for Perceiving, your temperament is **SP** (*Sensing-Perceiving*).

³⁴ It would be comparable to someone who is naturally right-handed trying to get someone who is naturally left-handed to change handedness. It cannot be done organically.

- If the first letter of your two letters temperament code is **N** for iNtuition, the second letter is found on the Thinking-Feeling dichotomy (third column from left). If your letter code is **T** for Thinking, your temperament is **NT** (*iNtuitive-Thinking*). If your letter is **F** for Feeling, your temperament is **NF** (*iNtuitive-Feeling*).

For example, my four-letter MBTI psychological type code is INFP. The first letter of my temperament code is found on the Sensing-iNtuition dichotomy which in my case is an N for iNtuition. When N is the first letter of a temperament code the second letter is found on the Thinking-Feeling dichotomy, which, in my case is the F for Feeling. Therefore my two-letter temperament code is NF, for iNtuitive-Feeling.

Once you have identified your temperament code, proceed to Chapter Five and create a summary outline of characteristics and traits known to be common for individuals with your temperament. Next, create summary outlines for each of the other three temperaments, making special note of natural and normal characteristics and traits that differ significantly from your own.

Your temperament-specific personality type.

The concept of temperaments can be rather confusing. They are not behaviors; they are distinctly different perceptual frames of reference with automatically-triggered priorities, values and meanings that differ from those of individuals with different temperaments. The manner in which an individual expresses their temperament (or how an individual expresses their temperament in action), is determined by the sum of the four-letter code derived from their Natural Personality Questionnaire score.³⁵ For example, I am an INFP, one of the four modes of expression for the NF temperament. The other three are ENFP, ENFJ and INFJ. I call these

³⁵Or any other type questionnaire built on the classification system developed for use with the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator®.

modes of expression *Temperament-Specific Personality Types*. Although these modes of expression for the NF temperament share the same core values and meanings, the manner in which each expresses those values and meanings differs in key ways from each of the others.

Note your four-letter NPQ score and review Chapter Seven for the characteristics and traits known to be common for individuals with your temperament-specific personality type. There will usually be a certain amount of "it depends..." with a few characteristics and traits in the type description fitting better than others. As a general rule, the more pronounced a client's dichotomy or temperament response orientation is, the more comprehensively they will identify with the characteristics and traits known to be common for individuals with their natural response orientation.

Individual temperament-specific personality type short form profiles are found in Appendix Two. These can be used to review a client's type orientation, or as a handout to give to your clients.

It is hard to overstate the importance of having a solid understanding of natural differences in temperaments. Back in 2000, when I first started using type profiling with all of my clients, I really knew very little about temperaments. The feedback I presented was focused on their dichotomy response orientation and their four-letter personality type code. It took a few years before it dawned on me that couple and family clients consistently pointed to an understanding of natural differences in temperaments as the key to helping them resolve their issues. Once these clients realized that natural differences - rather than acts of intention for personal gain -

were the cause of their difficulties they were able to accommodate and compromise in areas that had not been possible before. The importance of an understanding of natural differences is supported by statistical data collected since I began type profiling in 2000. This information showed that:

- 55% of my individual clients over the last twelve years have had a temperament that differed from my own.
- 80% of the couples seen during this period have included at least one partner whose temperament differed from my own.
- 75% of the couple clients have had different temperaments between each other.
- 30% of the couples have had a combination of temperaments that differed from my own.³⁶
- I have worked with 34 intact families since 2003. The minimum number of temperaments found in this sample was two. Twenty four families were led by parents with different temperaments. Twenty families had at least one child whose core temperament differed from both parents. In the 10 families whose parents had the same temperament, four had one child with a temperament unlike either parent, and two of the three children in each of the remaining families had temperaments that differed from both parents. Twelve families had 3 temperaments at play, while six were dealing with 4 temperaments.
- When you consider that each temperament is driven by perceptions, priorities, values and meanings that naturally differ in key areas from those of any other temperament it is easy to understand how family interactions can be disrupted by never ending debates over whose perceptions are right and whose are not. The magnitude of the challenge is severely exacerbated by conventional psychology's presentation of these differences as matters of choice rather than of nature.³⁷

³⁶I am an NF. This means 30% of the couple clients seen were NT-NT, NT-SJ, NT-SP, SJ-SJ, SJ-SP or SP-SP combinations.

³⁷This information suggests that additional explanations for sibling rivalry and the "difficult" child are warranted. It would be usual, for example, for a parent with the same temperament as one of their two children having an argument to have a certain amount of temperament-driven bias cloud the parent's effort to intervene. If unintended bias is present without the parent's awareness, the child will be aware of it. This awareness by the child can unintentionally place a barrier between parent and child and cause a breach in the child's relationship with a favored sibling. Many combinations like this can unintentionally tear families apart.

Most clinicians will find that the information on their dichotomy, temperament and temperament specific personality type is surprisingly accurate. Most clients will have the same experience.

Before using this information with your clients, it can be helpful to first practice type profiling with friends, family and colleagues.³⁸ The accuracy and usefulness of the information usually leads to confidence in its use with clients. I was able to get my family of origin to let me practice on them, and the information proved to be quite accurate. The nature of the information was non-judgmental, so we were able to acknowledge characteristics and traits in ourselves and each other without becoming defensive. We had always assumed that areas where we differed were matters of choice rather than of nature. Each of us thought we were being reasonable and anyone who disagreed with us was inherently wrong. Once we understood our natural differences we simply got along better. Debilitating debates over right and wrong became the exception rather than the rule. It was really quite amazing to see how quickly family dynamics changed, allowing for accommodation and compromise that had never been possible before.³⁹ By the time I started using type profiling with my clients I was quite confident that the information was going to be useful.

Recommended steps for providing clients with temperament & personality type feedback.

Start with clients already in your practice, with whom you have a comfortable rapport. Explain that you are thinking about using information on natural differences with your clients and would

³⁸Training and supervision is also available through the Natural Personality Institute. Visit www.NaturalPersonalityInstitute.com for more detailed information.

³⁹A large percentage of the couple and family clients that I have used this model with over the years have had the same reaction. Once differences are understood in terms of natural differences rather than as matters of choice a perceptual shift occurs leading to accommodation and compromise in areas where none had been possible before.

like to run the information by them to see if it is valid or not. Most of those interested will find the information very helpful, a response that will increase your confidence in the medium as a useful tool in the therapeutic process.

When ready, have your *new* clients download the NPQ from www.NaturalPersonalityInstitute.com, fill it in, and bring it to their initial session. When possible have them send you a copy of their completed questionnaire *before* their session. This will allow you time to prepare a type profile summary for each client before they arrive. Once you feel comfortable with the profiling process this will not be necessary. If the client does *not* bring a completed questionnaire to the session have them fill one in before you begin.

Whenever possible, avoid delving into a new client's issues while setting up their initial session. This lack of knowledge on your part increases the credibility and impact of the information you are going to give them about their nature. It is a unique and rewarding experience for a client to hear their therapist accurately describe how they have always been in terms of natural and normal response processes before knowing anything about them. Most clients arrive feeling that there is something *wrong* with them. They are usually both surprised and relieved to discover that the only thing wrong with them was their assumption that there was something wrong with them in the first place!⁴⁰

⁴⁰Although the psychic wounds are still there, a powerful foundation has been laid for the healing process. Clients' work in therapy does not center on changing the way they *are*, but rather on a combination of self-acceptance and self-value combined with putting an end to the self-abandonments they wrongly believed to be essential in order to be accepted and loved by others.

Before beginning the type feedback process have new clients complete an intake form that includes a question regarding their reason for seeking counseling assistance. Some clients will arrive in a state of crisis that must be effectively addressed before they can focus more clearly and specifically on type profiling.

Begin the type profiling process with a brief explanation⁴¹ of natural differences in human behavior. For example:

- Individuals have natural personalities that can differ in key areas from others in their life.
- Choice is not an option. Your natural typological response orientation will have been present at birth and not changed much across time.
- Your natural personality orientation is determined by your response orientation on four behaviors opposite dichotomies.
- The NPQ is designed to help identify your natural response orientation on those four dichotomies.
- Understanding a client's natural response orientation helps the counselor provide information that fits the client's nature in areas where it differs from that of the therapist.
- A brief explanation regarding type profile scores, that all degrees of response orientation equally natural and normal.
- A brief explanation regarding the nature of the information about to be presented on the client's dichotomy, temperament and personality type response orientations.
- That type profiles are made up of traits and characteristics known to be common for individuals with that type profile.
- That most individuals feel at least a few of these processes and behaviors do not fit for them.
- *That it is important to let the therapist know any time a trait or characteristic does not fit for them.* Otherwise the therapist may assume the client naturally responds in certain situations in a manner that they do not.⁴²

Begin the specific type feedback process with:

- General information on dichotomy response orientations.

⁴¹It is very rare for a client to show much interest in theoretical explanations about natural differences at the beginning of the process. They have to experience a practical application that has been helpful before such interest occurs.

⁴²Some clients have a fear of being labeled or judged to the extent that they do not want to fill in a questionnaire. In such cases begin the therapeutic process without a questionnaire-based type profile. Within a few sessions you will usually be able to figure out their dichotomy, temperament and personality type response orientations.

- Follow the general information with specific information for the client on their natural response orientation on each dichotomy.
- Throughout the type profile feedback process periodically ask your client if the information provided so far has been accurate. A fair number of clients are not comfortable disagreeing with the information their therapist is providing and will need ongoing encouragement to do so.

Follow information on the four dichotomies with general information on temperaments followed by specific information regarding the client's temperament.

Finish the type profile feedback process with information on the client's four-letter code MBTI based personality type.

Some clients may not feel comfortable interrupting their therapist's presentation of information on their type profile or disagreeing with the information being provided. Consequently, it is important that the clinician pause periodically during the type profile feedback process to see if any information provided up to that point does not fit the client's self-perception. Even a slight hesitation should be acknowledged, as experience has shown that a hesitation almost always leads to important information from the client regarding descriptive information that does not fit them well. These differences from type norms may seem insignificant to the client, but are very important for the clinician to be aware of. For instance, a clinician might have six INFPs in his or her practice at a given moment in time and each will differ in some ways from the others.

Some of the differences will be in matters of degree from standard type norms, while others will be more pronounced, even inexplicable in their nature. From my experience,⁴³ this range of differences appears to be quite normal for both dichotomies, as well as temperament driven response orientations.

⁴³Over 1870 clients from individual, couple and family counseling since I began using type profiles in February of 2000.

It can be very helpful to give the client handouts at the end of their initial session on their temperament and their temperament-specific response orientation. For example, I am an INFP. My temperament handout would be for an NF and my temperament-specific personality type handout would be for an INFP. If a client's typological profile is ESTJ, the temperament handout would be for an SJ and the temperament specific type handout would be for an ESTJ. Ask the client to mark the traits and characteristics described that most fit for them and bring the handouts back with them to their next session. The descriptive information highlighted often provides valuable additional clarification for how the client naturally processes within type that will allow the clinician to provide mirroring responses that more accurately fit with the client's nature.

With that being said, most clients that I have worked with have found the information provided to be consistent with their experience of themselves.⁴⁴ The accuracy of the type information provided has a powerful visceral level impact for most clients.

A word of caution before using a natural differences model with clients.

The type profile information found in this book tends to be accurate. However, this information is general, addressing response dynamics known to be common for individuals with each of the type profiles. The nature of an individual's self - separate from others - is far too complex to be captured by a temperament-specific natural response orientation profile. There are a near infinite

⁴⁴The accuracy of client self-perceptions has consistently been confirmed by clients' spontaneous response processes during their counseling sessions as well as from significant others in their lives who usually state that the client "has always been like that."

number of degrees of response orientation that each individual may have on each dichotomy and in the combinations that determine an individual's temperament and temperament-specific personality type. Birth order, degree of visual, auditory or kinesthetic perceptual processing, aptitudes of mind, and a wide range of environmental influences are but a few of the many determinants of each individual's sense of self separate from others. In this sense each individual is very much like the prints on the tips of their fingers: unique in ways that make it near impossible for any two to be truly alike. Consequently it is important to be aware that four-letter type profiles, no matter how accurate they are, do not do justice to the true nature of each individual.