

Temperaments: Introduction

Considering the role temperaments play in human societies, it is surprising that they remain so little understood. Four in number, the essential tasks that each is designed to attend to are so disparate that significant differences in automatically triggered perceptions, priorities, values and meanings are required to attend to them. These differences are present at birth, identifiable at an early age, and do not change much across time.

A.A. Milne's Winnie the Pooh fables provide delightful examples of how individuals with these temperaments interact in everyday life. Rabbit, for instance, is wired to abide by society's standard rules for appropriate behavior and to speak up when those rules are not being followed. Pooh, on the other hand, is wired to respond in the moment to what the moment has to offer. These differences lead to a wide range of predictable disagreements. In one episode, for instance, Pooh goes to visit Rabbit who is not home. Pooh is hungry and goes into Rabbit's warren to look for something to eat while he waits. He finds the store of honey that Rabbit has been building up for the winter months ahead and decides to have some. By the time Rabbit returns Pooh has eaten most of Rabbit's honey. What follows is a morality play with Rabbit pointing out society's standard rules for respect and consideration when dealing with someone else's property while Pooh counters with his own in-the-moment driven reasoning for why those rules should not apply to the situation at hand. After all Pooh was hungry and Rabbit, being his friend, should not mind if he found something to eat while he waited for him to return!

Christopher Robin, wired to facilitate harmony in the lives of others, is quick to respond with a helping hand when one of his friends in the Hundred Acre Wood is having a hard time. And then there is Owl, wired to speak up when someone has said or done something that does not make logical sense.

Parenting episodes have Kanga, a gentle by-the-rules mother, interacting with her more spontaneous, moment driven child, Roo. The challenge for Kanga, as with her real life counterparts, comes from finding ways to communicate society's standard rules for appropriate behavior in a manner that does not leave Roo feeling that there is something inherently wrong with the way he naturally responds.

The one constant in these stories involves each character's automatically triggered set of temperament driven perceptions, priorities, values and meanings. As with their human counterparts, these characters' response orientations do not change much across time. Rabbit, for instance, is no more able to get Pooh to adopt his own automatically triggered set of values and meanings regarding how people should behave than Pooh is at getting Rabbit to adopt his own moment driven rules for responding. Christopher Robin's ongoing efforts to help Eeyore

'lighten up' so he can better enjoy the upside of what life has to offer are no more successful than Eyore's efforts are in getting Christopher to understand why his own awareness of what is, or seems to be, missing does not allow him to do so. And then there is owl, of course, trying to get his fellow wood mates to be more logical in temperament driven contexts that do not allow them to do so.

This temperament driven perceptual frame of reference that each of us is born with may be the same as, or differ from;

1. One or both, parents.
2. One or more siblings.
3. One or more extended family members.
4. A teacher, coach, employer, friend or therapist.

How to Identify Your Core Temperament

Within your four-letter MBTI® (*Myers-Briggs Type Indicator*) personality type code from a scored copy of the Natural Personality Questionnaire, found on my homepage, is a two-letter code that identifies your temperament-driven nature. The first letter of your temperament code is found on the Sensing-iNtuition¹ dichotomy. That is the second column from the left on the questionnaire.

- If the first letter of your profile is **S** for Sensing, the second letter of your temperament code is found on the Judging-Perceiving dichotomy (the last, or fourth, 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).
- 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).

Please note:

1. All degrees of response orientation on any version of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® are natural and normal. No score is better, or healthier, than any other score.

¹ The letter N is used for intuition because the letter I has already been used for the introversion pole of the Extraversion – Introversion dichotomy.

2. If you have a 4-3 score on one or more of the dichotomies that determine core temperaments you may find that you have a temperament mix, responding with one temperament's perceptual frame of reference in one context, and from another temperament's in another.
3. The information provided on temperaments is only as accurate as an individual's self-perceptions are when filling in the Natural Personality Questionnaire. Errors in scoring choices usually come from;
 - Associating a meaning to the terms used that differs from that which the test designer intended.
 - Lacking a context for determining which of the options to choose.
 - Individuals that assess the choice options so comprehensively that they may not be able to choose one over another.
 - A language barrier

Consequently, no guarantee can be made regarding the accuracy of an individual's two letters temperament code, or the four letters code that identifies the manner in which they will tend to express their temperament in action.

The Four Temperaments

1. The NF (iNtuition-Feeling) Temperament²

NF (iNtuition-Feeling) oriented individuals are wired to facilitate harmony in the daily lives of human beings. They are our natural 'feelings fixers'. If a friend is struggling they will automatically reach out to help. If a group of their friends are not getting along, they will seek a resolution and keep at it, no matter how long it takes, until harmony has been restored.

In order to attend to their area of responsibility nature designed NFs with certain characteristics and traits that differ significantly from each of the other three temperaments. The most important of these is the degree to which NFs experience feelings of guilt and self-blame when they believe they may have upset or disappointed someone. It does not matter how reasonable or justified they believe their actions to be, if someone is bothered, they automatically experience feelings of guilt and self-blame well beyond those activated in the other three temperaments.

This elevated sensitivity to issues of harmony is compounded by NFs lack of concrete boundaries to ground them in their sense of self separate from others. Their temperament combines the limitless possibilities of the iNtuitive process with the limitless possibilities of how others are, or might be, feeling. The end

² Approximately 18% of the general population

result is an ongoing challenge; finding a way to express what they are thinking or feeling in a manner that does not upset or disappoint someone without ever knowing for sure if they have succeeded. This process is such that even a neutral response may be cause for concern since it could be a mask for unspoken displeasure.

The end result is that NFs end up in a world of possibilities without the means to experience a concrete sense about anything, including their own self. This challenge is unique to NFs who can find themselves on a never-ending journey in search of their true self. However, the nature of their process is such that the moment an NF locks into a set experience of self separate from others they are most likely no longer connected to their true self.

NFs do not choose to be like this; they are wired this way. Moreover, the standards for authenticity and integrity, consideration, and kindness with which they are designed to experience and live by can simply not be met. No matter how well they do, they cannot escape an awareness that they probably could have done better.

When disharmony is present, NFs experience it viscerally. This internal disruption will usually not ease until they have found a way to bring harmony back into play. An NF may not want to get involved, may truly know that a situation is not their problem to solve, and still experience an intolerable level of guilt and self blame if they know they *could* have done something to help and *did not*. The question NFs are always faced with when they must decide whether to help or not is; "Will I feel worse about myself if I;

1. Set a reasonable limit with someone who will likely be disappointed, or,
2. I do not set that limit to avoid feeling intensely guilty, and settle for feeling resentment toward the other party for asking in the first place?"

Far more often than not, most NFs opt for option 2.

I call this The Guilt Factor, an automatically triggered assessment process required to determine which, of a near infinite number of possible responses, is the one least likely to disrupt harmony.

Examples include;

- Enjoying a group activity, when it is their turn to choose, if any in the group do not seem to want to do it. Without direct assurance from those who appear disappointed with their choice, they may have difficulty enjoying the activity they have chosen.
- Seeking validation from their significant other before they purchase something. This 'check in' process has a practical function. If they buy

what they want to buy, something that is within their agreed upon budgetary limitations and their partner disapproves, they may;

- 1) Feel guilty and bad about their purchase and unable to enjoy using what they have purchased and/or
- 2) Get upset with their partner for causing them to feel bad about what they have purchased.

By checking it out in advance, NFs can eliminate this possible glitch.

- Sensing a problem has materialized an NF may automatically apologize, before they even know if they had anything to do with its cause. *(NF clients, when I have run overtime in our session, often apologize, automatically assuming they are responsible for my poor time management!)*
- NFs can have great difficulty with proportional responsibility. For instance, if they do not tell the truth on occasion in order to avoid a feared unreasonable response, can feel that they are just as bad as a significant other that is a habitual liar.
- NFs are naturally conflict-averse. Consequently, when they are pressured by an uncomfortably direct, intrusive, or judgmental individual, they may find themselves in a Guilt-Factor-driven dilemma. Fearing that a strait forward response will trigger a rejecting response that will cause them to feel intolerably bad, an NF may attempt some form of evasive response, even lying if necessary in order to avoid the intense feelings of awfulness they fear will be triggered by a direct honest response.
- NFs can find themselves in a relationship with someone with a narcissistic response process; someone that consistently projects blame onto others while the NF, vulnerable to feeling guilt out of proportion to the reality of a situation, attempts to get them to be more reasonable.
- NF's often grow up feeling that there is something wrong with them. Efforts by parents to help them be less sensitive, to take things less personal often, without intention or awareness, only serve to make matters worse. Knowing that the degree to which they feel guilty and bad, hurt and rejected as well as upset with those that are causing them to feel this way is disrupting harmony, they feel they are doing something wrong, a manner of experiencing emotions they should be able to change but cannot leading to a self perception that there is something wrong with them when there is not.

- An additional factor that may contribute to NFs feeling there is something wrong with them may be found in the temperament driven perceptual frames of reference of the individuals who established the theoretical base for making sense out of individual differences in personality; Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung. Both were iNtuitive-Thinkers (NTs), naturally wired to experience emotions in a more neutral and less personal manner than NFs do. They could not relate to the intense emotional sensitivity and reactivity that is inherent to the NF process and, consequently, assumed it to be an indication of emotional instability, as in a neurosis. The thought of an NT therapist attempting to counsel or analyze an NF client without a fundamental understanding of the NF's natural and normal experience of emotions is deeply troubling.³
- The Guilt Factor phenomenon can create problems for NFs when they are in a parenting role. The natural and normal boundary-testing behaviors of children require parents to set limits and enforce consequences. When an NF parent has to set a limit that upsets their child, an action that disrupts their child's harmony, they automatically feel bad, fearing that they may be harming their child. Their heads can tell them that the limit is reasonable and necessary for raising a healthy child but, the moment their child gets upset, The Guilt Factor can enter the equation and undermine their resolve and lead to withdrawing a perfectly reasonable consequence.
- An additional challenge for NFs is equally applicable to the other three temperaments. Without an understanding that natural differences are at play, NFs assume that others can experience feelings the way they do if they really want to. With this assumption of choice in place, NFs tend to believe that others, including a child that may naturally differ from them, are either choosing to feel differently or simply have a problem being aware of what they are actually feeling. However, over eighty percent of the general population is not NFs and do not naturally experience feelings of guilt and self-blame, as well as hurt and rejection, to the degree that NFs do.

Summary remarks on NFs

Nature designed NFs to experience meaning and purpose through helping roles that facilitate harmony in the lives of other human beings. These roles are activated by a visceral awareness of how others are or might be feeling and locked in place by feelings of guilt and self blame that get triggered if they know they *could* help and did not. No other temperament is designed to perceive, prioritize and respond in this manner.

³ The opposite is also true here. NF therapists are often uncomfortable with NT client's natural emotional neutrality, perceiving this characteristic to be an indication of insensitivity or an empathy deficit; neither of which will usually be the case.

The stresses associated with NF's level of sensitivity often lead to chronic tension in the neck and shoulders, headaches and a number of stomach related maladies. Yoga, meditation, calming music, and down-time in general from stress triggering sources of information and interactions with others can help counter these natural vulnerabilities.

2.The NT (iNtuition-Thinking) Temperament⁴

A note of clarification here. The terms used for descriptive purposes for those with a more feeling response orientation and a more thinking response orientation can be misleading. For instance; someone with a *feeling* response orientation is not inherently more able to feel or less able to think than someone with a *thinking* response orientation and someone with a *thinking* response orientation is not inherently more able to think or less able to feel than someone with a *feeling* response orientation.⁵ These terms are used to address fundamental differences in the perceptual and experiential dynamics automatically triggered when those with a more thinking response orientation and those with a more feeling response orientation are processing information, experiencing emotions and how best to express their conclusions to others. Although human beings are aware that people differ in their manner of expression, using terms such as tough-minded and just or compassionate and sympathetic to distinguish between them, few yet understand that these differences are driven by innately different perceptual and experiential frames of reference, differences that individuals have no choice in having nor option to change even if they wanted to.

While iNtuitive-Feelers (NFs) are attending to issues of harmony in the daily lives of human beings iNtuitive-Thinkers (NTs) are making sure that there is a logical consistency to what human beings are saying and doing. In order to attend to their area of responsibility nature designed NTs to;

- Process thoughts and experience emotions within an objective, fact-based frame of reference.
- Base decisions on an objective assessment of cause and effect.
- Automatically seek a logical explanation for what is happening when conflicts arise.
- Automatically require what is said or done make logical sense.

The innately disparate tasks that NTs and NFs are designed to attend to require distinctly different experiential dynamics. NTs' natural purpose and function requires that they be able to think and act in a logical and impartial manner. They would not be able to do this if they were susceptible to the intense feelings of

⁴ Approximately 15% of the general population

⁵ Ross Reinhold, e-mail correspondence, March, 21, 2007

guilt, blame, hurt and rejection activated in NFs when someone is bothered by what they have said or done. Nature solved this problem by providing NTs with an experience of emotions governed by logic. It is not that NTs do not have feelings as they very much do. They feel guilt, blame, hurt and rejection but not in a way that prevents them from letting others know, whether they like it or not, when something they have said or done does not make logical sense.

Characteristics and Traits known to be common for NTs include;

- An ability to assess cause and affect objectively.
- An ability to remain calm in crisis situations while determining the most logical direction for possible resolution.
- Are usually objective, direct, honest, and fair minded.

Natural Challenges for NTs

- May dismiss thoughts or feelings they believe to be impractical or irrelevant in a manner that can unintentionally trigger feelings of resentment and hostility in others.
- Introverted NTs may have difficulty in social situations governed by societal 'shoulds', forms and rituals that make little sense to them.
- NTs' logic driven emotional neutrality does not provide them with a frame of reference for making sense out of the emotional reactions of feeling response oriented individuals. For instance; When an NF gets upset with an NT, feeling hurt or rejected or guilty or bad by something an NT has said or done, the NT usually attempts to explain why the NF's emotional response does not make logical sense, which only serves to further upset the NF who now feels that their feelings are being rejected. Without a frame of reference for understanding what is happening, NTs often conclude that NFs are emotionally unstable and NFs often conclude that NTs are insensitive or have an empathy deficit, assumptions of meaning in both directions that are usually inaccurate.
- NTs are wired to process emotions logically. Becoming overwhelmed by emotions does not make logical sense to them and it can be hard for them to recognize when it is happening since it would be, for an NT, a failure to function, an illogical consideration. These limits can be tested in situations where;
 - 1) Their competence is constantly being unreasonably questioned or,
 - 2) Where their problem solving efforts, no matter how correct they may be, take a heavy toll on the lives of others. How many times, for instance, can an officer order his men and/or women into combat knowing heavy casualties will incur before he/she can no longer so order? The military is aware that field officers have their limits and have guidelines for determining when they must be

removed from front line roles before irreparable damage is done to their psyches.

- The stronger an NTs natural thinking response orientation is, the more challenging it can be for them to be aware when they are bothered beyond what makes logical sense. They can become more depressed, withdrawn or irritable than usual without being aware that these changes are connected to emotion driven traumas.

Summary remarks on NTs (iNtuition –Thinking)

NTs' are designed to solve problems that are amenable to critical analysis in the world of human beings; an automatically activated logic driven assessment process of cause and effect with emotions usually experienced within logical parameters of impact.

A friend of mine, an NT who was a planetary scientist at the California Institute of Technology (Caltech), was asked to take over as the director of the Jet Propulsion Laboratory and manage the very challenging task of reducing JPL's work force by over twenty percent during a major downturn in research funding. He accepted the job and met personally with each of those who were losing their jobs. He knew many of them and a number were close family friends. The stress inherent to the task was extraordinary. When he started the job his hair was brown. In six months, it was mostly grey. I asked him if, knowing the mental, emotional and physical toll this job was taking on him, would he agree to do it again if asked in the future. He said, 'If the explanation they provided me with for doing the job made sense to me, yes I would.' Did the task take a heavy toll? Absolutely, but NTs do not experience guilt, blame, hurt and rejection remotely close to how NFs experience them when something they say or do, disappoints or upsets someone. If they did, they would not be able to carry out the critical tasks that nature has assigned them in the lives of human beings.

It is unfortunate that NTs natural emotional neutrality, so necessary for them to attend to their areas of responsibility in a functioning human society, is so often perceived by feeling response oriented as an indication of insensitivity; a lack of caring. I spent 19 years at the California Institute of Technology surrounded by NTs. I coached them, I taught them⁶, and some are among my closest friends today. I have seen, first hand, the depth to which they care and are concerned about other human beings and the lengths they will go to in order to be of help.

3. The Sensing-Judging (SJ) Temperament⁷

⁶ Tennis and golf. I was an athletics coach.

⁷ Approximately 45% of the population

While NFs are facilitating harmony in human interactions and NTs are making sure that what human beings are saying and doing makes logical sense, Sensing-Judging (SJs) oriented are making sure that human beings are following the time-honored rules for appropriate behavior within their society. SJ children are easy to recognize. They are the ones who want to know what those rules are, follow them and expect others to do the same. Nature designed SJs this way with a particular purpose in mind: to provide human beings with a social structure, in order to make sure that the tangible needs of their society's members are adequately attended to and that their group members are conducting themselves in an appropriate manner.

As with each of the other temperaments, nature makes sure that SJs attend to their area of responsibility by setting off internal alarm bells when someone has behaved in an unacceptable manner. This inner turmoil is similar to the agitation triggered in an NF when emotional conflicts arise or the cognitive dissonance activated in an NT when something said or done does not make logical sense. There are rules of conduct that must be followed and consequences for those that break them. Be it theft, tardiness, cutting into line or assaults against another's property or self, there are consequences for offenders and an SJ is often in a position to enforce these consequences. When an individual disrupts 'behavioral harmony' an SJ will usually be unsettled until said harmony has been restored.

For most SJs, exceptions to the rule are rarely acceptable. Their logic is basic: if one starts making exceptions to a rule, where does one stop? I mean, how often have you been able to talk a police officer out of giving you a ticket or a librarian allowing you to carry on a conversation with someone that might be distracting to others? Considering how often humans can be found trying to cut corners in one context or another, it is no wonder that SJs tend to be skeptical about human beings in general and do not consider a job done until it is done, and done correctly.

For SJs, acceptable behavior has a much deeper meaning than simple respect for rules. This goes beyond casting your vote, paying your taxes, and being punctual, honest, and dependable; or getting good grades, knowing where to place a salad fork, remembering birthdays, or sending thank you notes in a timely manner. Good citizenship includes actively supporting the traditional institutions and organizations that contribute to the viability of the community on a local, state, or national level in both paid and volunteer capacities.

My mother had an SJ core. She raised her three children mostly as a single parent. While doing her best to keep us out of trouble, especially during our teen years, she served as a scout leader, the accountant for her church, led a number of committees for our Parent-Teacher Association, went door-to-door registering voters for the wrong political party, all while studying to become a real estate broker. I asked her one time why she had done so much and she said, "I did

what I thought a responsible parent and member of the community should be doing.” This was a classic SJ response. Choice is not an option. It is an automatically triggered set of perceptions, priorities, values and meanings that naturally differs from the perceptual frames of reference triggered in the other three temperaments.

General Traits and Characteristics of SJs

- Tend to be ethical, responsible and dependable. If an SJ commits to a project, he or she will usually complete it. It does not matter if the project requires a great deal more time and effort than expected. A commitment is a commitment, and an SJ will usually honor it.
- Tend to manage time well and usually have a clear sense of what the job requires. This quality allows them to organize effectively the tasks they feel will be needed to complete a project.
- Tend to be modest, traditional, conventional, and thrifty. They do not like to gamble. Prefer to deal with and rely on what is known to be rather than on what is possible. Comments like “Don’t worry about it” and “Things will work out somehow” do not reassure them. I know, I tried those lines many times with my mom and it never worked.
- Once they understand what needs to be done, extraverted SJs in particular, are quick to identify efficient ways to proceed and provide directorial leadership until the task is completed
- SJs trust experience. A method that has consistently been effective will not be abandoned for one that has yet to pass the tests of time.

SJ Relationship Challenges.

- SJs often have difficulty accommodating attitudes, beliefs and priorities that do not fit within conventional societal norms. For instance; there is only one way to set the table correctly for a meal, a time limit to sending out thank you notes, and no excuse for not voting or getting to an appointment on time.
- The stronger an SJ’s natural Sensing and Judging response orientations are, the greater their difficulty will be in accommodating unconventional behaviors in a spouse, child or with humans in general.
- SJ’s perception of caring about someone, or being cared about by someone, are connected more to how individuals are behaving than to how they feeling. You do not arrive late for a lunch meeting or a tennis match. You do not forget someone’s birthday. SJs experience such acts as a lack of caring or as disrespectful. They would be disgusted with themselves if they made such a mistake, assuming that the other would believe they did not care about them or was being disrespectful, an assumption of meaning that, in fact, would not likely be the actual response of someone with an NT or an SP driven response orientation.

- Dealing with a spouse or child that naturally responds from a temperament that differs from their own can be problematic. SJs are wired to teach and enforce standard rules for acceptable behavior. Exceptions are not part of the deal. The end result is that, without intention or awareness, an SJ parent can find themselves in a state of disconnect with their spouse and/or child or children, without understanding why it is happening. This was the case in my family. My mom did her best to instill in her three children her core SJ values. However, none of us are SJs. Efforts to shape us to be so only served to frustrate her and leave us, without intention or awareness, feeling there was something wrong with the way we actually were, something we should be able to change but never could.
- SJs require a clear sense of what is expected of them and may freeze and become ineffective when required to perform in situations where the expectations for a task are ambiguous, inconsistent, or simply not realistic. Their natural respect for authority makes direct challenges to unreasonable supervisors problematic so they will often just keep at it, trying to do what is expected in a no win situation. Simply quitting, in their personal or professional relationship capacities, can be experienced as an unacceptable failure and, consequently, avoided as long as possible. I asked my mother, after many years of constant complaints to me about her husband, my step-father, (*who I happened to like a lot*), 'If you are so unhappy, why not leave him?' Her response was, 'I made my bed so that is where I sleep.'

Summary remarks on SJs (*Sensing-Judging*)

While NFs are addressing the feelings based needs of human beings and NTs are making sure that humans proceed in a manner that makes logical sense, SJs are monitoring how humans behave, that they are adhering to the standard norms for acceptable behavior that make living together in social units possible. Choice is not an option. Like each of the other temperaments, SJs are designed by nature to fill a particular area of need in a functioning human society. An SJ's sense of self is connected to following the rules, honoring the traditions of their society, and making sure that others do the same. SJs are, figuratively and literally, society's 'behavior cops.'

Whereas tension in human interactions creates disruption in NFs' psyches and will not leave until harmony has been restored, and incongruities in what people are saying or doing are disruptive for NTs until logical consistency has been restored, SJs psyches are disrupted when people are not behaving as they should, and will not be relieved until appropriate conduct has been restored. As with each of the other temperaments choice is not an option.

4. The SP (*Sensing-Perceiving*) Temperament

While NFs are dealing with issues of harmony, and NTs are dealing with issues of logical consistency, and SJs are monitoring how humans are behaving, SPs are focused on providing optimum responses to immediate sensory experience.

This innate ability can reach extraordinary levels of specificity. I once observed Tom Dowd, the brilliant SP sound technician, who worked with Eric Clapton, Ray Charles, John Coltrane, Diana Ross and so many other great singers and musicians, doing a recording session with Aretha Franklin backed by a 25-member orchestra. The song being recorded at the moment was Respect. At a particularly loud moment in the song Dowd stopped the recording process went over to a musician in the string section, asked him to pluck a particular string that proved to be slightly out of tune. He had the musician pluck the string until the sound was right, returned to his booth and started the song over again. The discrepancy in sound was so slight that even the musician involved did not seem to be aware.

General George S. Patton, another SP, is considered one of history's greatest field commanders due to the speed and ingenuity of his in the moment adjustments to the unexpected during the heat of battle. SP basketball stars Ervin 'Magic' Johnson and Michael Jordan were at their best at 'crunch time' in the closing seconds of a tightly contested game. Their spontaneous creative adaptations in those moments that determine the outcome were often extraordinary.

This manner of perceiving, processing and responding transcends the temperament driven limitations of the other three temperaments. An SPs response may factor in how those with a different temperament might think, feel or act, or may not. What ultimately determines their response is an automatically activated conclusion regarding how best to accomplish their in-the-moment goal.

Characteristics and traits unique to SPs

- Are the most egalitarian of all temperaments, tending to treat others, regardless of status, as equals.
- Are utilitarian in their adherence to society's behavioral 'shoulds.' This does not mean they are dishonest or immoral, as they are usually true to their own code of ethics. It is just that they are designed by nature to ignore conventional responses that do not make sense when applied to the situation at hand.⁸

For instance, if four individuals, an SP, an SJ, an NF and an NT are at the end of four long checkout lines in a market, and they simultaneously

⁸ This aspect of an SP's nature can appear to be an indication of a narcissistic personality disorder. However, normal SPs have an ethical foundation that is not present in personality disorders.

notice another checker approaching to open a fifth checkout station, four distinctly different temperament driven responses are likely to occur.

- 1) The appropriate behavior driven SJ will usually stay in their line, expecting others to do the same and allow those who have waited longest in the lines first choice to the new line.
 - 2) The harmony focused NF will usually stay in their line to allow those who have waited longest to go first to the new line, their natural fairness to others driven response, kept in place in an NF who is late for an appointment and sorely tempted to break their fairness driven wiring, by the guilt they would experience if their 'unfair act' upset anyone.
 - 3) The NT might wait to see if others who have waited longer are going to move to the opening station and, if few choose to do so, and changing lanes makes logical sense, switch.
 - 4) By the time the SJ, NF and NT individuals have completed their internal decision making process the SP has already seized the opportunity of the moment and is first in the new line when the checker opens the new checkout line. From their perspective an opportunity to shorten their wait materialized and, if they do not seize the opportunity, someone else will!
- SPs only tend to show up for counseling when their in-the-moment problem solving response process stops working, leaving them overwhelmed and unable to function effectively. With rare exception, their goal is not to solve the problem they are affected by but rather to recover their SP driven manner of dealing with the problem. It often does not matter how bad their situation continues to be, or how dysfunctional their manner of addressing the problem continues to be, the moment they are able to respond again, in the moment, to what is happening around them, they often end their counseling sessions.⁹

⁹ Most SP clients I have had over the years have stopped coming in the moment the crisis that brought them in had eased a bit. Since SPs are typically very likeable people, it was quite jarring when they would, before we had barely gotten started on the healing journey⁹, drop out of the process. That they would not want to gain insight into the repetitious self-defeating process they were struggling with made no sense to me until I came to understand the very different nature of their design. The issues that SPs brought in to work on were problems they could no longer ignore because they were disrupting their ability to respond effectively in the moment as the moment dictated which, for an SP, would mean not being themselves. From an SP's perceptual frame of reference, once their ability to respond in the moment was restored our work was done. Insight into why they were in a self-defeating relationship, or as to why they have always ended up in self-defeating relationships is not part of the deal for SPs. They are designed to rely on in the moment ingenuity and problem solving skills to experience a sense of self. Once their ability to respond effectively in the moment was restored, their need for counseling assistance was over. Once I understood that this is the natural and normal usefulness of the psychotherapy process for an SP client; that I had not failed in some way to effectively convey the meaning and purpose of the psychotherapy process to them

- SP's natural response orientation can create difficulties when they have to address relationship problems that are not amenable to immediate resolution, issues of long standing that they will tend to avoid dealing with as long as possible. The challenge they are faced with is unique to SPs. Their sense of self is connected to immediate sensory experience. Unresolved issues from past moments in time are not connected to immediate sensory experience. In order to attempt to explain or justify past actions an SP must find a way to stop being their in-the-moment self in order to connect to a moment in time they are no longer connected to, something they may not be able to do. Thus their efforts to avoid participating in a resolution process they can't actually participate in, without being able to explain why.
- Considering the SP's natural connection to immediate sensory experience, it is not surprising that they do not tend to spend much time exploring their own motivations or the motivations of others. To do so would take them out of the moment and, by so doing, separate them from their perception of self separate from others.
- As wives and husbands SPs may be consistently inconsistent. Living in the moment, they may choose to attend to role responsibilities with a significant other or go off and do something else, something that came up that they would rather do.¹⁰

One exceptionally generous and kind SP client of mine once said, "I like to give presents but at times when I feel like giving them and not when societal 'shoulds' so dictate. This statement is quite consistent with SPs' nature. SPs must be free to respond in the moment, as the moment dictates, and not to how someone tells them they should respond. This would be tantamount to telling an SJ that they had to stop being so judgmental when people misbehave; or an NT that they should stop being so logical all the time, or an NF to stop taking things so personal. In other words, telling someone who is naturally wired to perceive and respond in a

and that they were not in denial, intentionally avoiding addressing the issues they really needed to work on, I was able to help them make sense out of why they proceed the way they do and provide a permission to close up the process with my support rather than just not show up or call, cancel and not reschedule.

¹⁰ One SP client, whose generosity of spirit in words and in actions far exceeded my own NF driven efforts to be of help, described a trip to the mall to get a birthday present for her niece: "I was heading for the children's department and saw an amazingly beautiful cashmere sweater on sale that I just had to have, went in and bought it and went home, forgetting to purchase the present for my niece!" Her niece still got her birthday present. It was just a few days late. The natural response from an SJ or NF in her niece's life would be to judge her harshly for being unacceptably selfish. However, this same SP rents a truck every year a few weeks before Christmas and goes around collecting food and clothing from her rich friends in the horse world, goods she then takes to the downtown Los Angeles homeless shelter where she personally hands them out to those in need.

particular way in order to provide for certain critical needs in a functioning human society to stop being the way they are naturally wired to be.

- SPs natural independence of mind does not mean that they are antisocial or narcissistic. Most usually adhere to the standard traditional conventions of their culture. It is just that they are not assaulted with feelings of guilt (NFs) or self-disgust (SJs) if they forget a birthday, or do not show up for a party they committed to because an opportunity arose to do something else that they would rather do. There is no double standard here. If someone forgot their birthday, or did not show up for an activity they had committed to, or beat them to the new line in the grocery store they would not be particularly bothered.¹¹ Their attention simply gets redirected.
- SP women can have great difficulty when in the role of a mother. The traditional SJ/NF/NT driven beliefs regarding how a nurturing mother should be¹² run contrary to an SPs natural need for freedom to do what they want to do in the moment rather than what others feel they should do. It could be in a situation like getting an ice cream cone for their child as promised, or to a scheduled dental appointment or getting a birthday present for their spouse on time. If something comes up that they would rather do, a self threatening impasse can surface between their natural response process and responses that most non SPs expect a mother/wife to have.

I have worked with a number of SP mothers over the years that have arrived for help in a state of depression, feeling disconnected from their self, their spouse and their child and not knowing why. Invariably they were trying to adhere to the mothering 'shoulds' espoused by their NF, SJ, or NT spouse, friends, parent(s), or in-laws. They had stifled their natural drive to respond in the moment to what the moment offers so much that they no longer felt connected to their self, their spouse or their children. Once these mothers understood what was happening they added 'me time' to their daily routine. They might get someone to watch their child while they went out to lunch with friends or, if on a tight budget, they may skip a scheduled hair cut for one of their children to get their own nails done or, in the spur of the moment, bring home some ice cream just for themselves and no one else; behaviors that an NT, SJ or NF mother would find unacceptable but were essential for these SP mothers to feel connected to themselves and, by so doing, able to experience the love they felt for their loved ones, a love they experienced in the moment with an extraordinary depth and generosity of spirit, that was moment driven and not through the conventional norms for how love should be expressed.

¹¹ Actually, an ESTP probably would!

¹² The perceptual frame of reference in over seventy-five percent of the general population.

Summary remarks on Sensing-Perceiving

SPs are wired to address situations where an awareness of, and/or a responsiveness to, momentary sensory experience is of value in a functioning human society. The original thinking and independence of mind required to respond in this manner separates them from automatically activated restraints inherent to the other three temperaments when such restraints interfere with their moment driven objectives.

I used to watch with fascination as SP basketball player Michael Jordan did his thing in the waning seconds of a critical game, while five multi-millionaire professional athletes, who had spent countless hours over the years studying his every move, tried to stop him. It was amazing. It did not seem to matter what they did, how many moves they were able to effectively counter, at some point, before the final second of the game arrived, he found a way to score.

This need for freedom to respond in the moment does not mean that SPs are by nature, defiant, uncooperative or disruptive because they usually are not. Their need for autonomy is situational, not general. Although some may be mercurial by nature, they are usually loyal to friends and loved ones and are loving and supportive of their spouse and children. Their natural response in certain situations is just different from those of the other temperaments.

Society's basic institutions, including most venues of public and private education, adhere to conventional standards for acceptable attitudes and behaviors. Most parents, teachers, coaches, and employers adhere to these rules and expect others to do the same. Consequently, when SP children naturally and normally respond in a manner that is contrary to conventional norms they are often told they are being inconsiderate, uncooperative, lazy, irresponsible or unacceptably selfish. The tension, conflict, and self-doubt that some SPs must deal with while growing up, simply by responding in a way that nature has wired them to respond in order to attend to certain essential tasks in a functioning human society, can take a heavy toll on them. It is hoped that a greater understanding of natural differences in core temperaments will help change for the better the way SPs are perceived.

Temperaments Summary

For a number of very practical reasons, human beings live together in groups, in societies. A number of essential, yet disparate, areas of need must be addressed in order to make this possible. Nature addresses these requirements by providing human beings with four distinctly different types of human beings, each designed to automatically respond, in certain contexts, with a set of perceptions, priorities, values and meanings that differ significantly from each of

the others. Choice is not an option. A newborn's natural response orientation on the dichotomies that determine core natures is already present and will not change much across time.¹³

- Those born with a Sensing-Judging (SJs) orientation want to know the standard rules for appropriate behavior. They will then adhere to those rules and expect others to do the same and are often found in supervisory roles that allow them to enforce consequences when they do not. Without SJs human beings would not have a social structure.
- Those born with an iNtuitive-Thinking (NT) orientation will automatically process information through a logic based filter to make sure that what is said and done, in areas amenable to critical analysis, makes logical sense. Without NTs human beings would not have a sensible foundation for production and safety.
- Those born with an iNtuitive-Feeling (NF) orientation are automatically sensitive to the tone and/or implication in human interactions with a drive to facilitate harmony in general and to do what they can to restore it when conflicts arise.
- Those born with a Sensing-Perceiving (SP) orientation automatically focus on optimum responses to immediate sensory experience. In certain contexts, where creativity and ingenuity are called for, they provide optimally effective responses that no other temperament can replicate.

Even though these differences in perceptual processing are identifiable at an early age, current models in conventional psychology for making sense out of them continue to treat them as matters of choice, a derivative of post-birth interactive dynamics with

¹³ A certain percentage of the population come into the world with an almost even response orientation on one or more of the key determinants of temperament. Individuals so wired will tend to respond in some situations from one temperaments frame of reference and from another one in others. This can be particularly problematic when an individual's temperament twins combine an SJ with an SP or an NF or an NF with an SP due to the frequency that the natural temperament driven response activated in one context triggers a self-rejecting response from their temperament twin. I have had some clients that even have triplets! Understanding that their process is normal usually helps while they develop a more effective inner dialogue when temperament driven differences require mediation.

primary care takers, rather than of nature. This has been going on so long now that people are on autopilot, perceiving those that naturally differ as choosing to differ. Understanding and accommodating what are, in fact, natural differences, is left out of the equation.

Consequently, when natural differences lead to disagreements over how best to proceed, never ending debates get activated over who is right and who is choosing to be wrong.

Few seem to be aware of the glaring contradiction at play here. In contexts where natural differences are at play, each believes that those that differ could change if they wanted to, without seeming to realize that what they believe others are capable of doing, they are unable to do themselves. The perception here then is, 'You can change if you really want to but, since my take on the situation is correct and yours is not, it would make no sense for me to change therefore I will not or, if I do, I am only doing so to avoid further conflict and not because you are right. The magnitude of damage this perception of differences is causing in human relationships is extraordinary. Everyone suffers and very few understand why.

Hopefully this information on natural temperament driven perceptions, priorities, values and meanings will actually be of help, both in self understanding, as well as in understanding those that naturally differ.