

About the Author

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Introduction

This booklet has been inspired by the experiences of newly qualified users of the MBTI® instrument. Over and over again, when I ask where they would like more help, they respond:

“How can I help people who are unsure of their type preferences?”

I’m always pleased to hear the question because it shows that the person asking it has understood the importance of allowing clients to decide for themselves where they fit into the type framework. He or she recognizes that reported type is only a hypothesis, and that the individual is the best judge of his or her type. But it becomes clear when people say things like

“Well, I do both, I can see myself in both—I can’t decide which is more like me.”

“When you described the preferences I thought I was a Sensing type, but I’ve come out as an Intuitive type.”

“The last time I took the instrument I came out as an INTJ—this time I’ve come out as an ENTP—I’m confused!”

“On the whole I’d say I’m more an Extravert, but there are some situations when I’m definitely an Introvert.”

“I used to be very much a Perceiving type, but now I’m more Judging.”

... that many new practitioners feel they need more strategies up their sleeve!

An ongoing subject of research involves investigating the proportion of people whose type reported by the MBTI instrument matched or “fitted” for them after self-selection of type and time for consideration. The *MBTI Manual* indicates that approximately 70 to 80 percent of people agree with all four letters of their reported type, while approximately 90 percent agree with three of the four letters.

It is clear that the MBTI reported type provides an excellent starting point for somebody wishing to identify his or her best-fit type. It is equally clear, however, that there will be a significant proportion of people who need time and help to clarify their type. Working with people who are in this situation calls for considerable sensitivity and represents one of the most important skills a practitioner must acquire.

Type clarification is detective work. It is an art, and, like all arts, it includes techniques but cannot be fully taught. In the end, you will develop your own skills and style through practice. This guide can, however, offer you some suggested avenues that may be useful to explore.



Case Examples

The following are some more extended case examples showing how the clarification process might proceed.

June—ENTJ or ENFP?

June, a fairly senior manager about forty years old, asked for a one-to-one counseling session during an MBTI qualifying workshop because she felt very unhappy about the way she had come out on the MBTI instrument but couldn't decide exactly what the problem was.

"I've come out ENTJ," she said to me, "and I know that if I asked anyone, they'd say 'yes, that's you.' I know it's how I behave. But I hate it! I don't really think it's me."

"OK...so, first of all, are there some parts you are especially unhappy with, and some parts you are more comfortable with?"

"Yes," said June, "I'm pretty happy with the E, and with the N. It's the T and the J that I have trouble with."

"OK. What do you see in yourself that makes you less sure about the T and the J?"

"Well it's not my behavior! I know that I behave like a typical TJ—making tough decisions, being very objective, keeping my personal feelings out of decisions, being organized and planned. But I just don't like those aspects of myself."

"...and earlier you said you didn't think the type was really 'you.' Does that mean that, as well as not liking

these TJ things, they also don't, in some sense, feel like 'you'?"

"No, they don't. And yet, I've always been like that. It's not as if it's just a response to a work situation. I'm like that at home as well."

This was very interesting to me because June had come across, since the start of the workshop, as a very tense person, ill at ease with herself. From what she had said so far, I began to hypothesize that, for some reason or other, she was fighting her "true nature." I did not, at this point, have a strong feeling of what that true nature might be.

"So you're saying that you behave like this all the time, but it doesn't feel like the real you. Is that really true, or are there some situations in which you behave differently? Particularly, are there any situations in which you feel more able to be 'yourself'?"

June thought for a moment, and then said:

"You know, I think I do occasionally feel like I get a glimpse of the real me—not very often, but with a certain group of girlfriends..."

"So tell me a bit more about those times...and about the you that comes out at those times."

"They're very spontaneous times...nothing is planned—we just do whatever we feel like. It's one of the few times in my life when I feel it's OK for me not to be the one in control."

"Has that been an important theme for you—being in control?"

At this point, I saw a change come over June. A look of pain passed briefly across her face, and it