

Valuing Human Diversity

It's a Neapolitan World

The Role of Personality in The Communication Process

Even as obvious as some differences are—age, sex, race—none of there is the major cause of communication breakdown. That distinction goes to personality conflict. Ask yourself, “Have you ever had a personality conflict with another person?” Almost everyone has. When communication fails at work, rarely is it caused by lack of technical skill or lack of desire to do the job; usually, it is because of personality differences. And when communication breaks down at home, rarely is it due to lack of concern or lack of love; usually, it is the result of personality conflict.

The following questionnaire measures your style of interpersonal relations, an important dimension of personality. It will allow you to better understand yourself and the people in your world. This understanding can help prevent communication breakdown and close communication gaps where they exist.

CHOCOLATE, VANILLA, OR STRAWBERRY—WHICH ARE YOU?

Directions:

This questionnaire consists of 26 statements. There are no right or wrong answers. The right answers are your true opinions.

For each statement, indicate which of the three alternatives, a, b or c, is most true or most important to you by circling a, b or c in the MOST column.

Then choose the least true or least important of the three alternatives and circle its letter in the LEAST column.

For every statement, be sure you circle one alternative in each column. If *a* is circled under MOST, then either *b* or *c* should be circled under LEAST.

Do not skip any questions and do not debate too long over any one statement. Your first reaction is desired.

	MOST			LEAST		
	T	P	I	T	P	I
1. When I enter new situations, I let my actions be guided by?						
a. my own sense of what I want to do						
b. the direction of those who are responsible						
c. discussions with others	b	c	a	b	c	a
2. When faced with a decision, I consider:						
a. precedent and traditions						
b. the opinions of the people affected						
c. my own judgment	a	b	c	a	b	c
3. People see me as:						
a. a team player						
b. a free spirit						
c. a dependable person	c	a	b	c	a	b

	MOST			LEAST		
	T	P	I	T	P	I
4. I feel most satisfied when:						
a. I am working on personal goals						
b. I do things according to standards						
c. I contribute to a project	b	c	a	b	c	a
5. I try to avoid:						
a. not being myself						
b. disappointing those in authority						
c. arguments with my friends	b	c	a	b	c	a
6. In my opinion, people need:						
a. guidelines and rules for conduct						
b. warm and supportive human relationships						
c. freedom to grow	a	b	c	a	b	c
7. Over time, I have learned:						
a. no person is an island						
b. what cannot be cured must be endured						
c. you only pass this way once	b	a	c	b	a	c
8. I want to be treated:						
a. as a unique person						
b. as an equal						
c. with respect	c	b	a	c	b	a
9. I avoid:						
a. not meeting my responsibilities						
b. compromising my personality						
c. the loss of good friends	a	b	c	a	b	c
10. What the world needs is:						
a. more people who think independently						
b. more understanding among diverse people						
c. more people who respect and abide by the law	c	b	a	c	b	a
11. I am most happy when:						
a. I am free to choose what I want to do						
b. there are clear guidelines and rewards for performance						
c. I share good times with others	b	c	a	b	c	a
12. I am most responsible to _____ for my actions:						
a. family and friends						
b. higher authorities						
c. myself	b	a	c	b	a	c
13. In order to be a financial success, one should:						
a. relax; money is not important						
b. work in cooperation with others						
c. work harder than others	c	b	a	c	b	a

	MOST			LEAST		
	T	P	I	T	P	I
14. I believe:						
a. there is a time and place for everything						
b. promises to friends are debts to keep						
c. he who travels fastest travels alone	a	b	c	a	b	c
15. I want the value of my work to be known:						
a. soon after completion						
b. with the passage of time						
c. as I am doing it	b	a	c	b	a	c
16. A citizen should support:						
a. the decisions of the majority						
b. only those policies with which one personally agrees						
c. those who are in charge	c	a	b	c	a	b
17. I believe feelings and emotions:						
a. should be shared at one's discretion						
b. should be shared openly						
c. should be kept to oneself	c	b	a	c	b	a
18. The people I enjoy working with are:						
a. free thinking						
b. well organized						
c. friendly	b	c	a	b	c	a
19. I value:						
a. teamwork						
b. independent thinking						
c. order and organization	c	a	b	c	a	b
20. I believe in the saying:						
a. all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy						
b. united we stand, divided we fall						
c. there are no gains without pains	c	b	a	c	b	a
21. My work day goes best when I:						
a. have freedom of operation						
b. have a written plan to follow						
c. experience fellowship with good colleagues	b	c	a	b	c	a
22. If I suddenly received a large sum of money, I would:						
a. use most of it now for the things I want						
b. invest most of it for the future						
c. spend half of it now and save the rest	b	c	a	b	c	a
23. I grow best by:						
a. studying established truths						
b. interacting with others						
c. learning from personal experience	a	b	c	a	b	c

	MOST			LEAST		
	T	P	I	T	P	I
24. It is important that I:						
a. plan at least a year or two ahead						
b. live my life to the fullest now						
c. think about my life in a long-range way	c	b	a	c	b	a
25. I am known for:						
a. making my own decisions						
b. sharing with others						
c. upholding traditional values	c	b	a	c	b	a
26. I work best:						
a. with structure and organization						
b. as a member of a team						
c. as an independent agent	a	b	c	a	b	c

SCORING

Step 1

Add up the total circled for each column, and put these totals in the boxes marked T, P, and I. Each section should equal 26.

MOST			LEAST				
T	P	I			T	P	I

Step 2

Determine your scores for T, P and I by using the following formula:

Score - 26 + MOST - LEAST. For example, if your T MOST was 20 and if your T LEAST was 12, your T score would be: 26 + 20 - 12 = 34. Complete the following:

$$\text{T score} = 26 + \frac{\text{T MOST}}{\text{T MOST}} - \frac{\text{T LEAST}}{\text{T LEAST}} = \underline{\hspace{2cm}}$$

$$\text{P score} = 26 + \frac{\text{P MOST}}{\text{P MOST}} - \frac{\text{P LEAST}}{\text{P LEAST}} = \underline{\hspace{2cm}}$$

$$\text{I score} = 26 + \frac{\text{I MOST}}{\text{I MOST}} - \frac{\text{I LEAST}}{\text{I LEAST}} = \underline{\hspace{2cm}}$$

(Your total should equal 78.)

$$\text{TOTAL} = \underline{\hspace{2cm}}$$

INTERPRETATION

If your highest score is T, you are chocolate by personality type. If your highest score is P, you are vanilla. If your highest score is I, you are strawberry. If you have the same or nearly the same scores for all three, you are neapolitan, giving you built-in versatility for dealing with different types of people. If your two high scores are T and I, this means there are two forces in your world asking you to be two different ways. One force is saying, “be chocolate,” and the other is saying, “be strawberry.” Although this can present problems, it can also be good if it allows you to accomplish your values and goals in life. Values and goals are more important than style of interpersonal relations. With this situation, it may be difficult for others to understand you because of the different signals you send.

WHY CHOCOLATE, VANILLA, AND STRAWBERRY?

This questionnaire measures style of interpersonal relations. The terms *chocolate*, *vanilla* and *strawberry* are used to make the point that all styles are equally good, even if they are different.

People accept different flavors of ice cream and appreciate the variety, but they do not always do the same in their relations with others. Indeed, when faced with people who are different, they may send out signals (perhaps subconsciously), “I am right, and you are wrong.” When this happens, a subtle psychological communication gap results.

If you remember that the world is full of different types of people, and that chocolate, vanilla and strawberry are equally good, this will reduce any tendency to feel superior and will improve your ability to communicate with others.

*Personality tests can help people learn more about themselves, understand other people, and improve human relations. However, they should not be used as a basis for decision making unless proved to be fake-proof, valid, and reliable: (1) Answers may be inaccurate (an unemployed parent may feel justified in lying on an employment test); (2) The relationship between test scores and other behaviors may be unknown or lack dependability (there may be no relationship between test scores and job performance); (3) Different days may produce different results (mood and recent experience may influence scores).

TYPES OF CULTURE AND TYPES OF PEOPLE

People are products of culture—their family culture, their town, the culture of their country. As such, your style of interpersonal relations is influenced by how you were raised. Societies teach and reinforce behavior traits, so that just as individuals are chocolate, vanilla and strawberry, whole groups of people are chocolate, vanilla and strawberry.

Chocolate cultures are formal and structured, such as Old England, Germany and Hungary. Strawberry cultures are individualistic, such as the French, Italians and Greeks. Vanilla cultures are melting-post societies, such as the United States.

It is important to note that there are exceptions to these generalizations. For instance, it is possible for a Frenchman to be more chocolate than the most chocolate German, and there may be a Hungarian who is more strawberry than the most strawberry Italian. It is also important to note that human traits vary in degrees, so that any one person may be a mixture of several types. While you may be primarily vanilla, you may have a few chocolate and strawberry characteristics as well.

Regardless of origin or degree, however, there are certain characteristics that distinguish the chocolate, vanilla and strawberry styles of interpersonal relations. The following describes each of the three personality types on ten important dimensions**. As you read these descriptions, think about the people with whom you live and work. The descriptions will help explain why one person is so easy for you to understand, although you may not necessarily agree with him or her (that person is like you), and why another person is so difficult for you to understand (that person is different from you). Think also about the ways these different types of people should be treated to bring out their best. **(*See following page*)

MANAGING/WORKING WITH DIFFERENT PERSONALITY TYPES

Although each person is unique and should be treated according to individual makeup, the following general guidelines are useful for meeting the personal needs and bringing out the best in each personality type. Remember that most people have characteristics of all three styles of interpersonal relations, but develop a preference for one or two over the other(s). The most ardent strawberry will have his or her chocolate moments, and vice versa.

Chocolate

Provide work rules and job descriptions with duties spelled out in priority order. Provide an organization chart showing reporting relationships; respect the chain of command. Respect traditions and established ways; appeal to historical precedent. Avoid changes when possible; if impossible, introduce changes slowly. Accentuate reason over emotion when handling problems. Mind your manners and language; be courteous.

Establish a career plan with benchmarks for progress, rewards expected and time frames. Provide tangible rewards for good performance, preferably money. Recognize good work with signs of status, such as diplomas, uniforms, medals and titles. Reinforce company loyalty through service pins, award banquets and personal appreciation. Communicate the mission, goals and objectives of the organization, and provide an action plan. Keep work areas organized, clean and safe. Finally, be clear and logical when give orders.

Vanilla

Include vanillas in the decision-making process; use participative management. Provide opportunity for off-the-job social interaction—company picnics, recreation programs, annual meetings. Emphasize employee teamwork on the job through task forces, committee projects, quality circles and other group involvement activities. Have regular, well-run staff meetings; provide ample opportunity for sharing ideas. Ask for opinions, listen to what is said, and then demonstrate responsiveness. Get to know the person—family makeup, off-the-job interests and personal goals. Appeal to both logic and feelings when dealing with problems; emphasize joint approach and talk with, not at, the person. Use communication vehicles such as bulletin boards, newsletters, telephone hotlines and the open-door policy to exchange information. Allow people skills to shine in public relations, teaching, and mediation projects. Provide growth opportunities through in-service training and staff development programs. Finally, keep human relations smooth; consider personal feelings.

Strawberry

Recognize independence and personal freedom; don't supervise too closely. Provide immediate reward for good performance; don't delay gratification. Talk in terms of present; de-emphasize past and future. Provide opportunity for personal growth through self-discovery. Keep things stimulating; keep things fun. Focus on meaningful personal experiences, satisfying interpersonal relationships, and important social causes. Provide individual job assignments, and assign work by projects when possible. Accentuate feelings over logic when handling problems. Reward good performance with personal time off and personal fulfillment activities. Keep things casual; minimize formality.

PERSONALITY TYPES AND ORGANIZATION EFFECTIVENESS

An important point organizations should remember is that different personalities are like different flowers. Each requires special soil and exposure to the sun to grow to full potential.

The absence of planning and clear-cut guidelines is particularly upsetting to chocolates, resulting in decreased morale and reduced efficiency. Constant bickering and cold human relations take an especially heavy toll on vanillas. Dissatisfied emotionally, their frustration increases and job performance goes down. Strict rules and close supervisory practices represent a hostile environment for strawberries. In such a situation, resentment is high, job satisfaction low, and turnover rates rise.

The most effective organizations honor the needs of all three types of people—the structure and order of the military may appeal to chocolates; human interaction and service may meet vanilla needs; and freedom of action and creative expression may appeal to strawberries—it should be remembered that each type of personality has positive qualities, and that an organization having variety in its work force can benefit by the balance.

INTERPRETATION

<u>BEHAVIOR/VALUE</u>	<u>TRADITIONAL</u>	<u>PARTICIPATIVE</u>	<u>INDEPENDENT</u>
Basis of action	direction from authorities	discussion, agreement with others	direction from within
Form of control	rules, laws, policies	interpersonal commitments	what I think is right or needed
Responsibility to	superordinate powers	peers, colleagues, self	self
Desired end	compliance	consensus, smooth human relations	actualization of individual
To be avoided	deviation from authoritative direction	failure to reach agreement	not being one's self
To get material goods	compete	collaborate	taken for granted
Basis for growth	following the established order	human interaction	introspective and personal experience
Position vis-a-vis others	member of hierarchy	peer group member	separate person
Identification with/ loyal to	organization	group	individual
Time perspective	future	near future	present