

Engaging Your Type Development

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Jung said that Sensing tells us that something IS, Thinking tells us WHAT it is, Feeling gives it value, and iNtuition gives it meaning.

So much surrounding psychological type emphasizes the preference for one end of a dichotomy over its opposite, but type theory is actually a holistic theory of human cognitive development that illuminates the path we are each most likely to follow as we experience, develop and ultimately build toward comfort and skill with all four cognitive functions. Type theory suggests that our type preferences are hard-wired and unchanging, but our type development--the degree to which we can access and the skill with which we use all the elements of type—is continually changing.

Type development, therefore, is the lifelong process of gaining greater control over all of the functions—knowing when and how best to use them. Type development is not a static state or designation—it is not a destination, but a lifelong process of honing your access and control of the mental functions. For instance, an ISTJ may prefer Sensing perceptions and Thinking judgments, but she has all four mental functions (Sensing, iNtuition, Thinking and Feeling), and success in nearly any endeavor, job, role or relationship is going to demand that each function be used to varying degrees at different times. Type theory asserts that given unimpeded type development, an ISTJ can access and use all the functions better and more easily at 40 years of age than she could at 20—and better still at 60 than at 40.

Sometimes an individual's type development—good or bad--leads to predictable outcomes and observable behaviors that can signify type development successes and challenges. It is important to note the positive—indeed essential—qualities for effective individual and organizational life that each function provides. Sometimes the underdevelopment of a function can block us from even seeing the value or even the existence of that function. This is the Thinking decider who has no use for and sees no value in Feeling decision making or the iNtuitive perceiver who is inattentive to detail and disdainful of any suggestion he should be otherwise. A great first step in any type development effort is to establish the existence and the value of each of the functions and their respective, unique contributions.

Sensing

The Sensing function helps us face the facts and be realistic. It tells us exactly what the situation is and what is being done about it. Sensing works against wishful thinking or sentiment that may obscure realities. It tells us what is happening right now and what has happened in the past. Sensing is concrete, realistic, practical and experiential.

Individuals with well developed Sensing tend to be:

- Detailed and realistic
- Attentive to and energized by sensual, immediate experience
- History-aware, data-rich and informed
- Curious about what has happened and what is going on now
- Literal and specific when they speak

Individuals with under-developed Sensing tend to be:

- Unobservant
- Generally ignorant of detail, specifics and chronology
- Uncomfortable with real world, sensual experience
- Unrealistic and impractical
- Disconnected from their physical bodies and the realities of pain, discomfort, hunger et cetera—unnecessarily diminishing or overplaying these events

The following are ideas to help individuals improve access and skill with the Sensing function:

- List the unshakable facts, the realities that are beyond dispute
- Be specific about the data you have, such as sales or production figures, costs, market share, verbal reports, and your own observations
- Balance your checkbook and/or pull a detailed report together (Si)
- Reflect on the chronology of an event or project (Si)
- Take a walk and focus specifically on the temperature, the sounds—how many different animal sounds, machine sounds, sounds you make, what smells are in the air (Se)
- Eat a meal, focusing on different tastes—can you discern specific ingredients and spices (Se)

Additional Actions:

iNtuition

The iNtuitive function helps us discover all the possibilities—all the ways in which we might change the situation, our approach, or other people’s attitudes. The iNtuitive function helps us to see what is not evident and might go against our natural assumptions. With iNtuition we see patterns suggested in the whole and project them to a possible future. The iNtuitive function gives us abstraction, imagination, inference, theory and originality.

Individuals with well developed iNtuition tend to be:

- Future-focused and visionary
- General, figurative and big picture when they speak
- Generators—writers and/or talkers—of concepts, trends and patterns
- Imaginative sources of new ideas and multiple courses forward
- Curious about the future or possibilities

Individuals with under-developed iNtuition tend to be:

- Unimaginative
- Pessimistic with a negative or overwhelming vision of the future
- Distrustful of future possibilities
- Blind to patterns, focusing instead on individual cases, mistakes or problems

The following are ideas to helping individuals improve access and skill with the iNtuitive function:

- Conceptualize your life/career in one year, five years, ten years (Ni)
- Imagine different possibilities for what a statement or action meant (Ni)
- Let your mind wander/daydream into the future (Ni)
- Brainstorm possibilities (Ne)
- Generate three times the options than you have time to actually complete (Ne)
- Have a discussion that flows from one topic to another (Ne)

Additional Actions:

Thinking

The Thinking function helps us to impersonally analyze cause and effect, including all the consequences of the alternative solutions, both desirable and undesirable. It helps us to consider the full costs involved and to examine the misgivings we may have suppressed because of loyalties, personal attachments, or reluctance to change our stand. Thinking is logical, reasonable, critical, impersonal, and tough.

Individuals with well developed Thinking tend to be:

- Problem solvers, who readily analyze issues for solutions
- Logical, fair and objective
- Effective conflict managers, expecting conflict, harnessing its power and learning from it
- Clear and organized decision makers
- Driven to be right

Individuals with under-developed Thinking tend to be:

- Overly or arbitrarily critical
- An appearance of arrogance
- Unconcerned with their own ignorance
- Unable or reluctant to weigh and analyze data – or make any decision at all
- Disorganized in their thinking and problem solving
- Unable or unwilling to disassociate issues or problems from self

The following are ideas to help individuals improve access and skill with the Thinking function:

- Critique or edit something for precision and clarity (Ti)
- Solve a word or numbers puzzle (Ti)
- Think through the logical steps of an argument (Ti)
- Logically argue or debate a point with someone (Te)
- Organize (bring order and control) to something (Te)
- Critique someone to make their effort more clear, effective and precise (Te)

Additional Actions:

Feeling

The Feeling function helps us to weigh how deeply we care about the things that will be gained or lost by each of the options. Feeling seeks accord between personal values and our actions. Its personal nature helps us to focus on the relationships around us and how our decisions affect them. Feeling is empathic, values-focused, subjective and personal—it also can be compassionate and harmonizing.

Individuals with well developed Feeling tend to be:

- Conflict resolvers, disliking conflict and either avoiding it or working toward its resolution
- Personally connected to issues and others
- Gleaners of personal meaning from relationships and actions
- Builders of effective relationships
- Effective at sympathizing and empathizing with others
- At harmony with his/her values

Individuals with under-developed Feeling tend to be:

- Conflict avoidant or even conflict-blind
- Emotionally reactive in ways out of sync or proportion to the situation
- Selfish and/or self-satisfying
- Unable or unwilling to weigh impact on others

The following are ideas to help individuals improve access and skill with the Feeling function:

- Reflect on how much you personally care about proposed actions, and the extent to which these actions fit your inner values—are the actions good or bad for you and those you care about
- Consider other people's feelings--both reasonable and unreasonable. Remember when you felt a similar way and what your resulting needs or expectations were.
- Reflect upon and journal the non-negotiables in your life. Statements like, "People should. . ." or "It is important that . . ." might help. (Fi)
- Express your feelings to someone you care for (personally or professionally) (Fe)
- Establish eye contact, smile and tell someone good morning or hello (Fe)
- Talk to someone about a value you feel strongly about. Statements like, "People should. . ." or "It is important that . . ." might help. (Fe)

Additional Actions: