How would you describe yourself? That is, how would you describe your personality? Do you prefer to be with others or alone? What about your friends—do you have numerous acquaintances or just a few close friends? Can you process concrete or abstract concepts more easily? Are you a talker or a listener? Do you base your decisions on your emotions or facts? Would you say you tend to detach from difficult situations or do you try to connect with them? And how would others describe you?

Often, your personality plays a role in how you learn (that is, how you process the world around you) and how you interact with others, so it is important to explore the traits that make up you. Ultimately, by knowing the ways you prefer to think, learn, and socialize—and the ways you don’t—will make you a better mentor. You will be better able to relate to others who think or learn differently from you as well as being able to get across how you think, how you learn, and how you relate to the world.

According to Katherine Cook Briggs and her daughter Isabel Briggs-Myers, we are born with or develop certain preferred ways of thinking, but they are all equal. There are four dichotomies, or pairs, that describe how we think and act:

**ATTITUDES: Extraversion (E)-Introversion (I)**

Whether you describe yourself as an extrovert or an introvert relates to attitude, or your readiness to act or react in a certain way (typically to social situations).

- Extraverts are “outward-turning” and draw energy from action while introverts are “inward-turning” and expend energy through action.
- Extraverts are action-oriented while introverts are thought-oriented.
- Extraverts seek breadth of knowledge and influence while introverts seek depth of knowledge and influence.
- Extraverts prefer more frequent interaction while introverts prefer more substantial interaction.
- Extraverts recharge and get their energy from spending time with people; introverts recharge and get their energy from spending time alone.

**PERCEPTION FUNCTION: Sensing (S)-Intuitive (N)**

Whether you describe yourself as reliant on the five senses or on your intuition relates to perception—how you gather information from the outside world.
• Individuals who prefer sensing are more likely to trust information that is in the present, tangible, and concrete—those understood by the five senses in details and facts.

• Individuals who prefer intuition tend to trust information that is more abstract or theoretical that can be associated with other information through flashes of insight that seem to bubble up from the unconscious mind.

• For sensing individuals, the meaning is in the data; for intuitive individuals, the meaning is in how the data relates to the pattern or theory.

**JUDGMENT FUNCTION: Thinking (T)-Feeling (F)**

Whether you describe yourself as being detached and logical or empathetic and diplomatic in situations relates to judgment, or how you make decisions regarding the outside world.

• Individuals who prefer thinking tend to decide things from a more detached standpoint, measuring the decision by what seems reasonable, logical, casual, consistent, and matching a given set of rules.

• Individuals who prefer feeling tend to come to decisions by associating or empathizing with the situation, looking at it from the inside, and weighing the situation to achieve balance, harmony, consensus, and fit upon considering the needs of the people involved.

**LIFESTYLES: Judgment (J)/Perception (P)**

Individuals tend to prefer to use one function over the other when relating to the outside world, but we do use all four characteristics at one time or another, whether in information-gathering (sensing-intuiting) or decision-making (thinking-feeling). This is probably the trickiest dichotomy to understand as it involves the others in its definition.

• Individuals who prefer judgment will appear to the world as either logical (if thinking-T) or empathetic (if feeling-F) when making decisions.

• Individuals who prefer perception will appear to the world as either concrete (if sensing-S) or abstract (intuitive-N) when taking in information.

• Individuals who prefer judgment feel more comfortable with a more structured and decided lifestyle.

• Individuals who prefer perception feel more comfortable with a more flexible and adaptable lifestyle.

Based on these dichotomies (opposite pairings), there are sixteen different personality types. None of these types are superior or inferior, but individuals tend to prefer one type or similar types over others. You are not limited by your type. For instance, if you are more introverted, you can become more
extroverted—you are simply more comfortable being an introvert. You can—and should—develop the skills to utilize opposing characteristics. It can be especially helpful in your academic career to exercise these. For example, if you are more scientifically-minded and view things concretely, it may help you to think more abstractly in your literature or art appreciation class. Conversely, if you are more abstract in thought, you may have to strive to think more concretely in your algebra classes. However, abstract thinking in a math or science class can bring a new level of insight while concrete thinking in an art class will do the same. Remember that no single personality characteristic or type is superior or inferior to the others. They are all equal.

REFERENCES CITED


REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Complete the personality questionnaire (http://www.humanmetrics.com/cgi-win/jtypes2.asp) and reflect on your personality type, on what you have read above, and on your own experiences in mentoring in writing responses to the following questions. It is not necessary to retype the questions, just label them: "1.1" for Module 1, Question 1, "1.2" for Module 1, Question 2, and so on.

Reflection Question 1. According to the questionnaire, what is your personality type? Do you feel this is an accurate assessment? Why or why not?

Reflection Question 2. In your own words, why is understanding your personality important? Try to reflect on what you have read and on your own experiences. Avoid regurgitating what you read above.

Reflection Question 3. How can better understanding your personality type affect how well you do at NWACC academically? How can it affect how you mentor other NWACC students? Consider how you would put understanding your personality type into practice in the classroom and in your relationships with others. For example, if you are extremely extroverted and enjoy socializing, you may find you do not have time to study because you are going out every night to spend time with friends. However, by studying with a group of friends
from your class, you may find it both enjoyable as a socialization experience and helpful as an academic experience.

Email your answers to Ashley Byrd at pass@nwacc.edu