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FAQs on Temperament and Personality

By Hal Warfield

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A. Can you change your personality? You cannot change your basic temperament styles but you can influence your behaviors and thereby your personality. The biggest mistake I've seen is someone who has "put on" behaviors that were not theirs' naturally until it has become habitual. It is almost always obvious and often painful. An example is a phlegmatic who felt it necessary to put on an outgoing sanguine style for so many years that it has become a habit; however it is clear that this is not their natural way of being.

B. Can you change someone else's personality? If you can't change your own, it is clear that you can't change someone else's but that won't stop most of us from trying. This is a special problem in marriage and child raising if the spouse or parent thinks the other person can be "improved" on. In Dicken's David Copperfield, Mr. Murdstone and his sister fatally try to impress their choleric nature on sanguine Mrs. Copperfield. Husbands and wives who think they will change their spouse may affect some behavior changes and think they have "changed" them. Changes are only fully implemented when they come from within the person and then they will still be in line with their basic temperament style.

C. Why do people so often marry opposite temperament? The first person to find out the underlying answer to this one will retire wealthy. Seriously, what attracts us to another person? Often it is the strengths we see in them that we do not have temperamentally. A choleric woman may appreciate the easygoing nature of the phlegmatic. A disorganized Sanguine appreciates the orderly manner of a melancholy. Unfortunately, over time, we realize that our natural strengths are usually their natural weaknesses, which can cause friction or even a feeling of betrayal; that is, "if he really loved me, he wouldn't be so disorganized, or angry, or rigid".

D. Why do different temperament types irritate us? Again, it's usually a matter of strengths and weaknesses. A straightforward choleric is irritated by a highly verbal sanguine. A highly organized melancholy finds a phlegmatic's laid back nature to go "against their grain". The phlegmatic is the most likely to ignore these irritations. The choleric is the most likely to bring them out in the open.

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E. Is one temperament "better" than another? Each of us is who we are – we were made that way based on inherited temperament characteristics. Each temperament type at some time thinks another type is "better" but that feeling is usually related to something they admire in that person that they cannot do easily. So a quiet phlegmatic envies the sanguine's easy outgoing manner and the disorganized sanguine may envy the melancholy's natural organization. Each type is better at some things and worse at others. The trick is to match the personality to the situation – which very rarely happens in normal life.

F. How does knowing my temperament help me? "Why do I do the things I do?" is a question many of us have asked ourselves at one time or another. Temperament study gives us insight into some of those "whys". A choleric with a quick temper, the talkative sanguine, or the organized melancholy now have an underlying reason for behavior. The trick is not to let temperament become an excuse for

negative behavior.

G. What jobs are best for each temperament type? Again there are many other factors to consider but in general choleric make good leaders (managers or executives) if they can control their tendency to criticize and get angry. Sanguines make good teachers if they can keep themselves organized. Phlegmatics make good counselors or pastors; anywhere where noncritical listening and relating can be helpful. Melancholies are good anywhere organization is important including the law and medical professions. Choleric don't like jobs where easygoing relating to others is important. Phlegmatics don't care for jobs where they must be outgoing and talkative. Melancholies detest jobs where they have little control over their circumstances and sanguines don't like jobs where they must work alone for periods of time.

H. Help! I'm not just a blend of two types – I can see traits of three! This is where temperament tests can be useful as well as talking with someone familiar with temperament theory. If we inherit temperament then it's certainly possible to inherit a blend of three temperament types.

I. What are quick "cues" that I can use to "read" a person's temperament? Again, the phlegmatic will be calm, quiet and easygoing. The melancholy will be precise, analytical and critical in conversation. A sanguine will always be the most verbal and will often be a "toucher". The choleric will be straightforward, even abrupt and most easily angered.

J. I hate my job! Is that a temperament thing? If you dislike the job because it doesn't "fit" your type, then yes it may be temperament related. List those things you dislike about the job (i.e. relationships, tasks, etc., NOT "it doesn't pay enough".) and compare them to your temperamental strengths and weaknesses. This should give you insight into whether or not your job dislike is temperamental.

K. I love my husband (wife, child) but I can't stand certain traits. How can I change them? Again, you cannot change a person's temperament type any more than you can change their eye color. Real change comes when a person sees the need to change and not before. Externally forced change is never real and can cause unhappiness and friction. Encourage the other's natural strengths and discourage their natural weaknesses. Realize that you may cause the same feelings in others that do not have your temperament.

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L. How do the different temperament systems match up? Am I a choleric, a "D", or an "SJ"? There are many different "systems" of temperament classification. There are even those that compare a temperament to different animals. The three most common systems include the one used here – choleric, sanguine, melancholy and phlegmatic, as well as the Meyers–Briggs Temperament Indicator which uses sixteen combinations of traits and includes the Guardian, Artisan, Rational, and idealist. The DiSC system is similar to the first system where the Decisive is the choleric, the influencer is the Sanguine, the Steady is the phlegmatic and the Conscientious is the Melancholy.

M. Is my temperament my personality? Or the other way round? What's the difference? Temperament is the canvas, personality is the painting. The temperament is the foundation, personality is the building. Taking your basic temperament, you add life experience, culture, education, and upbringing to form your personality.

N. How do the temperaments relate to a person's anger and fear? Everyone experiences fear and anger. The phlegmatic experiences the most fear and the choleric the most anger. The melancholy fears being out of control of situations and the Sanguine has quick, hot flashes of anger that pass as

quickly as they start.

O. Do men and women's temperaments differ substantially? Temperament is temperament. There are choleric men and choleric women. There are sanguine women and sanguine men. Gender is only one of many environmental factors that influence behavior. Others include upbringing, culture, education, etc.

P. If I can't change my temperament, then what good is it to know about it? Understanding temperament has many benefits such as understanding others better or being able to communicate more easily with temperament types that are different from yours. But while you cannot change your temperament type, all of us CAN change our behaviors. Knowing your temperamental weaknesses can help you reduce their impact on your life. Knowing your temperamental strengths can help you release them more into your everyday life. Feed your strengths and starve your weaknesses. Understand how your temperament impacts other types of individuals and adapt accordingly. If you have questions about your temperament, write me at the email address below.

Hal Warfield is a professional speaker, teacher and coach. Write him at warfield@midsouth.rr.com. Or visit www.halwarfield.com

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The Truth About Taking Your Dog To The Dog Park

By Adam Katz

This idea of taking your dog to a dog park is not a good one. Why?

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Because:

#1) It's not natural for the dog. We're not talking about human children who need to be socialized with other kids throughout their infancy. Dogs learn dominant and submissive behavior and how to interact with other dogs from 6 to 8 weeks of age. This two week period is called a critical stage, and a small amount of exposure will have a lasting effect on your dog's personality.

When you throw your dog in with all kinds of other dogs (from other packs) the first thing they need to do is establish who's dominant and who's submissive. And yes, they'll tussle to do this, often. If you have two really dominant dogs, they may even fight to the death. Or if another dog gets flushed too quickly, he'll get defensive. And then you have a dog fight on your hands, with hundreds of dogs and owners yelling and running around screaming.... and none of the dogs are trained... and none of the dogs are on leash... and all of the owners don't know anything about dog handling (esp. a fight) but think they know everything. Trust me... it's a bad situation you need to avoid.

#2) Health: They let anyone into those dog parks. And believe you me, you get the types who will find a dog in an alley and before giving it shots (rabies, parvo, etc..) ... they think they're doing a great thing by bringing the dog to the dog park where he can cough, lick and breathe on your dog.

#3) Temperament: Nobody does a temperament test on these dogs before letting them into the park. Duh! You're playing with fire.

So you can see, there are a lot of risks. And just because the dog gets into a dominance scuffle, does not mean that he's a dog fighter. But that's a different issue for another article.

That's all for now, folks! Adam

Adam G. Katz is the author of the book, "Secrets of a Professional Dog Trainer: An Insider's Guide To The Most Jealously Guarded Dog Training Secrets In History." Get a free copy of his report "Games To Play With Your Dog" when you sign up for his free weekly dog training tips e-zine at:



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