



HOW TO IDENTIFY THE TEMPERAMENT OF OTHERS

David Keirseley has given us a useful tool that I will attempt to simplify and make more user-friendly.

When we interface with other people, we only observe what they show us on the outside. We have no way of seeing what is on the inside of a person. However, what people can't hide are the words they use and the way they use the tools we have devised for living in this world. Both are observable and can lead us to a quick identification of their temperament.

Our game will involve these two observable characteristics. Let's take tools first.

Tools

How a person of any age uses their eating tools, such as a knife and fork, will reveal something about them. Some will use them the way you teach them to use them, returning them to their proper place and lining them up. These are the ones who easily comply and cooperate. They believe doing things the established way makes sense. They say, "Don't fix or change what isn't broken." They also ask, "Why wouldn't you want to do it the expected way?" Pleasing others where possible is, to them, a virtue. These are the people who value tradition.

The others will wonder how else their knife and fork can be used and will experiment with their own ideas. No matter how you explain the socially acceptable way to them they will attempt to find a better, more effective way — their own way. Sometimes they will do this just to be different. They are the individualists who don't value traditional ways of doing things just for the sake of following tradition. They want to find new ways of doing things even if the old ways work quite well. They exercise a freedom to be different and to act with personal pride in their individualism. They often show little regard for manners or for pleasing others.

The first group we will identify by the words "I'll cooperate." We will identify the second group by the words "I'll do it my way." The first we call the SJs and the NFs; the second we call the SPs and NTs.

Tools are myriad so you'll have opportunity to observe this distinction wherever you happen to be. The way people drive and obey the road rules, the way they choose to do homework and play with their toys etc.

You will see in the first group a desire to cooperate and please as well as a reticence to test authority and explore the limits. The second group is just the opposite. Testing authority is seen as brave and adventurous, and probing the limits is willingly and excitedly done. To do so with a twinge of fear is to prove one's self game and bold.

Words

Language is either used concretely or abstractly. Concrete usage is talking about actual things such as toys, tools, people and the adventures and happenings of daily life. It is concrete because it is talking about the real world.

Abstract usage is talking more about ideas and possibilities, theories and concepts. Of course, everyone will use language concretely since we must refer to things and talk factually about the happenings of life, but abstract talkers show a real preference for concepts and ideas in their daily talk. Their talk will explore the meaning of things.

Children who use words abstractly also show a preference for stories of fantasy and wild imagination. Stories are one of their early preoccupations. Fairy tales, the *Tales of Narnia* (C. S. Lewis' famous children's fables) and stories filled with magic or the supernatural are their preference. Because of well-used imaginations, they tend to daydream and can tell fanciful tales that you know are not reports of their real life happenings. Toys change in nature as trucks become airplanes and monsters; and the world of the imaginary emerges with passion or with notable regularity. You will also notice they tend to talk more to adults than to other children. Abstract word users are the NTs and the NFs.

Easily distinguishable from the abstract word users are the concrete word users — the SPs and the SJs. As children, they want to hear real life stories that are straightforward and talk about lots of realistic details. They will show less of a liking for fairy tales. In fact, they will show less of a liking for stories of any kind, preferring action instead and becoming restless and wanting to play as soon as the story is over. They spend most of their time making things and playing with toys, hence their concrete vocabulary. Their five physical senses ground them firmly in the real world.

None of these pursuits are unique to any of the four temperaments. All children, for instance, play with toys, listen to stories and make things. However, an observant person will soon see the way a person leans, to either concrete or abstract talk. Develop this skill and you will be expert at the game of temperament identity.

Below is a chart that will help you decipher the temperaments. In this chart, the SJs, SPs, NTs and NFs are categorized by the similarities and differences in word and tool

usage. The SJ and SP are concrete word users, but differ in their use of tools. NFs and NTs use abstract language, but they differ in their use of tools.

<p>Concrete word usage “I’ll cooperate” SJ</p>	<p>Abstract word usage “I’ll cooperate” NF</p>
<p>Concrete word usage “I’ll do it my way” SP</p>	<p>Abstract word usage “I’ll do it my way” NT</p>

People have similarities and differences on the outside and the inside. Four of those are exemplified in the chart. Remember, anyone can act any way they choose for expedient or protective reasons. What you are looking for is the dominant behavior. Dominant means that one characteristic will be observed more than the other and, in the case of the NT and NF, because they are the rare types, their characteristics will seem to be more pronounced.

The Temperament Game - Identifying the Temperaments by Observation

Identifying temperaments can become quite a game. The more you practice identifying the temperaments of all the people you meet (particularly your spouse’s or your child’s friends), the more accurate you will become and the more you will become aware of your own and your child’s and/or spouse’s needs. You will more readily see people in the context of all the temperaments.

The rules for the game are simple:

1. Memorize the chart.
2. Share with your partner what you observe in the behavior and language of others.

Playing this game will help you:

- Increase your awareness of preferred behavior.
- Increase your knowledge of how others choose to think and believe. (What you see began as thoughts in their minds and processed its way into their actions and words.)
- Bond with a spouse even more if you talk constantly between yourselves about your observations, and it will become a fun, competitive game.
- Know the effect that friends have on your game partner or your child, and you can watch with interest how they adapt and handle other temperaments.
- Determine the cause when your child or partner is upset. (Look at the strengths of each temperament and you will most likely see the reason for their upset by identifying a frustrated, inhibited or hurt strength.)
- Understand each other better, and your relationships will benefit from that too.