

Some Types Strive for Perfection

You won't be putting people in a box by remembering that we tend to receive life through one of a few innate filters. It doesn't mean we're all stamped from a cookie-cutter mold or two or four; it means we use our filter in our own particular but recognizable way. If we know the structural clues of the basic filters, we can "speed read" characteristics and adjust to meet the style of another. This is the way we prove ourselves courteous and interested in (ready?) their point of view.

One point of view is the precise, proper, perfectionistic personality that sees a right way of doing things. Who in your life has closets faultlessly ordered by color or length of clothing? Whose desk is so neat and clean you sometimes wonder if they've been terminated? Who is cautious, annoyed by those who pretend familiarity? Then you have a Perfect Melancholy acquaintance!

"Melancholy" is from a Greek word referring to bile, and thousands of years ago it was thought that some people had more bile than others and this somehow made them reserved and analytical. I like to use the Greek names for each personality but I also use an identifying word, and "perfect" is the identifier you might remember long after you've forgotten this temperament is called "melancholy."

Perfect Melancholy people tend to be introverted. Where some folks are loud and off-the-cuff, Melancholies are quiet and thoughtful. Where the good-timing salesperson will interrupt you with some thought that popped into his or her head and then have a good laugh about it, Perfect Melancholies will ponder, consider their words, and would not think of rudely interrupting anyone. People with this filter do not necessarily believe they are perfect, but they have a deep-seated conviction that

perfection is attainable. For this reason, they like order and symmetry and detail. I dress to express, but my Perfect Melancholy girlfriends lean toward a more conservative appearance; no big earrings or loud, trendy apparel here. Neat and tidy is far more important than dramatic or fun. Appropriateness is the name of the game.

For Perfect types, there is a proper way to execute a task. It's all about precision in execution. These are sensitive, careful people who pay attention to details in relationships, in activities, and in their work. They are interior people who weigh their thoughts and ideas carefully, analyzing how something might sound or could be perceived. They work well alone and need quiet to refuel and regenerate.

The Perfect Melancholy man or woman will not connect with people who are insensitive to his or her preferences. When you do not know what they consider the proper or right way to do a thing, you are at a terrible disadvantage. If you do know but ignore it, judgment will be passed! He or she can slide into dark moods when there's a vibe of insincerity or dismissal. Because perfection is a standard that seems possible, Melancholies are not only measuring others against it, but themselves as well, and this can paralyze them.

Here's what Perfect Melancholies don't get: there is frequently more than one right way of doing things. Detail for the sake of detail is time-consuming and

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business organizations throughout the country to rate her presentations as "the best seminar of the conference!" She trains those entering the workforce how to present themselves with style and authority; new employees in the importance of respecting one's work and the workplace; managers in the value of understanding employees' talent and temperament; and everyone in the timeless rules of behavior that will always bespeak excellence.

inefficient, and people resist cooperating with those who make them feel like they're doing things wrong. The insistence on their view of just the right way seems to make it almost impossible for this type to allow others their successes without criticisms; one frequently senses a qualification coming.

One of my Melancholy-temperamented friends simply will not compliment me unless she can be completely sincere. There's no cheerleading with a Perfect friend. When I finally receive kudos, I have met her standard!

If it were not for the Perfect types in my life, I would never be organized. My Melancholy husband will take time to read a map like I read a novel, and he can provide me with astonishingly precise directions to some location to which I must travel. He is an expert packer: from items that must be shipped to clothes folded into luggage, not a bit of space is wasted. He can instantly see details that I cannot. He can hear nuances that I miss, and he is keenly sensitive to clues that tell him whether a person can be trusted or not. I used to see his way of viewing the world as suspicious and cynical, but I now understand that he takes a serious view of life and without his insights, I might be swindled and hoodwinked! There is nothing wrong with suspicion in a world full of deceivers!

Can you see how simply knowing the basics can open up a world of understanding? Our next personality has its unique characteristics, too, so keep reading. 🙏



All pause for a celebratory moment: I've lost 70 pounds.

Like many who have endured a battle with weight since childhood, I have been on countless diets. I was on Atkins when it was first introduced in the 70s and my doctor prescribed it. I lost weight on the Cambridge Diet (anyone remember that?) in the 80s. I tried the cabbage soup diet, the grapefruit diet, and various fasts. I lost weight on the new, improved Atkins several years ago. My weight has always been my most difficult, sometimes frighteningly insurmountable challenge.

I attended Weight Watchers meetings when I was in high school. It was much different then: every

portion had to be weighed, every calorie counted. The primary feature of WW is the group encouragement, but I found it demoralizing: I would be the only one, week after week, to have lost only a quarter or half of a pound at weigh-ins. Everyone would smile gamely and say, "Oh, good for you!" But it wasn't good. It was deeply depressing, and my mother would insist I had to be cheating. I quit.

Since then, WW has made things much simpler and more reasonable, and there are so many different food products today that help us manage our choices. I gave it another go and here I am, almost 15 months later. I've had days where I've desperately desired a particular food, but it hasn't been the agonizing, I'd-rather-have-a-root-canal-every-single-day-than-be-on-this-diet craving. As I've told friends, somewhere in my menopausal march into maturity I turned a corner. Food is not the issue it used to be. I'm battling other things now. Food has ceased to be that all-consuming monkey on my back.

This is not to say I don't think about food. I think about it all the time, but not because I want to put something in my mouth at any given moment. I am not obsessively fixed on the mere thought of food; more on the content of intervals that will get me through the day and settled in (at last!) with my Skinny Cow ice cream sandwich (2 points) or my Trader Joe's Coffee Rio caramels (8 pieces, 2 points) as my prizes for being disciplined.

Ultimately, discipline is what it has been about. There is not only one diet for everyone. We all have different bodies and some plans work more effectively for us than others. WW has worked for me this time around, and I'm thrilled. But it's discipline that made the difference. All my life, I'd try a diet for a few weeks, become hopelessly discouraged, and say, "It's not working for me." It's taken ages to accept that my body does not respond quickly. It has to be beaten into submission. I have to wait it out, like an undercover cop on a surveillance mission. Where a colleague may have lost weight in a couple of months on a particular regimen, I'd have to give it twice as long to see only a perceptible change. Most "normal" bodies would have lost 70 pounds at a slow-but-sure rate in 10 or 11 months, but it has taken me 50% longer. If I had not exercised I would have lost considerably less. C'est ma vie.

"Fools despise wisdom and discipline," says the Book of Proverbs, and I must admit my sin: I have hated discipline. It's hard. It's enormously unpleasant. Undiscipline is a gargantuan enemy, and I'm grateful I have recognized, at this point in my life, the power to do as I should. I've conquered a lifelong failure of discipline and triumphed, and the whole world looks different. There is nothing I feel I cannot do! (Except that neurosurgery thing . . . it really is a bit late to start now.) 🙏

Teddy Bear Says...



I love treats! Like any dog worthy of honor, I am delighted by gifts; the more, the better! My humans have often assumed, though, that I like a new collar or raincoat as much as they do, while my preference is a treat of the tasty variety. I just don't get excited over non-delicious gifts (although a soft new bed is a close runner-up).

Herein is the rule of gift giving: we must consider the person to whom we are giving the gift. While

there are many things we like, we must think of the other party. Keep in mind what is suitable for the occasion and the relationship. In business, gifts are given to show appreciation or to create goodwill, so it is worth taking some time to select for the individual's interests. I know, this can be tricky sometimes, but you want the gift to reflect favorably on you, as well as sending the appropriate message. Engage the help of others if you must. Make the effort.

So often in business, a mug or paperweight with a corporate logo is given as a gift, but really, these are just giveaways. Sue used to work for an executive who kept logo-etched paperweights in wrapped boxes in her desk, ready to be given to occasional visitors to the office. When Sue left this woman's employ, her going-away gift was—you guessed it—one of those paperweights! Instead of communicating appreciation, something like this says, "See you later."

Take some time to do a little research. In general, you should avoid gifts that are too intimate. Perfume, lingerie, expensive jewelry—think of the message. A recent episode of the television show "Medium" featured a story line in which a male character's female business partner gave him an outrageously expensive bathrobe, and it made an already weak relationship more difficult. (Yes, we dogs watch TV.) If you're going to give alcohol or food, make sure it's something your recipient can eat or drink. You may unwittingly be offending a recovering alcoholic by giving the bottle of wine everyone else seems to appreciate. If the person's personality is of the type Sue describes in this newsletter, he or she may never forget your insincerity!

Ask colleagues what interests the person for whom you're selecting a gift, or think about things you've noticed when you've been together. Gift cards and certificates are always welcome and will never offend.

Your business acquaintance may have entertained you with a funny story about the trip she took to a spa. While a gift certificate written specifically for a massage could be a bit too intimate if you are of different genders, a certificate to a specific facility keeps it neutral. Every major store chain sells gift cards these days, and putting one in a nice card with a statement of appreciation and regard will always be appropriate.

Do a little research if you want to select just the right thing. Cultural considerations may apply. Gag gifts frequently fall flat unless you really know of someone's love of them. Ask friends or coworkers for help when you're unsure.

If you are the receiver of the gift, you should never feel constrained to accept something you think is inappropriate or too expensive, but even if you reject a gift, you should still send a thank you card. As always, if accepting the gift does not offend you and is not forbidden by your company, simply graciously accept even what may not be the world's most thoughtful gift. Understand that everyone does not take the time to select gifts carefully, and frequently people are just at a loss. Few can resist the gift of being allowed to scratch behind my silk-soft ears, so I am never at a loss. Humans have it hard sometimes, but the effort can be worth it.



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