

# THE TYPE REPORTER

Psychological Type in Everyday Life

No. 39

## WHAT CAN YOU DO WITH TYPE?

“Well, I think this Myers Briggs theory is interesting, but what can you *do* with it?” I’ve heard that comment from several people over the years. You might assume they were all Sensing types, since Ss look for usefulness first, but strangely enough, the people who asked me that were all Intuitives.

Whenever people ask me, “What can you do with type?” I tell them that the best thing about type is that most of the time, it frees you to do nothing. Before people know about type, they *do* all sorts of unproductive, harmful things, like worry, get mad at people, or try to change them. But after they know about type, they are more likely to understand, forgive, relax, and do—nothing.

For example, my friend Agnes has been very concerned about her son because in school he doesn’t like to participate in group activities, but quietly busies himself alone. She worries, “What can I *do* to make him join in?” She was even thinking of having him tested for learning disabilities. But after she figured out that he is probably an INTJ, she realized the best thing to do would be — nothing. His independence is normal and healthy, and may allow him to be a very original thinker someday. He may join in groups eventually, but only if it’s entirely his own idea to do so.

My friend, Mark, has been arranging speakers for a group of management trainees. The trainees rate the program highly, but they don’t interact much with the speakers by questioning, criticizing, or praising them. Mark, who is an ENFJ, assumes that they are not learning anything from the speakers and he needs to *do* something. But after the group took the MBTI, he discovered that they were mostly INTs. Now Mark relaxes and does — nothing. He understands that the trainees are learning a lot from the speakers, but quietly.

My friend Sarah was very concerned because therapists were telling her that her 16-year-old son doesn’t know how he feels about things and just intellectualizes them. They’re telling her he probably repressed his feeling side because of some childhood trauma, and she’d better *do* something to

bring him back in touch with it. But once she realized that her son is an INTP, and his therapists are Fs, she understood that he was being misinterpreted, and that forcing him to address only his feeling side would be terrible for him. So, after much consideration, she did — nothing. Eventually she found him an NT therapist who understood his “concepts” and lately he just seems to *feel* better.

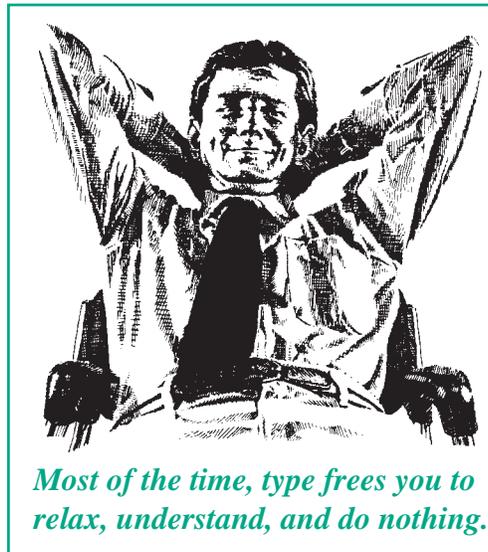
Over and over, I’ve seen people freed to do nothing because they understand why people are the way they are and they don’t have to spend all their energy in fruitless efforts to change them. The type theory must free me to do nothing at least five times a day.

But sometimes it’s not possible to relax and do nothing. Sometimes we really need to change the way relationships are going. That came home to me recently. My husband was telling me about a client who was giving him trouble. I listened to him describe the client and I realized I had a lot in my head from books, workshops and conversations to help me figure out what type the client was. I gave my husband my analysis of his client’s type, and why he and the man were in conflict. I sorted it all out beautifully and was immensely pleased with myself.

But then my husband said, “But what can I *do* about it?” Suddenly I was silent. There was nothing in my head from books, workshops or conversations that helped me advise my husband on how to make relations with this man smoother.

There isn’t much written about what to do to solve type-related problems, and you don’t hear it discussed often by MBTI trainers, so *The Type Reporter* went looking to see if people were coming up with any solutions on their own. For this issue we asked people for problems they were having in their own lives, or problems their clients were having. Then we asked them if they had discovered any simple, successful actions to solve the problems.

That’s what this issue is full of—actions. In short, this issue is about what you can do when it’s not enough to do nothing.



*Most of the time, type frees you to relax, understand, and do nothing.*

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## WHAT CAN YOU DO WHEN...

### ...you put off doing things that must be done.

"I had work lined up for the month of May but it fell through," says Alan Brownsword, INTP, management consultant and author of *It Takes All Types* (Baytree Publication Co., 1987). "I knew that I needed to call people and line up more work, but that is unbelievably painful for me, so I put it off.

"Then, as the days went by and I didn't attend to it, I felt more and more guilty and frustrated. 'Why can't I do this? I should be able to do this' I pressured myself. I added the frustration of not doing it to the frustration of not liking it.

"But finally, I *typed* the task. I realized that it is an Extraverted task, and I'm an Introvert. Typing the task made a big difference for me. First, it helped me see that it's OK for me to hate making phone calls to sell my services. I could be a little bit more understanding of myself, and even a bit amused.

"Second, I realized that it's never going to be easy for me to extravert, no matter how long I put it off. In fact, procrastinating just gives me more to be angry with myself about. I forced myself to attend to it right away and be done with it.

"Third, typing the task helped me strategize ways to make it easier. Since I'm an Introvert, I sat down and did some mental preparation for the phone calls, thinking about what I'd be saying, people's possible responses, and how I should react. I used my Introversion to help me extravert.

"Now I type all of the tasks that don't come easily to me, so that I'm more aware of what's going on, I don't put them off, and I look for ways to make them easier."

### ...Introverts don't participate in conversations.

"It's perfectly natural that Extraverts tend to dominate and Introverts observe in conversations," says Alan Brownsword, INTP. "That is not a problem. It is a problem if an Introvert wants to say something but can't get into the conversation.

"As an Introvert, I've had the experience many times of listening to a lively discussion among Extraverts, when something hits me and I want to say it, but I can't find the tiniest break in the conversation. Then before I know it, they are on a completely different subject. I feel as if I would have to yell to get in.

"You can help Introverts by watching them out of the corner of your eye. If, after reflecting, it looks like their lights are on, but they're still not saying anything, you may give them some room to get into the conversation by asking, 'Did you want to say something?' Once an Introvert breaks the ice

it's not so difficult for them to get in afterwards.

"Even when the Introverts don't look like they want to get into the conversation, you might wait until it's well under way and then say, 'Tell us what you're thinking.' They may not have reached any conclusions yet, but because they've had time to think, they may be happy for the opportunity to tell you what they are thinking about."

### ...meetings go on forever and nothing gets decided.

"I'm the head of our PTA, and when huge issues come up for discussion, the Extraverts talk and talk and the Introverts can't focus," says Libby Garvey, ENFP, career counselor and MBTI trainer in Arlington, Va. "The meetings go on forever and we don't decide on anything.

"I decided to put my knowledge of type to use on this problem. I sent out notices of the issues under discussion in advance, so the Is could think about it. Then I also encouraged people to call me and talk about it, so the Es could talk it out.

"Now our meetings are much shorter and more productive because people have figured out most of what they think before we begin."

### ...Ss are outnumbered or "out-powered" in an organization.

"Once I worked with a group where someone charged that management favored people because of their sex or race, and it released a lot of hostility in the room," says Alan Brownsword, INTP. "Finally, I asked the ENTJ leader of the group to go to one side of the room. Then I said, 'Everyone who feels that they are inside the power structure, go over and stand with her. Everyone who feels they are outside it, go over and stand on the other side of the room.' Well, there were blacks and whites, males and females, in each group.

"However, all the Intuitives were on the leader's side of the room, and all the Sensing types were on the other side. We sat down and tried to figure out why the Ss felt alienated from the power structure. It turned out that they felt they were living in a world of chaos and turmoil because the Ns were constantly driving for change.

"The ENTJ director made it clear that in the future, she'd try to expand the number of people that she drew into the management circle. At a later date she admitted that at first it was not easy for her because she became impatient when the Ss resisted change, and were always diverting the discussion from the big picture onto the details, but it became easier after she saw that the details were important, and made all the difference in how soon, or how well, the new ideas would be implemented.

"Another time I worked with a church group that had only 3 Ss out of around 50 people. Once the Ss realized that they were in the minority, they were able to say that the church wasn't meeting their needs, they often felt frustrated

# What Can you DO with Type in the Classroom

“I was consulting in a middle school for children who had learning disabilities,” says Gordon Lawrence, ENTJ and author of *People Types and Tiger Stripes* (Center for Applications of Psychological Type, 1982). “A teacher told me that she had a boy who was a real problem because he alternately bullied other students, or he sat in the corner and pouted and didn’t tune in to what was going on. I asked her what she thought his type was, and she said ENTJ. I told her that every ENTJ that I know wants to be in charge of something. They want to take on a job or project where they call the shots and put things in order.

“She went back to her classroom and told the boy that she never has time to organize the books in their classroom’s library, and asked him if he would be the ‘classroom librarian.’ He took his new responsibilities very seriously and after that, he was totally focused in class.

“Another teacher in that school said she had an INTP student whom she couldn’t engage at all. He didn’t act out, but he didn’t take any responsibility. I told her that every INTP that I know is nuts about computers. She said it’s certainly true that he’s crazy about computers. He’s got one at home and seems to want to spend all of his time on it instead of his studies. She asked him to be an assistant in the computer lab, helping the other students with computer problems, and after that, he took more responsibility for his studies. I’ve always found that the key to getting kids to act responsibly is to give them something to be responsible for that they can get excited about.

“Another teacher in an elementary school told me that she was having problems with an ESFJ student, because he wanted to socialize all the time. I told her that what he would want more than anything would be to know that he’s cared for and that the teacher takes a personal interest in him. The teacher invited him to lunch and they had a good chat. After that, he was more cooperative and attended to his work instead of socializing all the time.”

in church meetings, and they were always being asked to do the grunt work.

“After a very healthy discussion, the Intuitives resolved that they would routinely invite the Ss to express what would meet their needs, and then try to see that those needs got met.”

“I’ve been on several boards where I was one of only a few Sensors,” says Jean Palmer, ESFJ, independent trainer and consultant in Alexandria, Va. “I get concerned because I feel like a taskmaster, often asking people to get back to the point at hand, or plan things in a specific time frame. So I ask for feedback from the group on whether or not I’m annoying them. Around 95% of the time they tell me they appreciate what I do, and that helps, for a while.

“But that kind of imbalance in a group tends to undermine my self-confidence. I can get down on myself and not see the value of my contribution. It helps to ask for assurance from others, but most of the time, I have to tell myself that it’s not wrong to need some specifics and some closure, and that the group is better off because I occasionally bring them down to earth.”

## ...you want to win the cooperation of Ss.

“Once I came before our PTA board with a proposal for an after school program for middle school kids,” says Libby Garvy, ENFP. “The proposal fell absolutely flat. I couldn’t understand it because there was a big need for the program.

“I discovered later that the reason it fell flat was that I had jumped right into the proposal without giving the Ss an explanation of why it was needed. I was asking them to deal with a problem they didn’t know existed.

“Ss operate on the, ‘If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it’ rule. Now, before I put proposals before the board, I make sure I first provide them with evidence that something is broken, and then propose how to fix it. I also make sure I run my proposals by my Sensing friends first because I’ve learned that I just can’t always see where I lack Sensing.”

“I used to have an ISTJ boss,” says Patsy Myers, ESFP, and human relations trainer for Ohio Bell in Cleveland. “When I wanted something from her, I learned to give her FACTS! For example, when I wanted to start an in-house newsletter on the MBTI, I sent out a questionnaire to all the people in Ohio Bell who had taken the MBTI in the last 6 months. I asked them to rate how useful they thought it was, and asked them if they wanted some follow-up. With the results of this questionnaire, I was able to go in to my boss and say that 78% of the people had found it useful and 88% wanted to have some follow up. She was definitely sold on the newsletter idea after that.”

Paul Roush, ISTJ, assistant professor at the Dept. of Leadership and Law at the Naval Academy in Annapolis, MD, said: “We wanted to convince the many ST midshipmen, who are charged with indoctrinating the incoming freshman class, that we needed to humanize the place more, but we had to have good solid, aggregated data. So we did a study where we asked followers to rate their leaders. We asked them specific questions like, ‘Does he tell me when I do something right?’ ‘When things go wrong, does she maintain self-control?’ and ‘Does he treat me like an individual rather than a number?’ With this data, we were able to prove that in many instances, Feeling leaders outperformed Thinking leaders in terms of follower ratings on positive leadership skills, and that Feeling skills should be taken seriously by leaders.”

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## ...you're an S communicating with Ns.

“When I call clients to talk about upcoming training,” says Bob Slevin, ESFP, and independent management consultant in Bethesda, Md., “I tend to want to find out a lot of facts, like how many people he’d like to have trained, how long he wants the training to be, when, and where. But with Intuitives, that is very off-putting at first. They want to talk about the overall goals of the training, and how it will help them move toward their long-range objectives. So I prepare myself before I pick up the phone to bite my tongue and not immediately launch into my ‘20 Questions.’”

“The same thing happens with my Intuitive wife. She tells me something is so, and I start asking for all the facts that would tell me it’s true. Then I wind up hurting her feelings. I’ve learned to just ask myself, ‘Are you on automatic pilot or something? Why is it so important to have the numbers and be so exact? If it seems so to her, isn’t that the most important fact?’”

## ...you're an I-T giving training.

“My husband and I are both I-T trainers,” says Pam Hollister, INTJ, and management consultant with InterRelations in Las Vegas, Nevada. “We knew that we needed to add more Extraversion and Feeling to our training so we hired a very skillful ENFP trainer to help us design our workshops.

“We learned quite a lot from her. One thing we do now is greet people at the door to make them feel welcome. We tell more personal stories about ourselves and our relationship to illustrate the preferences. We also involve the audience more than we used to. For example, we developed humorous skits that illustrate the differences between all the preferences in office situations, and we have members of the audience volunteer to act out the skits.

“Another way we involve the audience is to take time after each segment to let people share their experiences with it. For example, after the skits, we ask people questions about whether they were able to see the differences in the preferences, and what the actors could have done differently to avoid conflict.

“Then, in my head, to help me get out of myself, I watch and listen to the audience, and pick out things that I can appreciate about individuals. I don’t always say those things, but I make an emotional connection and that helps me act more warmly towards them.”

## ...Fs can't get past the issue of harmony.

“My wife is an ESFJ and the president of the board of our community association,” says Alan Brownsword, INTP. “Issues come up that threaten to split the board and she agonizes over them, then the board members make it

worse by calling her up and asking her if she’s going to support them. When she waffles, they tell her, ‘You’re the leader. You’ve got to pick a position.’

“Finally I said to her: ‘*If you didn’t have to worry about harmony at all, what would you do?*’ Suddenly, all the confusion disappeared and she was able to see what her views were.

“I told her ‘Given human beings, is it realistic to expect that there will ever be harmony on the board? Since there really is no harmonious solution, why don’t you articulate your position, manage the meeting, then go back and pick up the harmony later.’

“She did that and found that just because she disagreed with people, there didn’t have to be a break in the relationships. They still respected her integrity.”

## ...a J and a P have to make plans together.

“I have a strong need to keep my options open until the very last minute or I feel trapped,” says Alan Brownsword, INTP. “On the other hand, my Judging wife can feel paralyzed, like she’s in limbo, when a decision hasn’t been made.

“Several years ago, I told my wife that I would take our 17-year-old son to California to look at colleges. She asked me when I was going to do it, and I said I hadn’t decided yet. She asked me later and I said probably early February. ‘When are you going to decide? When are you going to make up your mind?’ she kept asking me. Then in the last week in January she said, ‘Alan, it’s next week. You’re not going to be able to get your discount ticket if you don’t decide soon.’ I told her I already had a ticket but it was totally refundable so I still had my options open. She asked again later, and finally I said to her, ‘Why do you need to know?’

“She looked totally startled. ‘I don’t know, to make plans, I guess.’ Well, she and my son rarely see each other anymore because of their different schedules. She didn’t have to make plans, she didn’t have a *real* need to know. She had what I call a *psychological* need to know.

“Then she asked me, ‘Why do you need to postpone that decision?’ I told her that I was hoping we’d hear from more colleges before we left, so we’d know better what our options were. My need to postpone the decision had more of a basis in reality.

“An example of the shoe on the other foot is when we’re deciding on when we’re going to take our summer vacation. She has a real need to schedule it in April to avoid bumping someone at work later. I don’t have a real need to keep my options open; it’s just a reflex action.

“We’ve learned to ask ourselves if our needs are real, or psychological. If we’re dealing with real needs, that makes something worth compromising about. If we’re just dealing with psychological needs, knowing that makes it much easier to let go.”

Patsy Myers, ESFP, says: “When my husband and I go on vacation, we have learned how to divide up the planning so that it works for both of us. Since I’m a P, I think of 20 different places we could go, do all the calling and investigating, then come up with a few options where I’m fine with any of them. Since he’s a J, he picks one of the options and makes the rest of the plans.

“I also build alternatives into each plan, in case we get somewhere and see that it’s not what we had hoped it would be. He doesn’t mind those last minute changes as long as we have a plan to begin with.”

## ...in meetings, Js decide too soon, or Ps won’t allow decisions to be made.

“I was facilitating a meeting where the key leader was an ENTJ,” says Alan Brownsword, INTP. “After he’d

articulated his point of view, he’d lean forward, really concentrate, narrow his eyes, and listen to arguments. In a few minutes, however, you could see him relax and get a ‘gotcha’ grin on his face, and the next thing you knew he was brilliantly squelching any objections to his ideas.

“I told the group that we were going to take a break, but the leader was not to talk to anyone for the next few minutes. When he came back, he was, amazingly, more flexible, and listened more. I explained that when TJs are with others they are making Thinking judgments, which is why he was just listening long enough to figure out how he was going to win the ‘debate.’ But during the break he could access the more flexible, Intuitive side of himself, and see that there were other possibilities.

“I also worked with an ENTP leader. He had the opposite problem. He would keep introducing more questions that would keep the group from reaching consensus. I could see that a lot of people were getting frustrated and quiet.

# HOW TO SHOW PEOPLE IN MBTI TRAINING WHAT THEY CAN DO WITH TYPE

Everyone needs to know that type can be used to solve problems, not just understand them. That’s exciting information for Ss and Ns alike. But how can you build that into an introductory workshop on type?

Libby Garvey, ENFP, pointed out that the best and simplest way to demonstrate the usefulness of type is to tell stories about what *you* do when you have a type-related problem. Tell stories that demonstrate solving problems, like the ones in this issue, as you describe each preference.

Another way to help people see how they can use type to solve their problems, is to actually take on a group’s problems in the workshop setting. Alan Brownsword, INTP, says he makes a type table of a group before he meets with them to see if he can predict any problems. Then he’ll interview people before the workshop to see if there are problems that can be traced back to type. He’ll use that information to design the workshop and to make observations during the process.

Linda Berens, INTP, gave us an example of designing a workshop around a group’s problems. She trained a group of computer programmers who were going to have to leave their main office to work as consultants in branch offices. They may face the dilemma of having to decide whether to go ahead and change programs in ways they see fit, or work to win the consent of the branch-office supervisors first. Berens divided the programmers into temperament-alike groups (SP, SJ, NT, NF) and asked them to discuss how they would tend to handle it. The NTs and SPs tended to favor the fix-it solution, and the SJs and NFs tended to

favor the work-with-the-people solution. After she explained why they tended to favor different solutions, she had them discuss ways they could incorporate the wisdom of both points of view into a solution.

Or, have the people use each other as experts on the types. When type-related problems are brought up, let people discuss solutions, and call on the types involved to say what their needs are, and what would work for them. Marcia McDonald, ISFJ, has been the coordinator of our local type-talk group for about five years now. She says that the most exciting times in the groups are when someone brings up a problem they are having, and people start saying, “Have you tried this?”

I, personally, would like to see more workshops that promise to help me solve specific problems, like confronting people who don’t do acceptable work, or raising children, and then have the MBTI introduced as a tool to help solve that problem. If type could help me solve one big problem in my life, than I, and probably most people, would look to it for other problems as well. Even theorizing people would realize that you can do quite a lot if you have a good theory.

Finally, remember, if you are an Intuitive trainer, your tendency is to explain *why* people do things, and to stop there. You probably need to ask yourself, over and over again, “Have I told people *what to do* to prevent this happening in the future? Have I balanced all of the understanding with suggestions for *action*? Have I helped them see what they can *do* with type?”

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“Finally I called a break and talked to him. ‘Do you think that maybe if you were not in that room they’d be able to make a decision?’ He said yes. Then I told him ‘Maybe you need to give up being a divergent thinker for awhile, and try to be a convergent thinker.’ He agreed and when they went back in the group was able to come to closure.

“Whenever I am in charge of meetings, I call frequent breaks so that people have a chance to access their Introverted side as well as their Extraverted side. I try to make groups aware of their tendency in meetings to be drawing only upon their Extraverted side. I advise people to fight their

in-meeting tendencies to only make judgments, or only take in information.

“Another strategy that helps is giving warnings. J leaders can warn people when they are coming to closure by saying, ‘I’m about ready to make a decision. Is there more information to discuss before we move on?’ P leaders can warn people that they really don’t feel ready to decide things by saying, ‘I hear what you say but I think a decision is premature and here’s why.’ That way, at least people don’t feel surprised by the leader’s final decisions, or postponement of decisions.” ■

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# SAY IT SO I CAN HEAR IT

Based on an interview with Linda Berens, director of the Temperament Research Institute, and co-author of *Working Together*, (Newworld Management Press, 1988).

## When talking to NTs

Be hypothetical. Ask them what the possibilities are. Discuss things in terms of “systems” and “strategies.” Use a calm and reasoned tone of voice and mannerism.

Appeal to their need to be effective when you want them to change their behavior. For example, Berens had an INTP once ask her, “Do I really have to tell my F husband all these nice things about himself before I can tell him what I need?” Berens replied, “Only if you want him to *hear* you.” That helped the INTP overcome her resistance because she wanted to be effective.

## When talking to SPs

Talk about the fun, excitement, challenge or adventure in things. For example, Berens once counseled a married couple where the ESFJ wife didn’t think that the ISTP husband was in the right job. She kept saying, “He isn’t happy there.” But he didn’t see that as a reason to leave. After all, the money was good.

Berens said, “Yes, but you’re not having any *fun*.” At that, the man saw what was missing and realized he did need to look for another job.

With SPs, it’s also important to be brief. Linda Berens noticed that when she made a career tape for SPs, and tried to mirror their style, it was done before the allotted time.

## When talking to SJs

Talk about “security,” “making sure” and “being sure.” Give step by-step solutions. For example, when Berens gives advice on career searches to SJs, she says, “You’ll want to *make sure* you’ve done this or that.” And she lays out each step of the process: “First you do this. Second you do that.”

Also, compare it to something else. Make reference to what has worked before.

Another good way to communicate with SJs is to ask for their advice. They want to help, to make things better, simpler, more organized for you. By *asking* for their advice you are more likely to listen and make use of their knowledge, and it makes them feel useful and appreciated.

## When talking to NFs

Hold your tongue with a critique until you have pointed out the good points. It’s OK to ask for more details and specifics if your attitude is one of real interest, and you’re not just trying to point out the holes in their arguments. Share your personal feelings and mirror their enthusiasm; NFs are confused by impersonal or flat responses.

Talk about the benefits of ideas to the people involved, not just practical benefits, but the benefits that will help people understand their gifts and develop more of their potential.