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Let the Personality Bloom

Abluethreadtowardslifebalanceinyourlivingspace...

How to interpret a PersonProfile

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More to learn in the book: Let the Personality Bloom

The objective of the book is to give support for personal development. On the following pages you can read about

- **Step 1 – How to Interpret a PersonProfile;** here you will get an overview of the personality theory of L Szondi (1893-1986), which forms the basis of the development concept (step 2 is about the PersonCompass and step 3 about the FuturePlan)

The blue thread of the book is

1. Make a PersonProfile in order to see your personality more clearly.
2. Make a PersonCompass, which will give guidance for a life with good quality.
3. Make a FuturePlan so you know how to accomplish your vision.

The purpose of the other chapters is to give general support for personal growth. The chapters are

- Personal development; prerequisites and sound principles
- Positive thinking; how to make use of one's potentialities
- Efficiency or life balance?; here you can read about important attitudes and decisions in life
- Tips for successful development; how to secure the changes desired
- Different possibilities; inspiration to change

You find more about your profile and how you can interpret it on the following pages.

Good luck!
Rolf Kenmo

Step 1 – How to Interpret a Person Profile

The Significance of Personality

Your personality is of vital importance to your life. It governs your actions and behaviour. It can be compared to the operating system of a computer. It decides your possibilities and limitations. Naturally, there are other factors at play in this, but your personality has great importance. For example, it influences your choice of career, partner, clothing, car, etc. What methods you use. What treatment is best in order for you to recuperate from an illness, etc.

Unfortunately, there is a tendency in coaching and the like to lump everyone together. If you take a person's situation and personality into consideration the usefulness of a piece of advice will increase substantially. Can one's personality be good or bad? No. One's personality can only be more or less suitable in relation to a certain task, situation or object. There is rarely just one personality type, which suits a certain task. Therefore, it is less useful to make descriptions of the ideal boss, the ideal salesman, etc. This only results in everyone being cast in the same mould and having to do violence to his/her personality. One salesman may be successful because he/she is disciplined, whereas another salesman is successful because he/she is considerate.

When matching a person to a job you must analyse the critical situations of the job. You then need to evaluate the person's resources for handling the critical situations. **Well-developed (=mature) people** have good self-knowledge and use the appropriate personal resource at the right moment. In chaotic situations they bring out everything they have got in terms of order. Should they feel that they lack the resources necessary they get help.

Developing One's Personality

Is it possible to change one's personality? Many years ago I thought that there was no limit. Today I think there is a certain limit. I also think it wiser to use and develop one's strong sides, compared to devoting all one's energy to one's greatest flaws.

How "successful" people are with their lives is often most visible when they have reached a certain age. There is a saying: "Good wine is like good people, they improve with time." Unfortunately, the opposite is also true. It is sad to meet old people, who are bitter. One's positive thinking is really put to the test.

So, what can you change? Above all, things are latent. For one reason or another you have developed a mental barrier, for example: "You mustn't think you are something special!" If you can change your attitude to this you will become less inhibited and feel proud of what you have achieved,

etc. Women may have a mental barrier, which prevents them from taking charge, from fear of being perceived as mannish. The reverse barrier may be found in women in executive positions, since they feel that they have to be even more commanding than men in the same position and therefore tend to overdo it. Men may feel that they can't be too amiable, in case they should be perceived as feminine.

Mental barriers that are due to the environment can be regarded as external barriers. In addition to those there are internal barriers, which are related to your personality. A person who is very responsible may find it difficult to take charge even though he/she has that need. The solution to the problem is to distinguish between what is important and what is less important. If something is less important, it is sensible to take charge, because it can be put right easily.

How does one get one's personality? Environment or heredity? There are many different opinions among the experts. However, most of them agree that parents and other important persons in one's childhood have great influence. You probably realize that several of your character traits come from your parents. They can be either identical or quite the opposite.

Parents or experiences made can also create barriers. You need to analyse things objectively when something comes difficult to you. Don't hesitate to seek help from those close to you in order to sort things out. You can't possibly see yourself clearly, but others can.

Firstly, it is important to have as accurate as possible a perception of your personality. Then you need to examine how to make the best of it, for example when choosing assignments at work. You also need to make sure that the human needs of your personality are fulfilled. If they can't be met at work you must see to it that they are satisfied during your spare time. If not, you will be unhappy in the long run. The ideal situation is to be able to **be yourself** every day, i.e. be able to express your personality daily, or at least every week.

Those with the greatest barriers (or the greatest development possibilities) to being themselves are those who

- are careful not to offend others (=sensitivity – more about this in the chapter “The Personality Theory Eight Boxes”. The theory will be developed in greater detail in the next chapter)
- are very conscientious and always willing to help (=quality)
- are very disciplined (=structure)
- are in great need of appreciation (=exposure)
- find it difficult to tackle change (=stability)
- are contact-oriented, since they value their contacts so much (=contacts)

The opposite applies to those who

- are goal-oriented, since they take initiatives (=power)
- are creative, since they find their own ways (=imagination)

You need to become a "peach" (with a soft skin and hard stone, as compared to the hard shell and soft contents of an "egg"), to develop your stone and stick to it. It may not always be the popular thing to do, but people usually respect those with a definite purpose in life. Besides, your friends will be true friends, not false ones. And it goes without saying that it will make your life more pleasant in the long run. But you need to remember that Karin Boye, the Swedish poet, was right: It does hurt when buds burst.

Personality Test and Szondi's Personality Theory

There are many personality tests based on different theories. I have evaluated several tests but found them wanting. As a consultant I needed a test, which could assist me in the appraisal of people, e.g. for recruitment or in order to help people enlarge their self-knowledge. My requirements were:

- the test must be easy and quick
- the results must be comprehensible
- the person tested must acknowledge the results and have no difficulty in distinguishing between different factors
- the results must be adequately differentiated so that stereotypes are avoided

I chose to develop my own personality test to meet my needs. The starting-point 1986 was a request from a travel company that arranges coach tours to the Alps. They wanted to improve their routines for recruiting couriers. The job as a courier is very popular, and the company has to choose from a great number of applicants without spending too much time and money in the process.

I chose to base the personality test on a theory developed by the Hungarian Leopold Szondi (1893 - 1986). The theory relies on eight universal needs. This meant that the major part of my requirements was filled. The remaining requirement, that the test should be performed quickly and easily, had to do with the design of the test. In this respect I could draw on experiences from another Szondi-based test, Berufsbildertest, developed by Martin Achtnich from Switzerland. This test is used in several countries in Europe as well as in other parts of the world.

Leopold Szondi is not very well known in most countries. This is partly due to the fact that most of his writings and the literature on him and his theory is only available in German, and to some extent in French. Szondi

practiced as a psychiatrist in Hungary up to the Second World War. Being Jewish he was detained in a concentration camp during the war. At the end of the war he came to Switzerland as a refugee, where he stayed and practiced his profession. The Szondi Institute in Zürich teaches courses in the implementation of Szondi's theory. Apart from Switzerland the theory is widely used in particular in Belgium and France, as well as throughout the whole of Europe, Brazil, Japan and a few other countries in other parts of the world.

The Personality Theory Eight Boxes

The test, which we call Eight Boxes, is based on a certain simplification of the personality theory since it should be comprehensible and accessible to people without psychological knowledge. Eight Boxes also aim at helping people to get a better understanding of their own personality, whereas the original theory diagnose/explain mental disorders.

I have been assisted by the psychologists Lars-Erik Liljeqvist, Bo Haglund and Mary Norman in developing the test.

The eight universal needs (*in italics*) are:

- *sensibility*, e.g. to be soft and sensitive. The main need is to have skin contact.
- *power*, e.g. to be active. The main need is to use one's own physical power.
- *quality*, e.g. to be responsible. The main need is to be conscientious.
- *exposure*, e.g. to be seen. The main need is to be acknowledged by others.
- *structure*, e.g. to keep order. The main need is to maintain control of oneself and the surrounding world.
- *imagination*, e.g. to be imaginative. The main need is to expand mentally.
- *stability*, e.g. to be economical. The main need is to uphold stability in one's life.
- *contacts*, e.g. to be sociable. The main need is to be in touch with others and enjoy the good things in life.

For further explanations of the factors - see supplement.

How to Interpret Your PersonProfile

You have made a so called PersonAnalysis, and as a result you have received a PersonProfile where you can see what your character traits (factors) are.

So how do you interpret your profile? What is most interesting is the factors that dominate and the factors that are the least prominent. You should devote your time to those things you need the most. Furthermore, you should reduce those things that you don't really need. Obviously, you will have to compromise, but it is important to strive as much as you can to do what corresponds to your personality.

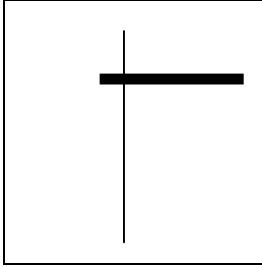
Are there any sources of error to the test results? Of course there are, but in general the PersonProfile corresponds very well to your personality. The greatest source of error is how you perceive the formulation of the various activities in the form. However, the form has been designed so that most people should perceive the formulations in similar ways. The formulations should also be attractive to the person with the need in question. Several years of experience and thousands of tests completed show that this is the case. This type of test must, nevertheless, be seen as a complement to your own and other peoples' personal opinions. Yet it is possible to increase precision if the person taking the test fills in the form together with someone who knows him or her well, or have several people fill in the test form concerning the same person.

However, experience shows that precision increases only marginally when several people take part in the test of one person. There is always the possibility that each person looks upon the person being tested through his or her "glasses". This means that if someone is good at something (or has a great need for something), the person in question has a tendency to underestimate others concerning that specific quality, and vice versa. It does occur that people have inadequate self-knowledge, something which causes problems in relation to others. He or she may also have difficulties in finding a suitable job.

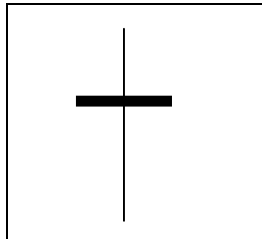
Can the results change over time? Yes, they can. This may be due to personal development. Sometimes certain needs can be overstimulated, such as the factor *contacts* when someone has been at a convention or a seminar for a whole week. Or someone may have experienced dramatic changes in life, such as a divorce, the death of a close friend or a relative, he or she may have moved, started a new job, etc.

Keep in mind that when you develop your personality it usually becomes more balanced. The greatest needs are reduced and other needs increase. What happens is that your dominant needs are filled, which gives more room for other needs.

When you filled in the test you chose the four activities in each group, which are typical of you. Then you ruled out the two activities that are the least typical of you. You then receive a PersonProfile, which has columns on both sides of the middle. The columns on the typical side signify your greatest needs (factors) and the columns on your non-typical side your least felt needs.



If you then for a factor only have a column on one side for a certain need (factor), this means that if you are in a situation, where this need may occur you are most likely to express it. The need may be seen as stable.



But if you have a column that is on both sides this means that you are ambivalent concerning that specific need (factor). Sometimes you will express your need and sometimes you won't. If we look at the factor *power*, you may sometimes take charge and sometimes you will simply let it be.

What Is Presented in Your PersonProfile – ThemeProfile?

The ThemeProfile shows all your answers. When you made the profile on the Internet there were 9 groups (themes) with 8 activities in each. You should decide, which four activities are the most typical of you and the two activities that are the least typical of you.

Your answers are presented in the ThemeProfile in relation to the themes of each group. The themes are

- communication
- working style
- leadership style
- stress
- view of resources
- decision-making
- attitude to life
- attitude to others
- core behaviour

In the last group - core behaviour - the activities are strikingly characteristic for each of the factors according to the personality theory.

This is why you most often choose activities that represent factors, which dominate your personality.

Under the heading TYPICAL you will find the four activities which you marked Yes. Under the heading NON-TYPICAL you will find those two activities you marked No. Under NEUTRAL you will find the two activities, which you left unmarked.

Analysis of Personal Chemistry

Sometimes we use the term personal chemistry to describe how people co-operate. Co-operation between certain people may be splendid, between others it may need some developing. Similarly, you may talk about other types of chemistry, e.g. job chemistry - how a certain job matches a certain person - cultural chemistry, etc.

A decisive part of the personal chemistry has to do with other peoples' personalities. Other important factors are origins, values, talents and experiences. We have developed a method, which shows how the personality influences the personal chemistry. The theory is based on the assumption that similarities often go together, for example if both persons have the factor *sensibility*. Of course, they may also take *sensibility* to the extreme. The factor *exposure*, however, can be problematic in this respect since the people involved will compete for attention.

Differences in personality can cause problems. But you may also choose to view the differences as complementary. The two alternatives can be illustrated through the following example:

A has *sensibility* and B has *power*. A may find B either straightforward or plump. And B may feel that A is being either tactful or a whimp.

When you can freely choose partners it is interesting to know what characterises your ideal partner. Even if you can't choose your partners freely you may still find it useful to analyse the personal chemistry, since you may become aware of the possibilities/risks involved in co-operating with a certain person. Problems can be dealt with while they can still be solved. Possible risks may be eliminated when you are aware of each other's personalities and their consequences.

Note that people who are at ease with themselves (=high self-esteem) find it easier to co-operate with others – even with those who are different from themselves. People with high self-esteem look upon the differences as possibilities/complements instead of threats.

The Uses of Personality Concepts

First I would like to relate a story, which a friend of mine usually tells on courses. He was out walking in the woods and came upon a mushroom he did not recognize. He then turned to his companion and asked: "What is this?" The companion, who is a bit short-sighted, investigated the object, and after a while he answered: "It looks like a mushroom to me." "That was really daft", my friend thought. But after some time he realized that mushrooms were simply not an interest they shared. The fact that he could describe a mushroom with concepts like cap, base, gill, spores, etc, held no interest to his companion. Stories like this make you realize why Eskimos have a hundred words for snow, whereas others need only a few.

Some people do not like typologies for describing persons, and this becomes an obstacle for using a personality theory. I can understand this attitude in cases where you put negative labels on people and make caricatures out of them. There is a book about difficult people in which they are called anti-personnel mines, balloons and steam-rollers. If you start describing someone as a steam-roller and the label sticks, it is hard for this person to change his image. Unfortunately, many people find it hard to change attitudes to others once these have been pigeon-holed. My recommendation is to avoid negative concepts entirely (or almost entirely), when we describe other people. All negative qualities have a positive side, and vice versa. If you normally think that someone is thorough and you all of a sudden find yourself in a hurry, you will experience that same person as nitpicking. In other words, it is the situation, which determines whether a certain quality is positive or negative.

There are, however, many ways to describe peoples' personalities. The most common is probably as different "types", or sets of characteristics. Each type consists of a set of characteristics - the entrepreneur is such and such. In some situations it may be practical to use such concepts, whereas at other times they are not as appropriate. The term entrepreneur is, for example, useful for describing a certain combination of qualities, which are desirable when you want to start a business. But as a description of a person as a whole it is not equally good, since it may be restrictive. The "entrepreneur" may very well be suited for other types of careers than that of the entrepreneur. It is easier to describe the personality in terms of qualities and see them as a set of tools. You may then be able to judge how well a certain person matches a certain job, with a certain boss, with certain colleagues and in a certain environment. The personality theory Eight Boxes is based on eight factors instead of four, as in many other theories. This makes the picture more nuanced. You can still differentiate between the factors and handle them in a satisfying way.

I would like to conclude by stating that concepts can facilitate communication and the gathering of experiences, which make it possible

to reflect upon a certain area. This makes it easier to solve problems. An accurate description of the problem is half the solution.

It is also important to note that the more you understand other people, the more tolerant you get. That which you do not understand may easily be perceived as threatening.

Supplement - Eight Boxes, A Personality Theory

Eight Boxes has its origin from Leopold Szondi's (1893 – 1986) personality theory.

Factor	Orientation	Characterstics
Sensibility	Consideration, sensitivity, closeness	Perceptive, considerate, careful, accommodating, complaisant, sensual, diplomatic, obliging, likes closeness
Power	Action, achievement	Energetic, speedy, driving, eager, competitive, strong, active, result-orientated, straightforward, fearless
Quality	Responsibility, endurance, tension	Reliable, quality-conscious, conscientious, supportive, persevering, comprehensive, thorough, unselfish, caring, dutiful
Exposure	To be seen, to be in focus	Spontaneous, charming, witty, proud, likes attention, trendy, charismatic, colourful, dramatic, ready-witted
Structure	Objectivity, order, discipline	Orderly, methodical, likes planning, neutral, distinct, correct, realistic, objective, disciplined, forethoughtful
Imagination	Creativity, development, freedom	Imaginative, inventive, improvises easily, clever, likes to experiment, ingenious, development-orientated, freedom-orientated, visionary, artistic
Stability	Materia, habits, tradition	Stable, economical, wary, creature of habit, thrifty, down-to-earth, tradition-bound, conservative, cautious
Contacts	Company, food and drink, fun	Outgoing, sociable, open-hearted, easy-going, playful, humorous, food-loving, contact-orientated, optimistic, cheerful