

Running Head: Using The Myers-Briggs in Tutoring

Using the Myers-Briggs in Tutoring: Understanding Type

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INTRODUCTION

People perceive issues, problems, happiness, sadness, general information etc., in different and fundamental ways. We also have a propensity to attribute the way people react to problems or issues, in a unique manner. We may apply causal attribution (Kelley, 1972) such as asking 'why' the person behaves as they do. Why did the tutee not show up for their appointment or why did the tutee not begin to do the assignment as previously discussed? At times, our attributions are in error and at other times, they are accurate. We make these fundamental attributions in error because we have a tendency to believe a person acts as they do because they are "that kind of person", (Van Overwalle, 1997). These differences, especially when in a one-on-one environment such as tutoring, can be especially challenging. People, in general, are motivated by different things and although there are many theories of motivation, I will briefly discuss three.

Locus of control is the degree to which reinforcement is or is not contingent on a person's own behavior. The factors include "external" and "internal" control. Having an internal locus of control refers to the perception that positive or negative events are the consequence of one's own actions. This is in contrast with external locus of control which refers to the perception of positive or negative events which are unrelated to one's own behavior and beyond personal control (Rotter, 1954). Some of us are extrinsically motivated by items outside of us, such as being liked by others or enjoy being complimented. Others are motivated intrinsically, by studying and getting good grades. They feel good about themselves or feel they have accomplished something. Others set goals and strive to achieve them. The goal - setting theory states that for a person to be motivated, the goal must be clear, specific, attainable, and quantifiable (Locke & Latham, 1984). In this case, the person (tutee) attends tutoring because their specific goal is to earn an "A" in a specific class. The final theory of motivation I will discuss here is the expectancy theory which is also known as VIE (Vroom, 1964). The "V" stands for valence which is the desirability of the outcome. The student may come to you saying, I need to pass this class or else, my parents will disown me. The "I"

stands for the instrumentality which is the perceived relationship between the performance and the outcome. Here the student may report I need to see a tutor to pass the class. Finally, the “E” stands for expectancy or the relationship between the effort and result. The student will say, I studied and expected to get a “B”, but I only earned a “D”. Here the expectancy of the grade and the reality of the student’s previous performance are not congruent.

People have different motives, purposes, aims, values, needs, drives, impulses, and desires for what they do and why they do it. There difference can make the tutor – tutee relationship challenging and at times, frustrating for both parties. One quick method for assisting a tutor is to think of their interactions or behaviors in terms of the four letter code result of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator. The Myers-Briggs Type indicator is a tool that can highlight differences in our perception based on personal biases. It can assist our understanding of those differences by assisting in our ability to discern rationale for the behavior of others. We can also work on common issues (via communication) and develop a basic understanding of those with whom we interact.

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) was developed by Isabel Myers and Katharine Briggs in the early 1940's (Myers & Mccauley, 1985). According to Renee Baron (1998), the initial development of the MBTI is based on the teachings of Carl Jung, a Swiss psychiatrist and is designed to reveal basic personality preferences. Carl Jung's four psychological functions include: thinking, feeling, sensing, and intuition. The central theory of the MBTI is that behavior, which is susceptible to growth and development, is a product of a relatively unchanging personality type.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE MYERS-BRIGGS

The Myers-Briggs Type indicator (MBTI) is designed to be a self-report instrument that requires a binary response of ‘yes’ or ‘no’. According to Von Franz and Hillman (1971), Jung’s original theory is based on characteristics of 12 different ‘types’, each with their individual strengths and abilities. Myers and Briggs added two additional types of Judging and Perceiving. The MBTI now consists of a total of eight psychological types:

Introverted Sensors, Introverted Intuitors, Introverted Thinkers, Introverted Feelers, Extraverted Sensors, Extraverted Intuitors, Extraverted Thinkers, and Extraverted Feelers. According to Keirsey (1998), Jung believed that people are different in fundamental ways which lead to the "function types". Jung, believed that the personality of each individual is characterized by the dominance of one of these dichotomous functions over the others. For example, a person can use the dominant function in either an Extraverted or Introverted manner. Using Extraversion as a dominant function would imply that the person would rely on this dimension when dealing with the external environment, just the same way a person who uses Introversion as the dominant function would rely on this dimension when alone or with a close acquaintance. The terms used in the Myers-Briggs describe preferences that do not hold the same meaning in everyday life. For example, Extraversion does not mean talkative, loud, or gregarious and Introversion does not mean shy, lack of confidence or withdrawn. This particular dimension focuses on how we interact in the world and how we direct our energy.

As a note of caution, the human personality is extremely complex and as a result, the Myers-Briggs assessment explains some of the differences and complexities of personality and behavior. It should be used to support our interactions with others (Pittenger, 2005), and not used to diagnosis or find fault with others. Also, according to Boyle (1996), the Myers-Briggs does not "tell" a person what to do or be and provides strengths and weaknesses associated with each profile type. Remember, it is a self-reporting instrument which can be manipulated and therefore should be used to support the manner in which you interact with others.

THE DICHOTOMOUS NATURE OF THE MYERS-BRIGGS

The Myers-Briggs uses personality preferences that are based on dichotomous scales such as Extraversion & Introversion, Sensing & Intuition, Thinking & Feeling, and Judging & Perceiving. Tieger & Barron-Tieger (1995), Baron (1998) and Kroeger & Thuesen (1988), reports the that Myers-Briggs type has various dimensions and strengths which can assist us with minimizing our areas of weakness.

The first dimension looks at how a person interacts with the world. This is the Extraversion (E) or Introversion (I) scale. People who are Extraverts tend to direct their attention outward towards people and things outside of themselves. Introverts on the other hand, tend to direct their attention inward and toward their own thoughts and perceptions. When interacting with others, Extraverts tend to be expressive, social, and interested in many things and Introverts tend to be more reserved, private, and cautious.

Extraverts tend to:

- Talk more than listen
- Think out loud
- Act, then think
- Like to be around others
- Prefer to do many things simultaneously
- Be attuned to their external environment
- Learn best through doing or discussing

Introverts tend to:

- Listen more than talk
- Think inside their head
- Think, then act
- Feel comfortable being alone
- Prefer to focus on one thing at a time
- Not take action
- Be attuned to inner world
- Prefer to communicate in writing

The second dimension looks at how a person processes information. This is the Sensing (S) or Intuition (N) scale. People who use Sensing notice the facts and details, where people who use Intuition focus on connections as well as relationships. Sensors have a tendency to be more practical and have trust in their past experience where Intuitives tend to be imaginative and trust their hunches.

Sensors tend to:

- Focus on details & specifics
- Admire practical solutions
- Notice details & remember facts
- Live in the here-and-now
- Trust actual experiences
- Like step-by-step instructions
- Work at a steady pace

Intuitives tend to:

- Focus on the big picture & possibilities
- Admire creative ideas
- Notice things that are new or different
- Trust their instincts
- Prefer to learn new skills
- Like to figure things out for themselves
- Work in bursts of energy

The third dimension looks at how a person makes decisions. This is the Thinking (T) or Feeling (F) scale. People who use Thinking base their decisions on objective, impersonal information, and tend to ask what makes the most sense or what is logical. People who use Feeling, tend to make decisions based on their personal values and how they feel about the choices. Thinkers use analytical logic and reasoning to make

decisions and Feelers have a tendency to take into account extenuating circumstances while searching for harmony when making decisions.

Thinkers tend to:

Make decisions based on logic and evidence
Be direct
Appear to be reserved
Be convinced by rational arguments
Value honesty and fairness
Take few things personally
Be motivated by achievement

Feelers tend to:

Make decisions based on their values & feelings
Appear to be friendly
Be convinced by how they feel
Be tactful
Value harmony and compassion
Take things personally
Compliment others

The final dimension looks at how one views structure. This is the Judging (J) or Perceiving (P) scale. People who use Judging prefer a structured, ordered, and predictable environment. Perceivers prefer to experience as much of the world as possible and like to keep their options open. Judgers have a tendency to be organized and productive and Perceivers tend to be flexible and nonconforming.

Judgers tend to:

Make decisions easily
Pay attention to time
Finish projects
Work first and play later
See the need for rules
Make a plan and stick to it
Find comfort in schedules

Perceivers tend to:

Have difficulty making decisions
Be less aware of time
Start projects
Play first, work later
Keep their options open
Question the need for many rules
Keep plans flexible
Be spontaneous

Using the information on the previously described dimensions, we can determine our corresponding type. For example, the type: ENTP. The "E" indicates the use of a dominant function for Extraversion. The "N" indicates Intuition, the "T" indicates Thinking and the "P" indicates Perceiving. Each Myers-Briggs type can be translated into its corresponding Jungian type in like manner. Here is a table of what each of the possible 16 types can correspond to:

INTP	Introverted Intuition Thinker Perceiving
ISTP	Introverted Sensing Thinker Perceiving
INFP	Introverted Intuition Feeler Perceiving
ISFP	Introverted Sensing Feeler Perceiving
INTJ	Introverted Intuition Thinking Judging
INFJ	Introverted Intuition Feeling Judging
ISTJ	Introverted Sensing Thinking Judging
ISFJ	Introverted Sensing Feeling Judging
ENTJ	Extraverted Intuition Thinker Judging
ESTJ	Extraverted Sensing Thinker Judging
ENFJ	Extraverted Intuition Feeler Judging
ESFJ	Extraverted Sensing Feeler Judging
ENTP	Extraverted Intuition Thinking Perceiving
ENFP	Extraverted Intuition Feeling Perceiving
ESTP	Extraverted Sensing Thinking Perceiving
ESFP	Extraverted Sensing Feeling Perceiving

THE IMPACT ON TUTORING

It is of course not very practical to assess everyone who enters the tutoring center in order to match their type with that of a tutor. Therefore, one can ask, why should we be concerned about this issue?

Understanding type can be very beneficial to tutors, tutees, administrative staff, faculty, mentors and just about everyone who interacts with others. For example, have you ever worked with a person who tends to see flaws in others, no matter what? How about the person who takes everything personally or the person who likes to play first and work later. We have all been around a person who starts project after project after project with few completed. Finally, the person who does not take action or acts and then thinks about what they have just done. There are times when we ask or wonder why this person is acting in such a manner and of course not acting in accordance to our own belief system. Generally, it is believed that 3 out of 4 people are extraverted and for every intuitive person, there are 3 sensory types. This begins to maximize your ability to understand the preferences of others.

If you understand a person's personality type, their behaviors make sense. You can place that person in a type and make adjustments to your interactions with them. For example, T's or thinkers will usually underrate the feeling types. A thinker cannot understand how the feeling type makes decisions without the use of analysis and logic. A thinker type makes the assumption that feelers are driven by seeking harmony and therefore, their decisions are suspect. Thinkers tend to need to know the objective. They usually look for some form of structured and logical plan. When you combine a sensor and thinker, you have a person who likes step by step activity that is logical. This person behaves much the same way an attorney or account behaves... by the numbers.

The sensing type thinks in a step by step manner with the belief that this is the way it has and it is the way it should always be done. They perceive routines as good and necessary, which is contrary to the manner in which intuitives focus on the big picture and trust their instincts. Therefore, when one works with a sensing type, you should articulate your thoughts in a step-by-step manner expecting that if details are missed, they will want to stop and fill them in. If you are working with an intuitive type, throw out the concept or issue in general terms and allow them to be creative with the topic. If you combine the sensing and feeling types, you have a person who makes decisions based on how they feel, rather than cold calculations. This is a profile in which we find teachers, social workers, and other health care professionals.

The feeling type is tactful and appreciative of others. They are more likely to ask for input from many sources in order to reduce hurt feelings. A feeling type will wonder how this activity may impact on others, therefore, allow them to ask their questions and report on their concerns. They are also aware of their emotions and show others how they feel most of the time. This is the type of person who shows their emotions on their face, shock, happiness, sadness and so on are readily observable. If we combine the intuitive and feeling type, we have a person who tends to be warm and friendly and communicates in a warm and empathetic manner. This is the profile which reflects professions such as counselors, and psychologists.

We also have similar issues within the tutor-tutee relationship. For example, why do some students show up on time and others arrive late? The perceiver type likes to play first, work later, and also may have difficulty with the need for many rules. They may begin the discussion with, "Why are grades so important?" Why do students say they are going to study or work on a particular paper or project, but fail to follow through? Is it poor time management. Again, the perceiver type is less aware of time and may start a projects but have difficulty completing them.

Using the Myers-Briggs can provide us with a method to gain valuable insight into personality, reduce defensiveness, and enhance our ability to see others more accurately. The Myers-Briggs also enhances our ability to appreciate differences and improve our ability to work with others, and perhaps work on ourselves.

Knowing our own type can assist us with understanding our strengths, what works for us, how we think through issues and problems, and resolve the question of why we behave as we do, rather than criticize our own behaviors. We can use the MBTI to better understand people and provide some rationale for the manner in which they interface with us.

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