



Don't Let the Moon Break Your Heart

Knowing psychological types helps teachers understand the reluctant learner.

CAROLYN MAMCHUR

Grade four: "Having Mickey in my class is like having ethereal stardust sprinkled everywhere. Her joy is absolutely contagious."

Any mother would be pleased to read such a comment on her child's report card. It was my daughter's fourth year in school, and she couldn't have been happier. Her teacher was alive with great ideas. She took her little friends on walks in the woods, and read to them under the arms of sweet-smelling tamarack, while they nibbled ripe berries until tummies were full or branches empty.

My daughter loved this gentle, wise young woman. So did I. I was surprised

when, during the year-end parent-teacher interview, the teacher suggested I send Mickey to a private school, a convent maybe, just for girls.

"What? Why?"

"I'm not sure. I just feel she has to be . . . protected, somehow."

"A convent school?" I was almost getting angry.

"I know of one north of here. The

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nuns are so loving. They run a farm. You learn to do so many things . . . it is really so freeing . . ."

It was out of the question. I was not ready to send my only child to a boarding school.

Not yet.

Grade ten: "Mickey is having difficulty in this class. She has missed so much school, I am unable to assign her any grade. She is so reluctant to try the assignments—how can I teach her? We can discuss this at the parent-teacher interview."

There isn't a mother alive who would have looked forward to going to that interview.

"She has failed the composition section!"

"Failed composition?" I, a professor of English, gulped.

"She missed the whole unit on poetry."

"Have you read any of the poetry she writes?"

"She writes poetry?"

"Almost every day."

Silence.

"She didn't do any of the exercises on grammar." This grade ten teacher was persistent.

"Have you ever heard her make a grammatical error?" I wasn't ready to submit.

"I've never heard her *speak*!"

The Reluctant Learner

That some students are reluctant to learn in almost any educational environment is a painful reality for teachers, parents, and, predominantly, the learners themselves. That many of these students share a common learning style is only now being discovered by researchers (Lawrence, 1979; Mamchur, 1982; Myers, 1980).

The basis of the learning style descriptors used by these researchers is an examination of personality constructs described by Carl Jung. Jung postulated that many apparently random differences in the way people behave are actually quite orderly and consistent, resulting from specific fundamental differences in the way people prefer to focus their energy and use perception and judgment. This system for examining individual preference variables Jung called his theory of psychological types. The major focus of Jung's theory concentrated on two fundamental human attitudes, extraversion and introversion. In the extraverted attitude, attention flows outward, toward the objects and people of the environment. Associated with this energy flow is a desire to act on the environment, to affirm its importance, to increase the effect of the environment on the extravert.

In the introverted attitude, energy seems to flow inward, back to the subject, who conserves this energy and uses it to examine his or her own ideas and concepts and reaffirm or dispel them.

The introverted attitude is reflective in nature; the extraverted is active.

Jung further defined his system in terms of four functions: sensing, intuition, thinking, and feeling. Sensing and intuition are the two basic processes of coming to conclusions about what has been perceived. Sensing is the process that establishes what exists. It is the practical, straightforward perception that relies on the five senses to provide information. Intuition refers to the use of insight to see possibilities and relationships. Thinking is the judging function that links ideas together in an objective, logical, analytical fashion. Feeling, also a judging function, arranges ideas together in an equally rational but subjective manner, according to the value system of the person making the decision. Jung defined these functions as "particular forms of psychic activity that remain the same in principle under varying conditions" (Jung, 1971 [originally published 1921], p. 436). It is this concept that makes understanding psychological types so useful to educators. Learning styles can be understood by using the Jungian system as a framework for observing student behavior.

One further explanation postulated by Jung is that an individual, because of an inborn predisposition, comes to favor one of the four functions of sensing, intuition, thinking, or feeling in the course of normal development. That favored function is considered the *dominant* one, the most interesting and most rewarding of the mental processes.

Myers (1962) has further used this classification of dominant function as a means of explaining how individuals interact with the environment. Those folks who use sensing or intuition as a favorite function for dealing with the environment are categorized as *perceiving* types. Those who prefer the environmental interface of thinking or feeling are labeled *judging* types. Each type has distinct attributes. The outstanding and much admired quality of perceiving types is their flexibility, curiosity, receptiveness, spontaneity, and adaptability to change. For judging types, it is a sense of decisiveness, responsibility, and order, and a willingness to apply oneself

to tasks and to have long-range plans for the future. (For further explanation, see the box on page 79.)

The Sensing-Perceiving (SP) Type

Several longitudinal studies (Kearsey and Bates, 1978; McCaulley, 1977; Myers, 1976) show that those students preferring the *sensing* way of functioning and the *perceiving* way of interfacing with the environment seem the most resistant to institutional learning. These students have a combination of sensing and perceiving attributes. The sensing attributes commonly seen are:

- A love for fact
- A need for relevancy
- An appreciation of the practical
- A tendency to cling to the certainty of actual things
- A materialism
- A preference to focus on the here and now.

The perceiving attributes commonly seen are:

- A love for the spontaneous
- A dislike of time schedules
- A need for release from the rigidity of rules, of patterns, of constant, fixed ways of organizing their lives
- A desire to be aware of process
- A reluctance to take initiative in decision making
- A flexibility in attitude
- A tendency to leave things to the last minute
- A love for surprise.

Of all students, the highest drop-out rate can be found among sensing-perceiving (SP) learners. Only 1 percent of teachers are SP types, however. This type, in contrast to all others, is relatively unmotivated by long-term goals. Instead, SP people are driven by a need to be free, free to do whatever they wish, whenever they wish. The overall goal of the SP is freedom—not freedom as an end, or as a means to an end, but freedom for its own sake. There is, essentially, no purpose in life; there is only being. This most process-oriented type acts on impulse, not design. The goal, then, is to have no goal. The king of whim and whimsy, the SP is a follower of Dionysus, god of music, song, and dance, god of joy.

(continued on page 80)

A Closer Look at Typology

"A Closer Look at Typology" is excerpted from Carolyn Mamchur's book, *Insights*, to be published in 1984.

In examining typology, it is fundamental to understand that Jung considered the various "types" occurring in human nature to be archetypal, "which is itself an irrepresentable, unconscious, pre-existent form that seems to be part of the inherited structure of the psyche and can therefore manifest itself spontaneously anywhere, at any time" (Jung, 1965, p. 392).

Such words as natural, instinctive, and automatic help to clarify the notion of the archetype. It is obvious that some people are at times extraverted (outward moving, action oriented), or deal best in the outer world of people and things, and at other times introverted (inward looking, reflection oriented), preferring to deal quietly with ideas inside their own heads. For each of us one attitude is more natural, more instinctive, more automatic than the other, and that one is our archetypal preference.

It is sometimes useful to think of personality functions as a Z pattern (see Figure 1). The pattern consists of two pairs of functions: sensing (S) versus intuition (N), and thinking (T) versus feeling (F). All four functions coexist, but in each pair, one function is most preferred and the other least preferred by each of us.

The first pair of functions concerns the way we perceive things. Those who prefer the perceptive function of sensing develop acute powers of observation and awareness. They enjoy dealing with details, with facts, with present realities. As they develop, sensing types rely more on experience than on theory. They trust customary ways of doing things, move cautiously

from the known to the unknown, and develop a very sound, practical attitude to life, often referred to as "common sense."

Intuitive types, on the other hand, rely more on inspiration than on direct experience. They pass quickly over details, see in flashes of insight, and work on hunches. Just as the eye teaches the mind of the sensing types, the mind teaches the eye of the intuitive.

Once a person has accumulated data, through either intuition or sensing, then a judgment must be made on that data. Two functions also exist for making decisions: thinking and feeling. Both are rational processes, insists Jung, and must be accepted as such. The thinking type makes decisions by a logical analysis of the factors. When used in a mature and positive manner, this is an objective, impartial process dedicated to fair play and justice. The feeling type, on the other hand, uses a more personal, subjective process to make decisions. Harmony and compassion guide the feeling type in the development of values and standards. Decisions are then made according to these values and standards.

Myers, whose work in applying and extending the concepts of Jungian type has been widely accepted, felt it would be most useful to distinguish among individuals according to one further criterion, derived from the two pairs of functions. Whether we are extraverts or introverts, we must deal with our environment, our everyday world. How are we most comfortable facing that world? What is our interactive facet, our interface?

Myers (1972) found that a fourth area of preference exists in each personality, one that favors either perception or judging (decision making) as a way of coping with the environment. This has important implications for what we see when we look at a person interacting with the

world around him or her. When we observe someone who is more comfortable focusing energies, coming to closure, gaining control over events, someone who does not easily tolerate uncertainty or ambiguity, we are looking at a decision-making or judging (J) type. The person with a judging interface seems to aim for singularity, a world of resolution and certainty. The judging types seem to want a structured life, to work well according to a schedule, to appreciate usable systems.

When, on the other hand, we observe someone who is more interested in taking data and weighing impressions, more concerned with understanding events than controlling them, someone who is uncomfortable with fixed patterns or structures, we are looking at a perceiving (P) type. The person with a perceiving interface seems to aim for plurality, a world of adaptation and change. The perceptive type seems to want a more flexible life-style, with the freedom to respond to impulse.

Judging types do not judge others (as the name unhappily seems to imply), but rather work best, feel more comfortable in, and use most often, their preferred interface of decision making. In judging, their preferred function may be either thinking (T) or feeling (F). As judging types are outcome centered, so perceiving types are process centered. They are not more perceptive than judging types (again as the name may imply), but rather work best and use most often their preferred process of perception, whether through sensing (S) or intuition (N).

Figure 2 shows how typology might be figuratively imagined. □

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Figure 1.
Four Functions in Personality Type

- S** Everyone needs to look at facts through the senses
- T** next comes to a logical analysis of the consequences
- N** then considers the possibilities through intuition
- F** followed by an examination of human values or consequences.

Figure 2. Figurative Depiction of Personality Typology

(E)	EXTRAVERT		INTROVERT	(I)
(S)	Sensing or Intuition	Perceiving Function	Sensing or Intuition	(S)
(N)	Thinking or Feeling	Decision Making Function	Thinking or Feeling	(N)
(T)	Judging or Perceiving	Organization of Environment	Judging or Perceiving	(T)
(F)				(F)
(J)				(J)
(P)				(P)

SP types can become great performing artists. They play musical instruments or sing, for example, not to become great, but to *do*. And by so doing, become great. Becoming great is not the goal, simply a pleasant side effect of the endless pursuit of doing, doing, and doing again.

Lock such a freedom-oriented being into a structure and the result is a natural resistance and resentment powerful enough to prevent learning. The SP becomes labeled as dumb, stubborn, lazy, even insane. If the SP child is extraverted, hyperactivity is often apparent. The introverted SP, on the other hand, is markedly withdrawn.

To teach such children is at best frustrating. To mother such a child can often be heartbreaking. I have spoken to many such mothers. I am one. My daughter, Mickey, is an introverted SP. She started "withdrawing" from regular school in kindergarten, even though she

could read when she was four years old. By the tenth grade it was all I could do to coax Mickey to attend guitar class for one hour twice a week with a teacher she especially liked. School had become unbearable.

Today she is attending a Quaker boarding school in the heart of the mountains, beside the loveliest river in British Columbia. In this school freedom, responsibility, and relevance are key words. The school is small, intimate, community centered. The students are as responsible as the adults for maintaining, even building, the school.

Even in this ideal and idyllic setting, where flexibility and freedom to do (two absolute musts for the SP child) are afforded the student, my daughter and three other SP students have difficulty. But they are surviving, they are learning, and slowly they are coming to be understood.

Understanding becomes a key issue in using knowledge of learning style to help the reluctant learner. Even for the learners themselves to understand "why they are so different" eases a lot of tension and self-doubt. Acceptance—on the part of the student and the teacher—can then occur. Adjustments and concessions must be made by both parties engaging in this social contract we call schooling.

But understanding does not come easy. It is human nature to expect others to behave the way we do. It finally dawned on me, when presented with the prospect of writing this paper, to ask my daughter about her learning preferences. I asked her two questions:

1. What do you like about English class?

2. What do you dislike?

These are her exact words; her voice trembled as she spoke. "In school I *hate* . . ." (I had not mentioned hating, I had asked about liking.) "In school I *hate* doing ridiculous things that don't make any sense. I hate essays, all those rambling ideas, demands of 'show the significance of this, relate this to that.' I *hate* it!" (It is an interesting fact that most English teachers are intuitive types. Intuitives value the world of possibility, of relationships, of hypothesis.) She continued, "I hate school. This is

I hate school. And I hate intuitive things. Let me be more specific," she added in true sensing fashion. "Hold on, let me think. I don't like teaching that goes on and on, that demands we go behind a thing, to find the secret meaning. I mean, it is what it is. I wish teachers could let it go at that." (Sensing types are realists. Intuitives are dreamers.) And finally she added, "The last thing that I hate about school is scheduled things. I hate timetables, doing the same thing every day. I hate that."

And indeed, true to her type, Mickey wanted unscheduled, nonintuitive, relevant, specific, here-and-now learning.

It was more difficult to coax from her what she *liked* about English class. Finally, she admitted, "In English class I like discussing things that are really relevant, like the situation in El Salvador. Going on the peace march to Washington, now that made sense. I like one-word answer tests, match and mismatch. I like ABC choices. Not those damn questions that have 40 possible right answers." (All of these were typical preferences of the practical, realistic, fact-oriented sensing type.) "And mostly I like to go with the flow, do what we want, not have all the tasks predetermined. If something comes up, go for it." (This third point I could understand. Even though I am an intuitive type myself, I can appreciate the natural and powerful dynamic involved in the teaching moment. The SP not only appreciates it, but is starved without it.) "And fourth, Mom, I like to know what's happening." "Where?" I asked, not quite sure what she meant.

"Everywhere. In class, in the world, everywhere." (It was a combination of a plea for relevance and a request to be *in on the process*. She wanted to be free to observe the process, to be aware of what was happening because that is how she learns best.)

And finally, she added, "I guess I like reading a story and answering specific questions or discussing the story."

"Discussing?" I asked, surprised, knowing my daughter's introversion and reluctance to speak out in class.

"Yes, I like to *listen*."

That aspect of discussion had never occurred to the extravert in me. If one

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doesn't participate in the discussion, one isn't learning, right? Wrong. The introverted SP loves to be actively involved in the process of relevant discussion by listening, by observing.

“But how do you learn?” I asked, still not hearing, still not believing what my child and my understanding of typology were telling me.

“Mom, I am a good listener. I am a good observer. I'm not being a space cadet in the corner.”

I guess the question I was really asking was, “But how will your teacher know you are learning?”

“She could ask me.”

“Ask me.” It was true. That had not occurred to me either. It probably occurs to few teachers. I was learning something very important about the nature of participation for the introverted SP learner. And about the nature of trust.

Mickey and I continued our discussion on learning in the English classroom. I had to push both her and myself to discover how the SP child would know whether or not she were learning. It was easy, we discovered, when it came to skills. She could read, she could play the guitar. Even attitudes were relatively easy to assess, eventually becoming apparent from her actions. But what about her ability to understand concepts? That one perplexed me. “How do you know you're understanding the significance, for example, of a poem?”

“I just know,” Mickey replied, “from the questions that run through my head. I know that if I am confused, if I don't have enough facts, that I should listen, and think of questions I would ask, and then wait for them to be answered . . . questions like, ‘Who is that? What does this have to do with that?’ If they aren't answered, if I'm thoroughly confused, I check it out.”

And suddenly, for the first time, after having studied and taught typology for years, I finally truly understood what I myself meant when I said, “Extraverts learn by talking to others; introverts talk inside their heads.” Participation suddenly took on a new meaning. Introverts hate for participation to “count” because quiet participation doesn't count.

Only the kind the teacher can see or hear counts. The fine tuning isn't there.

And suddenly I realized that like all other teaching tools, knowledge of learning style can work only if other qualities of good teaching are also prevalent. To truly internalize the nature of students' learning styles—especially when they are opposite to one's own—demands a big change in the teacher's attitudes. Many components of good teaching are precursors to the adaptive use of learning style. In this particular instance regarding participation by an introverted student, successful teaching is incumbent on trust, empathy, and large-goal orientation. It demands positive regard. And, perhaps, it relies ultimately on an understanding of typology to make an already good situation better, a deeper understanding more possible.

What School Must Be

School must become, for the SP child, “a place to learn.” Simply so. Less is more. We must provide a stimulating, relevant environment, full of important, factual things to see and hear and smell and taste and touch. We must provide opportunity to move and act and be. And we must allow the SP to observe and enter into the process as he or she feels a need to, permitting the SP to decide when that is.

It is important to remember that SP learners cannot sit for long hours in straight rows of desks, memorizing lists of spelling words so that one day they might be successful in writing a job application. SP learners value activity, risk, and adventure. They need to be spontaneous, able to do the unexpected. Drama, visual aids, videotapes—anything appealing to the senses appeals to SP's. They follow impulse rather than well-laid plans. They love things—things to do, things to make, things to touch, things to keep. And finally and most important, teachers must remember to keep in mind that SP's are often misunderstood and undervalued by themselves, their peers, their parents, and their teachers.

I have spoken and worked with too many SP adults who have been strapped in school, who have hidden in empty

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garages rather than go to school, who have been transferred from school to school, who have finally withdrawn or were expelled. I have worked in therapy with extraverted SP's who received shock treatment because they were diagnosed as mad. Some appear in juvenile court for repeated acts of stealing. These acts perplex everyone involved. The extraverted SP can display such an unconscious simultaneous love for things, such a sense of impulsive, immediate need that material things are "borrowed" and then promptly forgotten. This becomes a conundrum so complex as to go beyond the limits of this paper. It is enough to say that the ramifications of individual differences must be explored from a vantage point of understanding and acceptance before growth

has a chance. On a less devastating, but almost equally perplexing note, is the hyperactivity of extraverted SP's. They can be constant movers—jiggling, wiggling, jumping, talking, disturbing ad infinitum. Teachers have reported to me such events as the extraverted SP who actually rocked her desk into such motion that it broke into splinters, crashing the agitated occupant to the floor. I have been told of such students being tied to their desks or being put into large cardboard boxes to "temper" their natures.

What a tragedy when the response to a need for movement is forced confinement. How much easier to work *with* the energy instead of against it. The extraverted SP needs large, small, and in-between body movement. Action is the key. Every opportunity to move must be not only allowed, but created. To learn to write the letter A, an extraverted SP six-year-old needs not only to sit quietly at a desk, pencil in hand. He needs to go up to the board and write A 40 times, moving across the entire expanse of the blackboard. He needs to make A's out of clay and sand and wood and cardboard, molding and shaping and sawing and hammering and cutting and pasting. He needs to tramp an A in the snow with his feet. He needs to find an A in the alphabet box and hand it to the teacher.

Extraverted SP's who love material things should be encouraged to collect stamps, records, dolls—a surfeit of things should surround little SP consumers. They can be taught to collect and trade items, to make the things they like.

This plea goes beyond a desire to keep SP students out of juvenile courts, out of cardboard boxes, out of quiet corners. Making things may "slow down" the anxious collector to appreciate the product a bit more. It must be remembered that it is in the nature of this child to want things immediately. Let SP's collect bubble gum covers and you will find them buying whole cartons of bubble gum at a time. I have seen my daughter spend every cent of her allowance on a carton of such foul-tasting candy that she threw it out, stacked the coveted paper cards in a drawer, and,

having collected them all in one fell swoop, promptly forgot them! Finally, I must add my belief that if "stealing" is part of the SP's pattern, the only way to teach society's system of ownership is to abandon negativity, judgment, and punishment, and replace it with patience, understanding, and acceptance of a different perspective, a different view of the way things are.

Of all types the SP is the most joyful, the most full of spontaneous pleasure. "Look at the rainbow," says my daughter, and I search for a hidden pot of gold. She sees the glorious color of sky, now. For the SP, *now* is all there is, or need be. And in the easy acceptance and appreciation of the immediate comes a silent promise of tomorrow, simply understood and simply accepted. Uncomplicated, real, pleasure-loving, eager to do, impossible to be bound, these seekers of freedom can become the most entertaining and psychologically attractive, healthy members of any classroom. They can become magical.

*Beware! Beware!
His flashing eyes, his floating hair!
Weave a circle round him thrice,
And close your eyes with holy dread,
For he on honey-dew hath fed,
And drunk the milk of Paradise.*
—Coleridge□

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