

Why It's Important to Know Thyself

K. Jeffrey Miller, DC, MBA

The adage "Know Thyself" was inscribed on the Temple of Apollo at Delphi in ancient Greece. A modernized interpretation brought about by the self-awareness movement defines the adage as developing the ability to know one's true nature.

Discovering one's true nature is a challenge, but one worthy of pursuing. And an even bigger challenge is accepting what you discover, making efforts to improve upon negative traits and learning to use positive traits to your advantage.

Meyers-Briggs Is A Start

When I was 40-years-old I took the Meyers-Briggs personality test. When the results were, in I reviewed them and said, "Yep, that's me." I was comfortable with myself and felt the test results were right on the money. My second thought was, "I wished I had taken the test earlier in life." I felt it might have helped me avoid some of the hardships and tough lessons I endured along the path to becoming comfortable with myself. I also thought, "I am fortunate to have made several important decisions that fit my personality without having this information."

The Meyers-Briggs test has a personality type indicating system that includes four pairs of personality traits; Extroverted or Introverted, Sensing or Intuitive, Thinking or Feeling and Judging or Perceiving. Everyone has a dominant trait in each of the pairs. Combinations of the four preferences result in sixteen possible personality types. The four strongest traits you possess represent the strengths and weaknesses you display in multiple aspects of your everyday life. Each trait can dominate based on the situation you are in.

One of the best activities you can participate in is identifying which of the sixteen personalities is yours. The best way to do this is to take the Meyers-Briggs test which can be followed up with reading books like *Type Talk, The 16 Personality Types that Determine How We Live, Love and Work* by Otto Kroeger and Janet M. Thuesen. The book explores the sixteen personality types in detail and relates them to real life applications.

Understanding Others

The book is helpful in "Knowing Thyself," but it can also help you know others. For example, it is very helpful in identifying the best candidates for jobs in your office. The best personality for a front desk person is different from the personality for a person dealing with insurance and billing. The front desk person has to be friendly and represent the practice well since she is usually the first person to have contact with a patient. Yet, she has to be able to be firm in order to collect deductibles and co-pays. An insurance and billing person must be firm at all times and detailed-oriented. A billing person does not have to be as outgoing as a front desk person. Chiropractic assistants who work with therapy and rehabilitation should have a nurturing personality and also be able to pay attention to detail.

The book, *48 Days to the Work You Love* by Dan Miller, is also a good text for matching personalities and occupations. The book is designed to help a person find the career best suited for their personality and skill set. Exploration of the book helps you explore yourself and others. Another worthwhile activity that blends with discovering your personality type is identifying your dominant intelligences. Just as there is more than one type of personality, there is more than one type of intelligence. In fact, more than 100 types have been described.

According to the book, *7 Kinds of Smart* by Thomas Armstrong, research has consistently shown seven of these intelligences to be particularly common. Standardized tests only test for linguistic intelligence, the use of words. So, if you don't do well on standardized tests, there is no reason to feel stupid. You may be a genius in one or more of the other six intelligences.

Intelligence Definitions

- *Linguistic Intelligence* is the intelligence of words. (Example: Mark Twain)
- *Logical-mathematical Intelligence* is the use of reasoning and numbers. (Example: Albert Einstein)
- *Spatial Intelligence* is intelligence in pictures and images. (Example: Leonardo da Vinci)
- *Musical Intelligence* is intelligence in rhythm and melodies. (Example: Mozart)
- *Bodily-kinesthetic Intelligence* is intelligence in athletes, mechanics and crafts. (Example: Jim Thorpe)
- *Interpersonal Intelligence* is the intelligence of working with people. (Example: Martin Luther King)
- *Intrapersonal Intelligence* is the intelligence of the inner self and self-discipline. (Example: Amelia Earhart)

We all have some degree of each intelligence; some predominate and some are deficient but, they are all present. The good news is each of the seven major intelligences can be developed and improved. Tests are available that can identify your intellectual strengths. They are offered by career counselors and mental health professionals. Just like the Meyers-Briggs test, they can help you "Know Thyself" and direct you toward goals, activities and careers that will allow your star to shine.

Dr. Miller serves as the director of clinical operations for Tuck Chiropractic in Blacksburg, Va. Portions of this article are excerpted from Dr. Miller's book, *The Road to Happiness is Always Under Construction*, available through Amazon.com.