

Self-Assessment—What's My Nature?

Here is a simple self-assessment. Its purpose is to help you map out your temperament along the nine traits.

Below are the nine traits and three ways this trait could manifest itself in your life. Choose one behavior (a, b, or c) that sounds the most like you in each situation.

1. Activity Level: How much physical movement does your body need?

Think about your likely activity level at an all-day neighborhood party with sports, food, dancing, and friends.

- a. You are the Energizer Bunny—starting with volleyball and still going strong six hours later on the dance floor.
- b. The volleyball was enough for you. After lunch and cleanup, you chat with neighbors. At night you dance a little, but mostly listen to the music.
- c. Never mind the running and sweating. Good conversation, good food, and a game of horseshoes make it a great day. You're home reading when the dancing starts.

2. Regularity: How much do you have to keep to a schedule to feel comfortable?

Consider your comfort with irregularity when an unexpected opportunity takes you on a dream trip to India.

- a. Enthusiasm quickly turns to irritability when the different time zones throw off your sleep and eating schedule. The foreign food upsets your stomach and the scarcity of public toilets prevents regular elimination.
- b. It takes a couple of days to get over the jet lag and the early dinner hour, but then you adjust. Your digestive system never quite gets used to all the curries, but you mostly enjoy the cuisine.
- c. You have flexible routines, so travel is rarely a problem. Your body quickly adjusts to the time and schedule changes. Your favorite part is exploring remote villages and trying out the local cuisine.

3. Initial Response to New Situations: How do you approach new experiences/ideas?

You decide to take a course on web design at the local community college. How will you react on your first day?

- a. You find out all you can about the class before the first session, needing to know what to expect to assuage your anxiety about this new experience. On that big day you get there early, sit in the back, and quietly take in the scene.
- b. The first session you take copious notes but store up all of your questions for an opportunity to ask someone you know at a later time. You chat with the people around you and begin to settle in.
- c. An active participant from the moment you walk in, you take the opportunity to ask all your questions, try everything presented, and collect names and email addresses of fellow students.

4. Adaptability: How easily do you adjust to change?

The family is growing and you must make a decision about expanding the house you have or moving to a larger home. How does your comfort with change impact your decision?

- a. You like things just the way they are, so you have trouble admitting that a bigger house is needed. When your spouse finally convinces you, renovation feels like the only choice. The idea of moving to a new house and neighborhood far from friends feels totally overwhelming and undesirable.
- b. You have little difficulty with small changes, but major life changes are never easy. You see the need for a larger home. Despite your discomfort, you weigh the factors that make moving or renovation a better choice and go with the one that makes the most sense.
- c. Change does not create discomfort as much as excitement. You love the idea of starting over with a new home and new experiences. Anxious to get things rolling, you call the realtor immediately.

5. Predominant Mood: Do you tend to be more optimistic or pessimistic?

You've read the public health recommendations about getting the flu vaccine. How might your outlook affect your decision?

- a. Of course you will get the flu shot. In fact, you call the doctor to schedule the earliest possible appointment for your whole family, just in case he runs out of vaccine.
- b. You get your doctor's advice, think on it for a few days, and then decide better safe than sorry. You'll schedule an appointment before winter.
- c. You see no reason. You're healthy. If you should get sick you'll get better, so you have nothing to worry about.

6. Persistence: How much determination do you bring to activities and decisions?

How determined do you remain when the "easy to assemble" swing set turns out to be less than easy?

- a. Your determination never wavers in the face of frustration. You pass on dinner and work late into the night despite pleas from your spouse to leave it for tomorrow or get help.
- b. You start out determined, figuring it will take an hour, tops. After two frustrating hours you concede failure and ask your handyman neighbor for help.
- c. You feel like screaming fifteen minutes into the project. You give it another 10 minutes before throwing up your hands in surrender. You return it to the store

7. Perceptiveness/Distractibility: How much are you distracted by things around you?

While cleaning the garage, how focused do you remain?

- a. It takes twice as long as it should, what with the kids fighting in the sandbox, the weeds choking the tulips in the garden, and the break to take the dogs for a walk after you heard them whining in the house.
- b. Your garage gets cleaned up with a minimum of distractions. You pull out a weed or two while admiring the tulips, and you hardly register the kids fighting or the dogs whimpering inside.
- c. You win the prize for Least Distracted. When you are focused on a task, you notice or hear little else. Your spouse swears the place could burn down and you would probably not realize.

8. Intensity of Feelings and Reactions: How reserved or expressive are you?

At a Little League game, what kind of spectator are you?

- a. You cheer and shout till you are hoarse. More than once you must be reminded to sit down as you constantly pop out of the bleachers and annoy the umpire.
- b. You sit and watch, cheering when your son's team makes a good play, even standing when the play gets exciting.
- c. Your quiet demeanor and reserved cheers may not seem enthusiastic, but you wouldn't miss his game for anything.

9. Sensitivity: How much are you affected by sensory stimulus?

How much stimulus can you handle on the third-grade field trip that includes a long bus ride with the kids?

- a. Your headache starts before you ever reach the museum. First there was the confusion and noise getting thirty kids on the bus. Then the singing and harsh lights on the bus continue to stoke your discomfort.
- b. What a relief when you finally got the kids in their seats. It took awhile, but now you can lie back, tune out the singing, and read the newspaper.
- c. The confusion and noise don't bother you in the least. On the bus, you join the kids singing and even manage a nap. You arrive at the museum refreshed.

Be sure to keep your responses. You will be using them in a later chapter, which promises to be very interesting.