

MARITAL COUNSELLING

THE FOUR TEMPERAMENTS

The following information deals with what has been called the four basic temperaments. Hippocrates (cc. 400 BC) is usually recognized as the first person to introduce this philosophical concept to the world. For 25 centuries we have come to realize that each one of us has a tendency to be predominant in one of these four areas.

This is considered by some very qualified teachers to be the best explanation of human behaviour that there is taught today. It is important to examine our strengths and weaknesses in order to accentuate the positive aspects of our character while eliminating the negative characteristics. It also helps us to understand other people (especially our spouse and children) to better overcome potential conflicts. The following Biblical verses should help us.

“Each one should judge his own conduct for himself.”

Galatians 6:4

“Everyone should examine himself.”

I Corinthians 11:28

“Put yourselves to the test and judge yourselves.”

II Corinthians 13:5

“Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my thoughts . . .”

Psalms 139:23

I. SANGUINE (The Extrovert; The Talker; The Optimist; The Otter)

THE SANGUINE'S EMOTIONS

STRENGTHS

Talkative, storyteller
Life-of-the party - appealing personality
Good sense of humour
Emotional and demonstrative
Enthusiastic and expressive
Cheerful and bubbling over
Animated and expressive
Good on stage - born actor
Wide-eyed and innocent
Changeable disposition
Sincere at heart - holds on to people
Always a child
Curious
Lives in the present

WEAKNESSES

Compulsive talker
Exaggerates and elaborates
Dwells on trivia
Too happy for some
Egotistical
Blusters and complains
Naive, gets taken in
Has loud voice and laugh
Controlled by circumstances
Gets angry easily - scares others off
Seems phony to some
Never grows up
Can't remember names
Has a restless energy

THE SANGUINE AT WORK

STRENGTHS

Volunteers for jobs
Thinks up new activities
Looks great on the surface
Means well
Has energy and enthusiasm
Starts in a flashy way
Inspires others to join
Charms others to work

WEAKNESSES

Would rather talk
Forgets obligations
Doesn't follow through
Confidence fades fast
Undisciplined
Priorities out of order
Easily distracted
Wastes time talking

THE SANGUINE AS A FRIEND

STRENGTHS

Makes friends easily
Loves people
Thrives on compliments
Seems exciting
Envied by others
Doesn't hold grudges
Apologizes quickly
Prevents dull moments
Likes spontaneous activities

WEAKNESSES

Hates to be alone
Needs to be centre stage
Wants to be popular
Looks for credit
Dominates conversations
Interrupts and doesn't listen
Answers for others
Fickle and forgetful
Makes excuses
Repeats stories

I. SANGUINE (The Extrovert; The Talker; The Optimist; The Otter)(Contd.)

THE SANGUINE AS A PARENT

STRENGTHS

Makes home fun
Is liked by children's friends
Turns disaster into humour
Is the circus master

WEAKNESSES

Keeps home in a frenzy
Forgets children's appointments
Disorganized
Doesn't listen to the whole story

II. MELANCHOLY (The Introvert; The Thinker; The Pessimist; The Beaver)

THE MELANCHOLY'S EMOTIONS

STRENGTHS

Deep and thoughtful
Genius prone
Talented and creative
Artistic or musical
Philosophical and poetic
Appreciative of beauty
Sensitive to others
Self-sacrificing
Analytical
Conscientious
Serious or purposeful
Idealistic

WEAKNESSES

Remembers the negative
Moody and depressed
Enjoys being hurt
Has false humility
Off in another world
Low self-image
Has selective hearing
Self-centred
Too introspective
Guilt feelings
Tends to be hypochondria (depressed)
Persecution complex

THE MELANCHOLY AT WORK

STRENGTHS

Schedule-oriented
Perfectionist
Detail-conscious, Economical
Persistent and thorough
Orderly and organized
Loves research
Senses needs
Sees the problems
Finds creative solutions
Needs to finish what is started
Likes charts, graphs, figures, lists
Neat and tidy

WEAKNESSES

Not people-oriented
Depressed over imperfections
Often over-detailed
Chooses difficult work
Hesitant to start projects
Spends too much time planning
Can take needs of others personally
Prefers analysis to work
Self-deprecating
Hard to please/too high of standards
Deep need for approval

II. MELANCHOLY (The Introvert; The Thinker; The Pessimist; The Beaver) (Contd.)

THE MELANCHOLY AS A FRIEND

STRENGTHS

Makes friends cautiously
Content to stay in background
Avoids causing attention
Faithful and devoted
Will listen to complaints
Can't solve other people's problems
Deep concern for other people
Moved to tears with compassion
Seeks ideal mate

WEAKNESSES

Lives through others
Insecure socially
Withdrawn and remote
Holds back affection, unforgiving
Dislikes those in opposition
Suspicious of people, critical
Antagonistic and vengeful
Full of contradictions
Sceptical of compliments

THE MELANCHOLY AS A PARENT

STRENGTHS

Sets high standards
Wants everything done right
Keeps home in good order
Picks up after children
Sacrifices own will for others
Encourages scholarship and talent

WEAKNESSES

Puts goals beyond reach
May discourage children
May be too meticulous
Becomes a martyr
Sulks over disagreements
Puts guilt upon children

III. CHOLERIC (The Extrovert; The Doer; The Optimist; The Lion)

THE CHOLERIC'S EMOTIONS

STRENGTHS

A born leader
Dynamic and active
Compulsive need for change
Must correct wrongs
Strong-willed and decisive
Unemotional
Not easily discouraged
Independent and self-sufficient
Exudes confidence
Can run anything

WEAKNESSES

Bossy
Impatient
Quick-tempered
Can't relax
Too impetuous
Enjoys controversy and argument
Won't give up when losing
Comes on too strong
Is not complimentary
Dislikes tears and emotions
Is unsympathetic

III. CHOLERIC (The Extrovert; The Doer; The Optimist; The Lion)(Contd.)

THE CHOLERIC AT WORK

STRENGTHS

Goal-oriented
See the whole picture
Organized well
Seeks practical solutions
Moves quickly to action
Delegates work
Insists on production
Makes the goal
Stimulates activity
Thrives on opposition

WEAKNESSES

Little tolerance for mistakes
Doesn't analyse details
Bored with trivia
May make rash decisions
May be rude or tactless
Manipulates people
Demanding for others
End justifies the means
Work may become his god
Demands loyalty in the ranks

THE CHOLERIC AS A FRIEND

STRENGTHS

Has little for friends
Will work for group activity
Will lead and organize
Is usually right
Excels in emergencies

WEAKNESSES

Tends to use people
Dominates others
Decides and others
Knows everything
Can do everything better
Is too independent
Possessive of friends and mate
Can't say "I'm sorry"
May be right, but unpopular

THE CHOLERIC AS A PARENT

STRENGTHS

Exerts sound leadership
Establishes goals
Motivates family to action
Knows the right answer

WEAKNESSES

Tends to be over-dominate
Too busy for family
Gives answers too quickly
Impatient with poor performance
Won't let children relax
May send others into depression

IV. PHLEGMATIC (The Introvert; The Watcher; The Pessimist; The Golden Retriever)

THE PHLEGMATIC'S EMOTIONS

STRENGTHS

Low-key personality
Easygoing and relaxed
Calm, cool, collected
Well-balanced
Consistent life
Quiet, but witty
Sympathetic and kind
Keeps emotions hidden
Happily reconciled to life

WEAKNESSES

Unenthusiastic
Fearful and worried
Indecisive
 Avoids responsibility
 Self-righteous
Selfish
Too shy and reticent
Too compromising

THE PHLEGMATIC AT WORK

STRENGTHS

Competent and steady
Peaceful and agreeable
Has administrative ability
Mediates problems
Avoids conflicts
Good under pressure
Finds the easy way

WEAKNESSES

Not goal-oriented
Lacks self-motivation
Hard to get moving
Resents being pushed
Lazy and careless
Discourages others
Would rather watch

THE PHLEGMATIC AS A FRIEND

STRENGTHS

Easy to get along with
Pleasant and enjoyable
Good listener
Dry sense of humour
Enjoys watching people
Has many friends
Has compassion and concern

WEAKNESSES

Dampens enthusiasm
Stays uninvolved
Indifferent to plans
Judges others
Sarcastic and teasing
Resists change

Several key points are important to remember when concluding our thoughts about the four main temperaments.

1. Labelling should be done with caution - Keep to the objective of better understanding yourself, your spouse and others you associate with.

2. Each of us are made differently - Don't try to make one another a carbon copy of each other. Set yourselves free to be what God intended you to be.

3. No one is 100% of any temperament trait - It is important to know your strengths and build upon them. It is also important to work on your weaknesses to improve your personal characteristics.

4. Evaluation is for self-analysis only - Don't try to become a junior psychiatrist.

5. No one Temperament is better than the other - These are natural, God-given traits. God is a God of variety. We can enrich our life and relationships when we better understand them.

6. Do not seek to change your temperament - Let God do it IF He chooses to - especially after you're saved.

7. Opposites attract - Don't be surprised if you're attracted to someone quite different from yourself.

8. God uses all four temperaments to do His work - He used Sanguine Peter (**Otter**), Melancholy Moses (**Beaver**), Choleric Paul (**Lion**) and Phlegmatic Abraham (**Golden Retriever**).

Marriage is never to be competitive. Rather, it is to be complimentary. Our differences can create our greatest strengths if our attitude remains correct. Our differences can bring "the spice of life" into our marriage.

A marriage must be worked at to be successful. This is both individual and collective. Make Jesus the Lord of your life and then the Lord of your family relationship. The closer you draw near to Him, the closer your relationship will become.