Type and Career Development

Facilitating Personal and Professional Development

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Introduction

This booklet is designed for anyone engaged in a helping relationship in the area of career and/or personal development. Its purpose is to increase the professional's ability to apply personality type theory when helping others manage and capitalize on career and lifestyle choices.

Helping relationships can be found in a number of contexts and may take many forms: manager/staff member, coach/client, human resources consultant/employee, mentor/mentee, counselor/client, and others. To simplify the language in this booklet, the term *practitioner* will be used to denote the person in the facilitator role of the helping relationship and the term *client* will be used to describe the individual receiving assistance with the process of career development.

Although the focus of this booklet is career development, the steps covered—setting the stage, conducting self-assessment, generating and researching options, making decisions, and taking action—can also be applied to other developmental situations in which a client is solving a problem, assessing a relationship, or looking to change patterns of behavior. The career development process is not only about finding work—it is interwoven and integrated with broader issues of lifestyle, health and well-being, personal satisfaction, and interpersonal roles and responsibilities.

Personality type theory can enhance the career development process in a number of ways. It can be used as a tool to facilitate client insights. It can also be used to tailor career development tasks to meet the needs of individual clients. Furthermore, understanding personality type can help practitioners recognize their own style of helping and potential blind spots when guiding others through the process.

Prerequisite Knowledge

It is assumed that practitioners using this booklet are familiar with the language and basic concepts of personality type theory. Those unfamiliar with any aspects of type theory may find it helpful to consult the Resources section at the end of this booklet.

Type Preferences

Personality type refers to a set of innate natural preferences. These preferences relate to how individuals are energized, prefer to take in information, make decisions, and orient themselves to the world around them. The *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator*® (MBTI®) assessment helps people identify their personality type by having them choose one of each of four pairs of preferences. The result of this process is a four-letter code that, when validated by the client, represents his or her best-fit personality type.

However, everyone uses both the preferred and nonpreferred sides of each preference pair, as necessary, to adapt and thrive. It is important that readers know and can share with clients information about how these individual preferences contribute to personality type. It is also important that practitioners recognize that these preferences are not traits and that "trait language" should be avoided.

Type Dynamics

In type theory, whole type is greater than the sum of the parts. Identifying a four-letter best-fit personality type is only a starting point. To accurately understand and apply type theory, practitioners must understand how each preference relates to and acts in concert with clients' other preferences. This level of understanding is referred to as *type dynamics* and illustrates the importance of approaching personality type in an integrated and holistic manner. Please see Myers and Kirby (1994) for helpful material on type dynamics.

Type Development

Personality type theory asserts that over their life span individuals will strive to learn, grow, and find balance. Innate type will interact with environmental influences and experiences as individuals mature. Under ideal conditions, a recognizable and unique pattern of development, related to type dynamics, manifests for each whole type. This aspect of type theory is referred to as *type development* and is especially important to understand and explore when working with midlife clients.

Stress Patterns of Type

When clients are under stress, often they will act in a manner atypical of their natural personality type. Since stress is common during career transitions, you must recognize negative stress patterns as well as typical and positive behaviors associated with each type. Clients will often exaggerate their dominant function during times of stress. Then, as their stress increases, they may find themselves acting out of a poorly developed form of their inferior function. This booklet does not describe the various forms of stress reactions, but as a skilled practitioner it is important for you to be able to recognize stress reactions and sort them out from normal healthy functioning. See Quenk (2002) for more information on stress and personality.

Appropriate Use of Type

Personality type can appropriately be used for building awareness of individual differences, enhancing understanding of self and others, appreciating the strengths and gifts of self and others, and accommodating others. It also offers a way for people to learn from others and develop themselves and provides a language and framework to use when resolving conflicts. However, bear in mind the following:

- Situational factors can affect how individuals assess themselves and express their type preferences. When you work with personality type, your role as a skilled practitioner requires you to consider, assess, and take into account the context of the situation at hand.

- Everyone expresses his or her personality type in unique ways. Personality type does not measure or account for additional factors contributing to behavior, such as background experience, interests, skills, and abilities. Personality type does not explain everything. Overzealous practitioners and clients must be careful not to focus too much on personality type and neglect other factors affecting an individual's behavior.

- It is not appropriate to use personality type to avoid tasks or personal development, justify problem behaviors, stereotype, put others down, or blame others.

Type and Career Development

When clients understand their type preferences, they also deepen their understanding of the kind of work that will suit them. They may also gain insight into their developmental needs and/or the things about work that are stressful for or uninteresting to them.

Enhancing Client Insight

Personality type provides a tool to help clients understand themselves and their work preferences. Links have been demonstrated between individuals' personality type preferences and activities they tend to find enjoyable. Data have been gathered that show how individuals with certain personality preferences are more likely to choose certain types of work. When this information is used carefully in combination with other personal information, it can help clients in career transition better understand what work activities will be satisfying for them.

As well as helping clients consider suitable work activities, personality type can also provide insight into some of the interpersonal dynamics and systemic issues that may be affecting their work satisfaction. Individuals in career transition often express dissatisfaction with working relationships or organizational systems, values, policies, climate, atmosphere, or principles. Learning to understand their preferences and the similar or different preferences of the people they work with can give them insight into specific sources of work dissatisfaction or difficulties.

Personality type theory includes a developmental component that can be applied to personal or professional development. The theory is dynamic and assumes natural patterns of growth and development for individuals. Building on a Jungian developmental model that assumes all individuals strive for growth and balance throughout their life span, personality type provides a helpful lens for taking a positive view of adult development. By understanding these patterns, practitioners and their clients can identify potential blind spots and developmental tasks. This is especially appropriate as baby boomers reach midlife and seek alternative work and lifestyle options. Although personality type cannot completely explain or describe all the themes and changes midlife adults are experiencing, an understanding of type development can enhance practitioners' and clients' understanding of some natural patterns in life span development.

Customizing the Career Development Process

Individual clients prefer to work through the career development process in different ways. Each will want to focus on and emphasize different aspects of the process. Clients will be most comfortable moving through career development steps at their own pace and will prefer to take on the different tasks in their own way. An understanding of personality type can guide practitioners as they seek ways to customize the career development process to meet the needs of individual clients. Throughout this booklet you will find tips and strategies for helping clients use their strengths in the career development process.

Fostering Clients' Type Development

This booklet also presents tips and strategies for helping clients understand the process of innate type development. Practitioners can help clients develop the versatility to adapt to situations that may require use of nonpreferred aspects of their personality. They can use type knowledge to coach clients to see and address potential blind spots. Practitioners will have the greatest positive effect on their clients' developmental process when they are simultaneously accommodating clients' needs and helping them learn and develop in areas of nonpreference.

Fostering Practitioners' Type Development

When practitioners understand and apply personality type differences, they can not only customize the career development process to accommodate their clients' needs, but also foster their own growth by understanding their personal strengths and areas for development.

Specific practitioner strengths are listed in the section beginning on page 43. As you review these strengths, consider how you can tailor your type development process to better meet the needs of all clients, as part of your personal development plan.

Strategies for Using Type in Career Development

Personality type can be helpful in many ways in the career development process. However, it can also be misused. As you read through this section, bear in mind that personality type is only one component of career development. Also remember that personality type patterns are dynamic and complex rather than simple or static. Here are some strategies to ensure that you are using personality type most effectively within the career development process.

Deal with Transition First

When clients come in for career counseling, it is critical to consider what changes and stresses they are experiencing and to help them deal with these factors before assessing personality type. In many cases, career transition is linked to changes in other parts of a client's life, such as changes in health, mobility, location, or marital status, or children leaving or entering the home. Clients may be returning to the workforce after considerable time away. They may have lost their previous work involuntarily and may be grieving their loss.

These situational factors can affect the way clients approach the personality type assessment process. The stress of transition may cause them to act, think, and respond to questions in ways that are not characteristic of their natural preferences.

To use personality type effectively in career development, you must recognize transition issues and also help clients recognize the emotions and thoughts associated with their transition. Dealing with these transition issues before clients begin self-assessing their personality type can help them avoid inaccurate results and misleading conclusions. When transition is dealt with first, clients are more likely to complete the personality type indicator accurately and confidently and to validate their best-fit type.

If clients are significantly distressed by changes in their life, provide or refer them to additional counseling. One helpful strategy for facilitating transition management is to introduce transitional models or overview stages and phases of grieving. This direct educational approach of explaining and helping clients identify and deal with the psychological components of change can help them normalize what they are experiencing.

Separate Work Competencies from Preferences

It can be difficult to accurately assess a client's best-fit personality type when that client has developed competencies and worked in settings requiring him or her to develop nonpreferred aspects of his or her personality. Often a person's identity is tied into and associated with what he or she can do and has done in the past. Sorting natural preferences from learned skills and experiential learning can be a challenge for the practitioner. This is especially true when clients use and develop skills over long periods of time.

Work with your clients to carefully separate what they can do well from what they prefer to do. When

validating type, ask them about the activities they were engaged in and the competencies they demonstrated in previous employment situations. Emphasize their adaptability to situations and ability to learn and develop both preferred and nonpreferred aspects of themselves. Most clients can sort out these distinctions. They will often describe their use of preferred functions as energizing, comfortable, or motivating. In contrast, clients will often describe their use of nonpreferred functions as tiring or tedious or uncomfortable, especially as they were initially developing them.

This distinction between competencies and preferences also plays a role in determining each client's level of career satisfaction. For example, consider a competency your client has developed to a high level of proficiency. The client may gain great satisfaction from carrying out activities related to this competency, or she may feel trapped because she is good at something she doesn't particularly enjoy. This can be especially true for some clients who have mastered activities and are no longer challenged when completing them. By exploring these distinctions between what clients can do and what they prefer to do, you can be sure to incorporate both competencies and preferences into the career development process.

No matter what work your clients choose, they will likely have to carry out some tasks in nonpreferred modes. Part of effective career development is minimizing the amount of time spent in these nonpreferred modes; however, equally important is helping people manage, and be successful when engaging in, activities they do not prefer. Practitioners do a disservice if they emphasize the gaps between a pair of preferences. It is more helpful and realistic to emphasize to clients how they can access and use both sides of a preference pair when necessary. The practitioner's challenge is to highlight and maximize natural strengths while also encouraging development of all aspects of a client's personality.

Focus on Type Dynamics

Sometimes personality type is introduced with overly simplistic explanations focusing only on the prefer-

ence pairs. For example, clients may believe that careers in areas such as sales, teaching, and personal services are "extraverted" or that mathematics and science are suitable only for "logical" types. This can create a misconception of how personality type links to work preferences.

While a client can gain some information by understanding preference pairs, to look at only one preference pair in relation to career options is highly misleading. No single type preference can be used to evaluate one's career choices. To avoid possible misconceptions, use whole type descriptions when looking at work preferences.

Use preference pairs primarily as tools to help you discover the whole type. Then take an integrated approach to provide a broader understanding for your clients. Familiarize yourself with type dynamics so you can explain to your clients how to link work preferences clearly to whole type, and be ready to provide specific reference materials.

Incorporate Type Development

Basic type descriptions do not necessarily reflect a client's type development. These descriptions usually focus on the strengths and challenges of the dominant and auxiliary functions rather than specifically addressing type development. Personality type theory provides a model for development for each of the 16 types and can be a helpful tool for exploring the link between development and career satisfaction. As a practitioner, you must go beyond basic type descriptions to explore how your clients are learning to use and develop their preferred and nonpreferred functions. This is especially true for midlife clients, who may be in the process of developing their tertiary and inferior functions.

Listening for Clues

Listen to your clients for clues to their level of type development. Clients may comment that the description of a particular personality type sounds more like them when they were younger than how they are now.

Tips for Customizing Career Development for ESFJs and ENFJs

Contributors focus on the needs and situations of others and are most comfortable in an amicable and sociable setting. They want to build a harmonious, supportive relationship with the practitioner. Take time to establish rapport with them. They will consider logical aspects of situations, but will be comfortable making and following through with decisions based on what feels right for them. Organizational atmosphere and morale can be as essential to Contributors' sense of well-being in the workplace as the specific tasks and activities in which they engage. Contributors will want to explore the values and behaviors within an organization. They want to know if people are nurtured and treated with respect.

Contributors use their auxiliary function to balance their cooperative, collaborative approach by taking in additional information or perceptions. This input of information and ideas provides checks and balances for Contributors' tendency to immediately act on values-based decisions. The following descriptions will help you customize your interventions by highlighting general Contributor preferences.

Contributor Work Preferences

- Are collaborative, people-oriented communicators
- Are cooperative rather than competitive
- Seek to build consensus and agreement between individuals and groups
- Plan, organize, and coordinate people, events, and projects
- Express emotions and values openly
- Understand others through interactions and discussions
- Develop and maintain rapport and personal relationships with co-workers
- Uphold and contribute to personal, community, and societal values
- Seek and give positive feedback, validation, encouragement, and support
- Create and maintain harmony in groups
- Take on helping and/or nurturing roles
- Seek and create pleasant and peaceful working spaces
- Responsibly accomplish tasks and meet deadlines
- Focus on the needs of the people involved in a project as well as the project itself
- Take on multiple obligations and feel responsible for the welfare of others

Following are some tips to consider when establishing an effective career development relationship with Contributors.

Setting the Stage

- Create a pleasant, friendly career development environment
- Support and encourage Contributors in a personal way
- Discuss feelings and values
- Take time to discuss and deal with personal implications of transitions
- Offer opportunities to participate collaboratively

Conducting Self-Assessment

- Explore career satisfaction factors through dialogue
- Encourage and listen to personal stories; discuss what was learned from the experience
- Focus on values and contributions
- Consider the needs and expectations of important family members and friends
- Discuss importance of morale and atmosphere at work

Generating and Researching Options

- Look for options and organizations that are based on values
- Encourage research through networking and dialogue
- Share others' stories, especially encouraging or inspiring examples
- Provide access to personal stories and perspectives
- Develop strategies for assessing organizational morale and atmosphere

Making Decisions

- Factor the needs of significant others into the process
- Ensure that Contributors also factor in their own needs
- Contributors may be swayed by what they think they should do; explore this
- Evaluate information in terms of personal, subjective, and logical criteria
- Coach them to also consider logical aspects of situations

Taking Action

- Assign tasks within a cooperative, structured development plan
- Support and provide reinforcement for Contributors' efforts
- If they are overcommitted, coach them to say no and set limits
- Encourage them to take actions focusing on their own needs
- Capitalize on their preference for organizing, structuring, and obtaining results

ESFJ

Practical Contributor

"Many hands make light work."
12.3% of the population

Dominant (F_E): Are outwardly decisive, collaborative, and sensitive to the needs of people

Auxiliary (S_I): Inwardly focus on the practicalities and realities of each situation

Tertiary (N): As they mature, consider broader possibilities to enhance human potential

Inferior (T_I): Have the developmental challenge of assessing situations logically and objectively

ESFJs hone their results-oriented approach by developing their auxiliary function. The following work preferences and tips for working with ESFJs show how the auxiliary preference, Sensing, acts in balance with the dominant function, Extraverted Feeling.

Work Preferences of ESFJs

- Prefer to engage in practical and frontline service roles
- Notice and attend to immediate needs of people
- Uphold social norms and traditions and enjoy celebrating successes
- Schedule and coordinate details so events run smoothly
- Work in collaborative, structured, predictable settings

Tips for Working with ESFJs

- Follow a clear, structured, step-by-step process
- Help Practical Contributors set and achieve immediate, concrete goals
- Share examples of real people and their success stories
- Provide practical, factual information
- Monitor and reward specific efforts and results

ENFJ

Insightful Contributor

"Two heads are better than one."
2.5% of the population

Dominant (F_E): Are outwardly decisive, collaborative, and sensitive to the needs of people

Auxiliary (N_I): Inwardly focus on possibilities for enhancing human potential

Tertiary (S): As they mature, consider practicalities as well as possibilities

Inferior (T_I): Have the developmental challenge of assessing situations logically and objectively

ENFJs hone their results-oriented approach by developing their auxiliary function. The following work preferences and tips for working with ENFJs show how the auxiliary preference, Intuition, acts in balance with the dominant function, Extraverted Feeling.

Work Preferences of ENFJs

- Contribute to the growth and development of others
- Collaborate to create and implement new ideas to help people
- Engage in activities that will enhance organizational climate and morale
- Champion change that will improve peoples' situations
- Organize and cooperate on complex, multifaceted, long-range projects

Tips for Working with ENFJs

- Focus on the future by sharing Insightful Contributors' visions and dreams
- Make a plan to actualize long-term goals
- Explore broad options while also moving toward actions and results
- Share ideas and actively encourage growth and development
- Provide inspirational stories and metaphors, especially of people achieving dreams

ANALYZERS (ISTP AND INTP) AS CAREER PRACTITIONERS

Analyzers working as career practitioners have specific strengths associated with their characteristic approach. When working with clients, they want to maximize their strengths while recognizing that not all clients will be comfortable with the approach Analyzers tend to prefer. Specific Analyzer career practitioner strengths, and ways to effectively balance them when working with clients with different preferences, are described below.

How One Analyzer Sees His Strengths

"I find clients can usually figure out their own problems. One of my strengths is asking the right questions. Questions help clients think more clearly about their situation. 'What would happen if …' or 'What is the worst thing that could happen if …' work well for evaluating possible outcomes."

Analyzer Career Practitioner Strengths and Ways to Balance Them

Greatest Strengths

Analyzers are independent minded and analytical in their approach. They take time to analyze and solve client problems. By looking at causes and consequences, they help clients view their situation objectively and identify the best logical course of action. They coach clients to independently assess and analyze consequences and implications of career options and choices.

Analyzers will maneuver and adapt. Comfortable exploring and analyzing career options in an open-ended manner, they can help clients develop flexibility. Not overly concerned with rules and structure, Analyzers can help clients think "outside the box."

Balancing These Strengths

Feeling clients will be more interested in their subjective needs and those of others involved in the situation. Take time to discuss and validate these personal career considerations. Integrate subjective factors into a career analysis.

Extraverted and Feeling clients may want to discuss ideas and connect with their counselor. Accept and accommodate their preference for a less independent, more collaborative process. Offer frequent positive feedback to reinforce their efforts.

Judging clients can be uncomfortable with an open-ended exploratory approach. Provide these clients with some additional structure for the process so they know exactly what to expect from a session.

Extraverted and Judging clients may want to make decisions and move forward by taking action. Work with them to set goals, take action, and achieve results throughout the career development process.

Practical Analyzers (ISTPs) as Career Practitioners

Greatest Strength

As well as having an independent and adaptable style, ISTPs will be aware of and tuned into work realities and the facts. They help clients analyze immediate consequences and implications of their options.

Balancing This Strength

Intuitive clients will want to consider broader effects and consequences, not just facts. Incorporate a long-term focus by adding possibilities, trends, and future goals to the career analysis.

Insightful Analyzers (INTPs) as Career Practitioners

Greatest Strength

As well as having an independent and adaptable style, INTPs will be aware of and focused on work trends and patterns. They help clients analyze long-term consequences and implications of their options.

Balancing This Strength

Sensing clients will want to focus on relevant current realities. With these clients, consider factors influencing their immediate situation and help them incorporate these factors into their analysis.

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