

# The power of personality

By Tabitha Wells

A few years ago, a close friend of mine sent me a link to fill out a Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI). These assessments are designed to help identify personality types by indicating a person's psychological preferences through how they see the world around them and make decisions.

The MBTI is often used in everything from classrooms, to workplaces, leadership teams and churches, and consists of an introspective questionnaire where you are asked to rate how you feel about certain things.

I won't claim to know the full science behind these personality analyses, but they are mind-blowingly and incredibly accurate. As someone with a mental illness, one of my biggest struggles has always been figuring out where my illness ends and I begin.

Although it can be argued that the way I think and feel is, in some way, related to my illness, at times when it is not acting up, it has very little to no control. But when you've spent the majority of your life with the illness out of control, it can be very difficult to make that blurred line a little more focused.

Of course, people with mental illnesses aren't the only ones who have trouble figuring out the why's behind how they act and respond, what things they react to, or what drives them. Often-times, understanding ourselves can be one of the most difficult tasks. The first time I took the Myers-Briggs assessment, I thought the answer must be wrong. The personality traits described under this category seemed, well, too good to be true in my mind. They sounded like someone I wanted to be, but was too afraid to step out and become.

INFJ-T, also called the 'Activist' or 'Advocate' personality is identified as one of the most rare types to have. Less than 1% of people fall into this category. The more I dug into the definitions, explanations, and breakdowns, the more I started to feel like I was reading an in-depth psychological examination about myself. Thought patterns, actions, things I wasn't aware I would do - they were all laid out in front of me.

I spent the next few years trying to read up as much as I could on my personality type, learning the ins and outs, the whys and the whos and the whats. It was equal parts fascinating and eye-opening, and allowed me to develop a deeper understanding of myself. For instance, the advocate is described as being overwhelming affected by and concerned for the current state of humanity. This plays into social justice issues, defending the downtrodden, speaking out for minorities. There is an innate passion there that causes us to throw our entire being into the issue, often resulting in us taking any disagreement with the issue as a personal attack on ourselves.

Figuratively, mind-blown.

There were many, many other things, like the way our decisions are driven by our emotions but founded on logic, the ability to be both a dreamer and a doer, and presenting ourselves as an idea instead of opening up.

Over time, as I've learned more about this personality type, I've been able to use it to help me navigate life. Whether it's through how my mental decision-making process works, why certain things upset me so much, or how to deal with other people, I can use this added know-ledge.

If you've never taken the Myers-Briggs, it's something I would highly recommend. We tend to function every day without caring about digging into what makes us tick. And while that's not necessarily a bad thing, being unaware of the things that set us off or the methods that work best for ourselves can lead to greater conflicts, disagreements, and misunderstandings.

Identifying which personality type you are helps combat these things by allowing us to understand better how we interact with others, and ways in which we can get outside of our own thinking to see another's perspective.

Another great benefit to the Myers-Briggs assessment is that it provides a list of jobs and careers people of your talents, mindsets, skills, and abilities are best suited for. This is why it's a great idea to get students to take the test, as it can allow them to critically assess not just the kind of job they want, but what kind of job they would thrive in.

In a workplace, having employees, managers, and supervisors take the test can help create better communication, improve teamwork skills, and more. It provides in depth insight to how each member of your team thinks, acts, assesses, and plans to allow for a more efficient process to be in place. It could likely even help minimize conflict when people are more aware of how certain personalities do things as opposed to others.

For instance, a trait of the INFJ is intense honesty. For many of us, this means that we are unknowingly blunt when we speak about certain things.

It's not meant in a cruel or attacking manner, but rather we don't see the need to fluff up the edges, paint it pink, and tie it in a cozy bow. For some personalities, however, that can be considered rude or feel like a personal attack. In knowing how each person relates

to conflict and confrontation, it's easier to build understanding.

If for nothing else, it's worth it to take the test just out of sheer curiosity. As one friend of mine recently found out, you may end up very surprised by what your results are.