

Personality Education Definitions

Below you will find a list of definitions for terms used in this personality education material. These definitions are provided so that you may refer back to them for help understanding the material as you progress through each topic.

“Unfortunately, as every investigator and worker in this field knows only too well, current psychological concepts are so imprecise and so ambiguous that mutual understanding is practically impossible.”

– Carl Jung (Psychological Types p.409)

“Since this (consensus) is not within the bounds of possibility at present, the individual investigator must at least try to give his concepts some fixity and precision, and this can best be done by discussing the meaning of the concepts he employs so that everyone is in a position to see what in fact he means by them.”

– Carl Jung (Psychological Types p.409)

Personality: that thing that defines individual differences in human behavior and the human experience. A person’s overall personality is the combined result of innate tendencies and exposure to different life experiences.

Personality Education: is a directed effort to provide fundamental knowledge about the mental mechanisms which produce individual variations in human behavior and experience, for the purpose of helping people to better understand themselves and others.

Personality Style: a grouping of observable human qualities that demonstrate a consistent pattern of activity.

Mental Mechanisms (Jungian dichotomies): the three pairs of mental mechanisms that originated with Carl Gustav Jung, plus a fourth pair extrapolated by Katharine Briggs and Isabel Briggs Myers.

This material refers to the Jungian mental mechanisms by the following names (1) Extraversion: Introversion, (2) Planned: Spontaneous, (3) Hands-On: Theoretical, and (4) Objective: Subjective.

Psychological Type Preference: the greater use of one mental mechanism over its opposite, e.g. a preference for extraversion or introversion.

Temperament: describes a grouping of a person's innate character traits, their inborn disposition. (This is an older term often used synonymously with "personality style".) In time, our overall disposition or personality is altered to varying degrees as we each adapt to our diverse life circumstances. It can become seemingly impossible to determine which character traits are natural and which are adaptive.

Temperament Theory: a systematic description of the physiological or psychological make-up of an individual. This personality education material focuses on the Jungian-Keirsey psychological temperament theory.

Twenty-five centuries ago, Hippocrates' ancient medical practices were based on a form of physiological temperament theory called humourism. It was believed that good health resulted from the balance four qualities of the human condition (four bodily fluids known as the four humors). An excess or deficiency in one of the four humors could directly influence a person's physical health, physical features, and their personality.

Four Basic Personality Styles (or Four Fundamental Temperaments): While each of the four fundamental temperaments represents a grouping of observable human qualities, what makes them "fundamental" or "basic" is that as a set of four they are believed to classify observable human qualities into as few non-overlapping groups (sets of data) as possible.

Personality Style Lineup: an ordered sequence of the four basic personality styles listed in order of dominance or preference.

Natural Trait: a single quality of a person's innate disposition, from birth.

Adaptive Trait: a single quality of a person's personality that has formed in response to navigating life experiences.

Personality Dynamics: a study of the diverse interactions of individuals with their environment and with each other.

Vital Energy: the power available for humans to live and grow (a combination of mental, physical, and spiritual energy.)

Vital Energy Producers: any activity or aspect of life that meets the core values and needs of a person's overall personality (usually provides a noticeable boost in energy.)

Vital Energy Consumers: any activity or aspect of life that opposes the core values and needs of a person's overall personality (usually feels like a drain on a person's energy.)