

## What's My Type?

### Recognizing What Motivates You

Let's begin with nine simple questions. There are no right or wrong responses to this well-trying methodology for identifying the foundation of your personality, your dominant motivational mode. Once you understand what motivates you, you'll be prepared to discover whether you tend to be a Helper, Organizer, Dreamer, Observer, Questioner, Entertainer, Protector, Peacekeeper, or Moralizer. Following each question are three statements. Choose the one that fits you most closely.

#### 1. When you reflect on your own approach to parenting, which of the following statements best describes your style?

- a. My parenting style has to do with interaction and energy, with connecting to my children. I ask myself, am I getting through on an emotional level? I try to feel where they are coming from. Do they understand where I'm coming from? How do they see me? It's important that we connect in a meaningful way.
- b. My parenting style is intuitive; I have a gut sense about what's right and wrong, fair and unfair. I'm ambivalent about conflict, but when I have something to say, I have a great need to say it and to be heeded. I don't like being encumbered by extraneous demands or the social expectations of others.
- c. My parenting style is intellectual, no question. I'm interested in how children think, process information, and work with ideas. I live in my head--conceptualizing, fantasizing, thinking things, researching and proving--that's what's important to me. "Rationality" is a big word with me.

#### 2. How do you assess the way you communicate with your family?

- a. What you see is what you get. I don't use guile, or fancy gimmicks. I talk about things the way I understand them; I give it my best shot. My family gets my honest sense of how it is.
- b. I like to present things in the best light possible, not being dishonest, but finding ways to connect, to make sure I get a response--the medium is the message, that kind of thing. So I try to put on a show in a way, highlight my ideas; find the nuances of expression that will help me get through to them. I use emotion and some dramatics, anything that will help them better understand what I'm saying.
- c. I try to keep things as conceptual, uncluttered and intellectually pure as I can. I love to ask questions, to practice skepticism, to be a discerning thinker. I try to probe below the surface. I want my children to learn to think this way. If we can stick with what's rational and logical, we're on solid ground.

#### 3. You try to teach your children how to solve problems and make decisions, to encourage their positive personal growth. What is most important to you about facilitating your children's growth?

- a. I facilitate their growth through mental activity, finding answers, the excitement that comes from seeing their minds open to the possibilities, to big-picture connections, to new conclusions. Their mental energy stimulates my own thinking. I like that.
- b. I facilitate their growth through valuing them as people. I teach them the possibilities of all sorts of human contact and connection: the emotional highs and lows, the feeling of togetherness when we all click and experience some profound interconnection in the moment. My family is a small world complete unto itself; we play out our lives together--unity built on empathy and human understanding, little else.
- c. I facilitate their growth by trying to steer them in a direction where they can make a difference and lead fulfilled lives. People need a sense of themselves, of where they stand. The world is difficult to understand--you can lose

your way all too easily. Teaching them for me is giving them some skills, some tools, some road maps to take on their journey.

**4. Although you get along with your children most of the time, every so often you clash. What would they say about you in those moments?**

a. I come on too emotionally when I'm talking to them, they feel like I'm trying to manipulate them into interacting with me. Why can't I just say things out straight? I try to shine it on. It's almost like I need their approval.

b. I'm too abstract, too theoretical, too detached. They need more emotional, personal interaction from me. We're talking, I'm listening, but they have this sense that I'm not really there, that I've moved to somewhere in my head. The harder they try to know where they are with me, the more I distance myself. They question whether anything gets through to me emotionally.

c. I can come across as an immovable force, solid, implacable, although I'm not usually aware of this. I know I can dig in and nothing people say or do will shift me. I've been accused of being overly defensive, stubborn, and critical. I'm not usually aware of my impact on people.

**5. Your child is in serious trouble in school because of a grave misdemeanor. How do you try to help in this difficult moment?**

a. I try to help by being rational, and not getting caught up in emotions. I can explain the inevitability of the disciplinary decision based on school rules. I can support her best by being logical. Then we can have rational discussion, and I can help her see all the reasons for this outcome. She knows how strongly I love her; this has nothing to do with that--school rules are school rules.

b. I try to help by being straightforward and down-to-earth, having a face-to-face talk. We know where we stand, together, how solidly I love her. This in no way affects that relationship--that doesn't even come into the picture; it's the way things are. She made a mistake. We all do. Face-to-face, saying it straight without any extraneous talk, that's always the best way to handle these interactions.

c. I try to help by letting her know how much I care. I don't like handling these situations. When my children are in trouble, it strikes at my heart. I'm more anxious about this than I want to admit--emotional upsets really get to me. I know her so well, I know what she's feeling as if it were myself. Although she's in the wrong--and we all know that--I'll try to get through to them how much I care.

**6. At the last minute your child tells you that he wants to spend his birthday with friends, knowing full well the plans you've made together for the day. What is your first reaction?**

a. Disbelief--I can't accept this at all. I know he has to grow and become independent, but why now, why on his birthday? We've planned this day for months. He knows how much I love birthdays. I'm so disappointed; it's a heart-wrenching feeling. It'll take time for me to get over this one.

b. I guess I should have seen this coming. He made noises about this last year. He's growing up--all the signs are there--I just didn't think it would come down on this day. If you think about it rationally and logically, it's a perfectly legitimate request--shows healthy growth. I allowed myself to be blindsided by my own expectations. I'll learn other good lessons from this. Of course he wants to be with his friends, have his own experiences and memories. I won't take this personally.

c. I'm upset and angry about this. It's about honoring commitments. It's that simple, you don't let people down at the last moment. He should have given me an inkling, a clue, not go along with making plans without a word. You get slammed in this world, one way or the other, even by your own children. The anger is overwhelming; I feel it in my whole body. I'll count to ten, but she must know how unfair this is.

**7. You want to be a great parent--your dreams reflect the deepest parts of yourself. Your passion for your vision stems from:**

- a. A feeling that I've got something valuable my children can relate to. I believe I've got what it takes to put across my vision in a way that's honest, good, and effective. It's all about people, I'm in tune, and I understand people. I want my children to have this, too. In my heart I know this is true.
- b. A hunch, an instinct that I'm in the right place at the right time doing what I'm supposed to be doing, what I'm meant to be doing. When my head, heart, and gut are aligned behind something, I can trust that sense. I can put my full force behind it. I would never commit to being a parent if I didn't feel 100 percent about it. I'm a 110 percent parent.
- c. The knowledge that I have thought through first-rate ideas about parenting that will be of benefit to my children. I wouldn't be involved in anything if I wasn't convinced of the validity of my ideas, hadn't thought things through, and this includes being a parent. If I weren't absolutely sure of my thinking I wouldn't be putting myself on the line.

**8. You want to run for an open slot on the PTA. You feel confident you can handle the job and make a contribution to the life of your child's school, because:**

- a. Of my proven record as an ideas person. No one can question that what I do is conceptually sound. My references attest to my theoretical ability and know-how. I'm as intellectually solid as anyone on the PTA.
- b. Of my track record of getting through to people. Whether it's coaching Little League, attending a meeting of the choral society committee, or volunteering at the community center, I've always been able to put across what I believe so that people want to be part of it. I know people; people are my life. I can get the world on board.
- c. Of the fact I just know this is right for me now, I can fit myself into the PTA. I have reliable instincts. I've proven it to myself and others time and time again. Lots of people have made good from my instincts. Only something that I believe in 100 percent would get me into running for this election. People know where they stand with me, and that makes them feel safe.

**9. Your child writes a paper for class on why you are the best parent in the world. It's published in the school magazine. What is your response?**

- a. This is wonderful--it validates my parenting style. It's great that my child appreciates the way I think through what I do and my intellectual energy. She's picked up on the highly mental approach I bring to all my activities, it's something she can measure and write about. So, I'm pleased.
- b. It's gratifying, but this is not about me. I'm not what I do. It's about her, how perceptive and a good writer she is. This paper's being published won't change things one way or the other: it won't make me a better person, or bring more meaning to my life, or change my relationship with her. I'll just go on being the parent I've always been.
- c. I know I'm a good parent, so I deserve this validation, but there are lots of good parents. What's important is that my child wrote about me. That means the world to me. That she knows me so well, values me, is connected to me, and wants to acknowledge me this way. That really pleases me.

**How Do I Think? How Do I FEEL?**

Now that you've completed the exercise, locate your choices on the chart below. Your dominant mode is reflected by the area with the most choices. You may find you have some choices that do not indicate this mode. There are sound reasons for this that has to do with the shifts you make from your dominant mode when you are under stress or in a particularly secure situation. Nonetheless your dominant mode is the one that shows the most circled choices.

**Feeling Mode (Attacher):**

1a, 2b, 3b, 4a, 5c, 6a, 7a, 8b, 9c

**Mental Mode (Detacher):**

1c, 2c, 3a, 4b, 5a, 6b, 7c, 8a, 9a

**Instinctual Mode (Defender):**

1b, 2a, 3c, 4c, 5b, 6c, 7b, 8c, 9b

Research on personality shows that we make our way in the world primarily as Attachers, Detachers, or Defenders. My nomenclature--Attacher, Detacher Defender--is based on the respected work of the pioneering psychologist Karen Horney who, in her book, *Our Inner Conflicts*, describes three broad personality patterns as those of moving toward people, moving away from people, and moving against people. I developed the terminology Attachers (who move towards people), Detachers (who move away from people), and Defenders (who move against people). People are a complex fusion of these three ways of being, but one is always dominant.

<http://www.enneagram-edge.com/parentps.htm>

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