How Judgers and Perceivers Can Accept, Respect, and Embrace Human Differences

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When was the last time you took a vacation? And how much planning did you do? Did you plan where you would go, how you would get there, where you would stay, and all the things you would do each day, even something like a travel itinerary? Some people feel most comfortable when all the details are taken care of and the planning is wrapped up well in advance of the actual event. Other people prefer to do things more spontaneously. They may decide to go today or tomorrow, put things in the car and take off. Or even buy an airline ticket one day to leave the next, with little concern about where they will stay. To them, such detailed planning and advance decision-making may seem stifling and takes all the fun out of traveling. To the advance planner, such impromptu decisions to take a major vacation may create great anxiety and a high level of stress, resulting in something like a “heart attack” or panic. To them, such immediate decisions seem irresponsible, creating chaos or unnecessary difficulties resulting from not thinking ahead.

People have different approaches or lifestyles when interacting with the world, either living a planned, controlled life or preferring a life filled with surprises and spontaneity. These two approaches or attitudes regarding the way we live our lives represent only one aspect of what is known as personality type. Carl Jung, a prominent 20th century psychologist, spent years looking at differences in preferred processes and approaches to living our lives and defining the basic components of personality type. The basic ideas resulting from his observations and are summarized below.

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It is the nature of humankind to live in a complex lacework of social and interpersonal relationships. Habits of mind act in combination with other innate dispositions to influence how we perceive and judge these relationships. Perceptions and judgments, in turn, promote typical, discernible expressions in behavior that tend to be consistent and enduring. The structure that explains these habits and typical behaviors is psychological type.

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Early in the 20th century, Kathryn Briggs and her daughter, Isabel Myers, developed questions and a scale to differentiate and assist in the identification of these types. Their work was to help people understand the inherent and observable differences in
human behavior that originate with differences in personality type. Their mission was to help people see differences as natural rather than deliberate attempts spawned in the dark of night to irritate you to distraction and stymie all your wonderful ideas and good work! When we observe differences in other’s behaviors, there often is triggered within us a natural and common response. That is, we may see these differences as but temporary manifestations of madness, badness, ignorance, or illness. We naturally account for observed differences in behavior in terms of flaws and afflictions in other people. “Oh, why couldn’t they be more like me?” Or more pointedly, “They should be more like me or see things the way I do!” Our attempts to reconstruct others can result in change, but when it is done by taking away their preferred approaches, we often create a scar rather than a genuine transformation.

**You can pull the fangs from a lion; but you have not created a domestic cat, only a toothless lion.**

Our attempt here is to help people see the contributions of two contrasting preferred lifestyles from the Myers/Briggs Types, the “judger” (J) and the “perceiver” (P). Suggestions also will be given to help people understand and resolve difficulties they experience with the opposite type.

**Judgers**

“Judgers” are people who prefer a lifestyle that is structured, decided, orderly, organized, settled, and clearly planned. The term here does not refer so much to “judgment” in the traditional sense, but rather people who feel more comfortable coming to closure with decisions. Order and control are paramount in their life. Their desks usually are very neat and tidy, as are their file cabinets. At home, their cupboards and closets usually are organized. The cups may even have all the handles facing the same direction, and towels are organized by type and color. They may have hangers that match their clothes, with clothes organized by style, color, season, or use.

Judgers are most trusting of organization, planning ahead, coming to closure, and most comfortable when decisions are made. They like to bring things in their life under control. For this reason, they like to organize and plan. They make lists and set goals, both of which are prioritized. They tend to work before play, with a strong focus on settling things. They like expectations and tasks to be clearly defined, and then proceed in a planned ordered manner to get things finished. They like to plan ahead, often having a timeline and sequence of tasks all pointed toward project completion. Frustration emerges if they are unable to get things done by a deadline or well ahead of time. These are people who develop tools such as “Daily Organizers” and other aids to help clarify tasks and place them into prioritized lists to better manage each day’s activities. The following are characteristics of judgers.

**Judgers usually:**
- need structure and predictability
- like to make decisions
- have good work habits
- want to do things the “right” way
- like to get tasks done on time
- live by schedules that are not easily altered
- work best when things are planned and the plan can be followed
- don’t usually appreciate surprises
- are organized, orderly, and systematic

**Perceivers**

“Perceivers” are people who enjoy being flexible, adaptable, and spontaneous. They prefer to be open to new experiences and information, and they are most comfortable exploring options. As a result, they tend to resist coming to a final decision that shuts the door on other options. They are open to reconsideration of past decisions as new
information, ideas, or opportunities become known. They are more adaptable to changing situations, even enjoying the change. They like to explore possibilities, and look more loose and casual in their physical appearance. Strict adherence to plans, priorities, and goals are avoided and seen as roadblocks to spontaneous responses to unexplored possibilities and ideas. They like to combine work and play, often working in big bursts of energy rather than a steady pace, and sometimes they never make a decision. They are very curious, and they may begin working on a task before the directions even are complete. Below are other characteristics of perceivers.

**Perceivers usually:**
* act spontaneously
* like freedom to move
* find too much detail work to be boring
* enjoy games
* enjoy dramatization and may like to perform
* may start too many projects and have difficulty finishing them all
* let work accumulate and then accomplish a lot with a last minute fury
* find deadlines imposing and may turn in projects late as a result of poor planning or time management
* enjoy the activity itself more than the result

**Other Differences**

Order and spontaneity are two important differences between these two personality preferences. While judgers have an external order that is easy to see, perceivers have an internal order that is much more difficult to understand and observe. Judgers like rules that bring order to their world, and occasionally will test to determine if the rule still is in force. Perceivers either forget or are indifferent to rules. Judgers, are organized, and feel pressured by deadlines, while perceivers are more spontaneous and use deadlines as a stimulus to begin a project. Judgers working in a group want to initiate and finish a task without delay, often enjoying the repetition of a task. Perceivers in a group setting will pursue possibilities until time is running out, delaying a decision as long as possible. Rather than enjoying the repetition of a task, perceivers enjoy the energy that comes with the initiation of a project. Perceivers like to generate ideas, while judgers like to put order to ideas.

**Working Out Differences**

There are many things both judgers and perceivers can do to support each other in a relationship. One of the most important is to begin to see the opposite process as an inherent preference and the most comfortable approach to life of that person. It does not represent a flaw but simply a difference from the approach or lifestyle that you prefer. Its origin is a natural predisposition and is not born of a desire to make life difficult for you. In other words, it is important to accept the contrasting lifestyle preference as a strength that brings balance to a relationship. For each person the preferred process brings a sense of security, comfort, and confidence in living their life and interacting with others. With this in mind, here are some suggestions to address the differences that originate in these two approaches.

The desire for order, predictability, and control must not be viewed as incompatible with a desire for flexibility, spontaneity, and fun. Both can enrich a
relationship. For example, if two people (a judger and a perceiver) were traveling together, they may have reservations at a hotel for the evening. It may be important to include some unplanned time to take advantage of unforeseen opportunities such as a sightseeing adventure, which could be fun to experience, while still making it to the hotel in enough time to have the rest they also need. The conflicts here arise from the judgers need for predictability, order, and avoidance of surprises compared to the perceivers joy in surprises, need for spontaneity, and keeping options open.

With judgers, it is important to have some order in their life by setting goals and establishing priorities on tasks and activities. While they seem “uptight” and “inflexible,” there is recognized value in organizing and planning. At the same time, it is important for them to see that not everything needs to come to closure, even learning the joy of doing some things spontaneously. For example, it may be that the basics of vacation planning such as travel and lodging can be finalized in advance, but open time and flexibility during the day also can be included. Or some trips may be planned, while other ones can be done spontaneously when driving the car. Other suggestions are:

For Judgers:
* learning joy and pleasure in spontaneity and new experiences
* understanding some value in not having everything come to closure
* being able to have some flexibility with priorities
* being flexible when things do not go right or when a change occurs beyond his/her control

With perceivers, it is important to understand the need for some level of organization and closure. While there is joy in spontaneity, if one were building a house, one would need “blueprints.” And things like that do not occur overnight or without planning. It can be important to see the value in planning ahead, for example less expensive flights and better deals on hotels. It also can be easier to find things in an organized office or a kitchen, with less time trying to locate a needed object and more time spent on the project itself. Other suggestions include:

For Perceivers:
* learning the need for some closure and predictability
* finding comfort in some level of planning and organizing
* starting projects earlier so they are completed on time
* working on bringing order to ideas as well as generating them

Other Resources:

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