

Embracing & opposing change

Does type make a difference to how we address change?



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How does each type regard change? Let's hear what *they* say.

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Can you recall a time when you knew it was right for a spouse, friend, colleague to do something differently from the way they had done in the past? Is there another recent situation where someone presented you with a 'great idea' which required you to change your thinking, your attitude or your behaviour?

In either situation, was it necessary for one person to change their way of thinking or experiencing what worked well in the past? Different personality types will find this invigorating, or an intrusion to be wary of. Some will identify the best method; others will explore and analyse the implications of the change.

How does type make a difference to **how we address change**? For an individual, change might be initiated from within, or through an external situation.

From **within the individual**, where:

- The individual is not happy with the status quo and sees a better way
- The status quo has become mundane or boring, and a change will bring renewed energy or interest.

From **external forces**, where:

- Another person is not happy with the status quo and sees a better way
- New external conditions necessitate a change.

Another framework to explore how change is experienced by different personalities is to address change from the perspective of the functions in their attitudes, *extraverted* or *introverted*.

The **perceiving** functions are oriented to exploration, opportunity and discovery.

- The **introverted perceiving** functions (Si and Ni) explore relevance of change over time, and may be wary of change which is not relevant for the long term.
- The **extraverted perceiving** functions (Se and Ne) search for opportunities in the environment to reduce boredom, and may have the motto 'variety is the spice of life'. Generally, people with these preferences are open to change, and more interested in immediate practical change, or change over the short term.

A person with a dominant perceiving function is likely to want to continue exploring the options, and to find making a definite commitment to long-term change a challenge.

The **judging** functions are oriented to solutions.

- The **introverted judging** functions (Ti and Fi) analyse the situation to fine-tune the change processes.
- The **extraverted judging** functions (Te and Fe) organise efficient processes to create change.

A person with a dominant judging function is likely to make their decision to change and, once the decision is made, will be committed to the change for the long term.

Each personality type deals with change in different ways. By appreciating these differences it is possible to understand why some people embrace change, while others seem to oppose any suggestion for change. When different personalities work together with understanding, they can produce a change scenario that will build on the successes of the past for benefits in the future.

We will explore the different ways that the notion of change is experienced by the different types, with a focus on the Jungian functions and their extraverted or introverted energies.

Each dominant function is supported by a second function. One of the functions will be gathering information using *perceiving* (sensing or intuiting), while the other will be making decisions using *judging* (thinking or feeling). According to MBTI theory, one of these functions will be extraverted, and the other introverted.

The dominant function will drive the mental processes and influence behaviour, tempered by the auxiliary function. Someone with a dominant *perceiving* function will want to explore either detail (S) or possibilities (N), and keep their options fluid. Someone with a dominant *judging* function will want to bring closure. Once a decision to change has been made, they will generally stay with the decision.

Introverts often say that they are comfortable with change when *they* have initiated it. This seems obvious to people who understand the introvert's propensity to work through the needs and the details of a situation before articulating what the outcome will look like.

Individuals with a dominant *introverted judging* function (Ti or Fi) will spend time exploring (using their extraverted perceiving function) and analysing the situation. Once their decision to change is formulated, they will be committed to the change scenario.

Individuals with a dominant *introverted perceiving* function (Si or Ni) are likely to be wary of change as they fine-tune the available

Table 1: The functions in their attitudes

Perceiving orientation	Judging orientation
<p style="text-align: center;">Se: sensing is extraverted</p> <p>Information is gathered through the senses.</p> <p>Energy comes from interacting with current experiences and talking about reality in the present. What is the practical impact or effect for this moment?</p> <p><i>'I am bored without change and look for something new.'</i> <i>'Let's change it now!'</i></p> <p>Practical change for the joy of doing something in a different way.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Enjoy change</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Si: sensing is introverted</p> <p>Information is gathered through the senses.</p> <p>Energy comes from making connections in the mind with realities experienced in and remembered from the past. If it worked in the past, why change now?</p> <p><i>'Give me time to study and fine-tune the details.'</i></p> <p>Practical change to improve the situation.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Wary of change</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Ne: intuiting is extraverted</p> <p>Information is gathered from the outer world through the 'sixth sense'.</p> <p>Energy comes from interacting with people and objects and brainstorming aloud.</p> <p><i>'What are the possibilities for the future?'</i> <i>'Here's another idea, so let's do this one!'</i></p> <p>Variety of options to improve the future.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Enjoy change</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Ni: intuiting is introverted</p> <p>Information is gathered through the 'sixth sense' and symbolic connections are made with models for a potential future.</p> <p>Energy comes from inner-world exploration of the purpose of life.</p> <p><i>'Give me time to explore implications for the future.'</i></p> <p>Change will address a refined vision for the future.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Wary of change</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Ti: thinking is introverted</p> <p>Decisions are made through classifying and systematically linking new information with previous concepts.</p> <p>Energy comes from inner questioning of all aspects of the change.</p> <p><i>'Don't change until we have the correct strategy.'</i></p> <p>Analysis of the task to create better ways to achieve the required result.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Explore and analyse</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Te: thinking is extraverted</p> <p>Decisions are made objectively through discussing logic, rules and systems.</p> <p>Energy comes from efficiently creating a system or structure where change will be achieved.</p> <p><i>'Let's list the things to be done and work out the most efficient way to do it.'</i></p> <p>Logical change to create greater efficiency in achieving the result.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Find the best method</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Fi: feeling is introverted</p> <p>Decisions are made rationally to accommodate personal values related to what is ideal for people. Identify differences between previous benefits and potential future benefits for people.</p> <p>Energy comes from seeing people achieve and grow.</p> <p><i>'This is how people will benefit from the change.'</i></p> <p>Change will work better for the people involved.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Explore and analyse</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Fe: feeling is extraverted</p> <p>Decisions are made rationally, based on values for people and norms for society. Identify the benefits for stakeholders in this environment.</p> <p>Energy comes from organising people so they have a better life.</p> <p><i>'How will I organise people to make the change operational?'</i></p> <p>Change will improve outcomes for people in general.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Find the best method</p>

information before applying their extraverted judging function (Te or Fe) to apply the best method to achieve desired outcomes.

Extraverts often are energised by change, and enjoy the challenge of creating or managing new situations.

Individuals with a dominant *extraverted perceiving* function (Se or Ne) may enjoy creating change to alleviate boredom from routine activities. And with a dominant *extraverted judging* function (Te or Fe), the focus will be on organising and managing the best method to improve outcomes.

I co-opted a convenient sample of friends, colleagues and type practitioners with knowledge of their Myers-Briggs preferences, and invited each of them to send me a brief email explaining what *change* meant to them.

Table 2 (at right, and over the page) presents one comment from each of the 16 personality types, as just one example of what ‘change’ means for that type. To assist in recognising how the different types address change, the dominant and supporting functions for each type are highlighted. ❖

Reference

Barger, Nancy J, and Kirby, Linda K 2004, *Introduction to type and change*, Palo Alto, CA: CPP.

The universe is change; our life is what our thoughts make it.

Marcus Aurelius Antoninus

We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them.

Albert Einstein

Table 2: What does ‘change’ mean?
 Examples of responses from each type

ESFP

Se Fi

Extraverted sensing
 with introverted feeling

I enjoy change and am always open to ideas. I get bored without change. I dislike repeating units of work and prefer to come up with something new and interesting for teachers, students and me. I’ve even noticed that after 3 years at one school I start to get itchy feet and look for something different. I need new stimulation and new environments.

Variety provides energy, and the outcome relates to benefits for people

ESTP

Se Ti

Extraverted sensing
 with introverted thinking

I enjoy practical results, but more if these can lead to future activities. ... I get round barriers as I see them as challenges rather than limitations. I go with the flow whichever way it changes and solve problems as they arise. This has a few inherent problems, as some things don’t get finished for quite a while or sometimes never.

Variety provides energy, and completion is not a focus

ISTJ

Si Te

Introverted sensing
 with extraverted thinking

In the work world I find large or sudden changes difficult to deal with. It takes me time to digest these changes, and I want to know lots of details before I go along with them. I prefer fine-tuning and improvements, rather than starting from scratch.

Need time to explore and fine-tune the task

ISFJ

Si Fe

Introverted sensing
 with extraverted feeling

I’d like to know all the details of the change—what is going to be the result of making the change, what benefits the change is going to bring. I think being fully informed at all stages is the best way to cope with any change.

Details are important and the outcomes are valued

ENFP

Ne Fi

Extraverted intuition
 with introverted feeling

I enjoy change, and my résumé documents how often I seek it out. However, a reason for my initiating change is almost always that the present arrangements lead to too much bad feeling—folks are not well accommodated or matched to the demands of their situation. I am always looking for ways to change that will make the current staff feel more engaged, more animated in their practice.

Change provides new opportunities for improving the situation for people

ENTP

Ne Ti

Extraverted intuition
 with introverted thinking

Generally I love the excitement of change and get inspired by the possibilities it offers—for me personally and for the organisations and clients I’m involved with. I try quickly to find others ... who have experienced similar changes. I then ask what it meant for them and their teams [and] clients, and hypothesise about what may be similar/different in my/our context. ... I like to be out in front when things are likely to be winners, but my need to look competent sometimes makes me a little wary. ... Once I feel confident about proceeding, I like to work with others to develop an implementation strategy.

Variety and change for strategic efficiency

INTJ

Ni Te

Introverted intuition
 with extraverted thinking

I like new challenges; but not constant changes. I like to develop some routines, to feel some order about life, but I can accommodate changes and adjust reasonably easily. I think balance is important, and I’m seeking a way to balance leading a purposeful life and meeting the material needs of my family. I like to have some completion on tasks I undertake.

Focus on the vision of a purposeful life through strategic routines

INFJ

Ni Fe

Introverted intuition
 with extraverted feeling

I always want to see or work out the big picture, spending a great deal of time pondering the ‘what ifs’. With work, I can always see the overview, but have trouble with the nitty gritty of how to get there. I often frustrate myself because there are so many ‘little’ dull jobs I tend to put off. As I look back over my life, I have always become restless when doing the same thing for too long. Never living in the same place, a new town, a new job, a new situation fired up the energy. But in all these new situations I always have great feelings of anxiety. ... The way I decide things at work is very much the feeling way.

Exploring implications for the future

ESTJ

Te Si

Extraverted thinking
with introverted sensing

I was in Year 5 and my family had moved to a new house. The house was liveable but was not completely finished. My parents gave all the children in the family the job of designing our rooms, from wallpaper to furnishings and accessories. We all thought that this was great and we were excited about the task ahead. I set about thinking, planning, organising, discussing and rethinking how I was going to do my room. When anyone questioned what I wanted, I was able to give reasons and justify decisions. I did everything in a planned, organised and logical manner and got the job done quickly. ... In a new job I took in everything, observing what others did and pictured things in my mind on how things are going to be and how situations were going to become real. I noticed in great detail how others carried out tasks and went about their job. This helped me to sort through the things I wanted to take on myself and the things that I could disregard.

Organisation of details through logical application

ENTJ

Te Ni

Extraverted thinking
with introverted intuition

When I have a decision to make I argue the pros and cons with myself, like a conversation in my mind. I don't see pictures in my mind. I will write long lists on paper of the advantages and disadvantages of situations. Sometimes I will make a logical decision based on the above lists, and then I will do the opposite going with my intuition and do what feels best.

Initial logical analysis followed by intuitive influence

ISTP

Ti Se

Introverted thinking
with extraverted sensing

When I have made up my mind about something it stays made up. It takes me a while to get there sometimes, but once I've made a decision it usually sticks. When building our house, my husband and I were choosing the colour of the vertical blinds. After much deciding, I had chosen the style and colour I wanted and was not prepared to change my mind (it had taken me so long to decide). My thought processes all took place internally and involved consideration of the colour of the tiles, walls and our existing furniture, the effect we wanted to achieve and, of course, the ease of cleaning of the fabric. He had chosen another style and colour entirely but it would have been difficult to clean and I knew it would not suit any of the colours we had. The man installing the blinds told us of a place where we could see the blinds my husband had chosen. We went and looked: straight away it was obvious that they would not suit our house. My husband gave in but was not convinced of my choice. A few months later he admitted that I had made a wise decision.

Logical analysis of details and once a decision is reached further change is rejected

INTP

Ti Ne

Introverted thinking
with extraverted intuition

If the change is imposed by somebody else, I want to hear the rationale for it. If the rationale makes sense to me, I embrace the change, and become an enthusiastic advocate and facilitator. If it does not compute (or if no one can acquaint me with its rationale) I can easily become sceptical, or even openly critical. The first couple of times I initiated change I was stunned to discover that my co-workers did not all share my vision, nor appreciate the ingenuity and elegance of my organisational architecture! The next couple of times I put a lot of effort and energy into documenting the new structures, roles, and rationale, and explaining them to the team members, clients and senior management. That seemed to help to lubricate the wheels of change. Perhaps my most significant leadership learning experience came while I was first a team leader. I was waxing lyrical to my team about some forthcoming corporate initiative, and assuring them that they would all have an opportunity to shape the local implementation of the changes. From the back of the room a plaintive voice said, 'Can't you just tell us what they want us to do, and we'll do it?'

Focus on analysis of the rationale and leading to strategic efficiency in implementation

ESFJ

Fe Si

Extraverted feeling
with introverted sensing

I like a chance to interact with as many people as possible. I like all the facts presented clearly and sequentially. If they are not present I will try to draw up some positives and negatives of a situation.

Explore the facts with people

ENFJ

Fe Ni

Extraverted feeling
with introverted intuition

I am always trying to make sure I consider others' feelings. I am full of ideas! I am always putting forward suggestions at staff meetings and constantly coming up with what I think are great ideas. I don't, however, follow them through, which doesn't sit well with me ... I like to know that I have completed and crossed that idea off the list of things to do. While I live very much in the future and have plans that I want to see carried in my life, I need change and challenge regularly. We have a policy in my school that you must change year levels every three years. This suits me very well ...

*Organising the future
with a recognition of what is best for people*

ISFP

Fi Se

Introverted feeling
with extraverted sensing

I normally welcome change, especially when the old way becomes stale and overdone and a fresh outlook is required. I don't always agree with change just for the sake of change without any real justification. I think it is worth embracing the best of the old with the best of the new, especially in education. Often 'a change is as good as a holiday' and is needed, but I don't think it always has to be drastic.

Analysis of practical relevance with a focus on variety

INFP

Fi Ne

Introverted feeling
with extraverted intuition

I welcome change as long as I feel confident that I can handle it or that it will be something interesting or exciting. Change for no purpose leaves me feeling annoyed and frustrated. On the other hand, I become bored by lack of change and easily lose excitement without being able to look forward to something new or different on the horizon. I must admit though to suffering a fair amount of inertia and am not always the first to take the initiative in creating change. Once pushed in that direction, though I usually feel energised by the project.

*Stimulated by variety for a purposeful outcome
often initiated by other people*