



Educating the WholeHearted Child, 4th Edition

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— Chapter 8 —

**The WholeHearted Learning Child:
Understanding Your Child**

We hope you will enjoy this free PDF download from our book, *Educating the WholeHearted Child*. This chapter is all about your child's personality type and preferences for living and learning. This full and unedited excerpt includes a full explanation of our personality model, type indicator, and type profiles.

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The WholeHearted Learning Child: Understanding Your Child

Personality and Learning Styles

It doesn't require a college degree to know that children come fully fitted with personality right out of the womb. Time, growth, and life experience will not add new aspects of personality to the new person but will only gradually reveal and add new layers of expression. The big question is not whether there really is a thing we call personality but whether there are distinct kinds of human personalities that can be described, differentiated, limited, and categorized. Beyond that, there is the question of how personality might affect the learning process and even the teaching process. Those questions have spawned a multitude of opinions and a multifaceted educational consulting industry.

Though Scripture is filled with many different and distinct personalities, there is nonetheless no discernible doctrine of personality. Scripture nowhere speaks directly to the issue, yet there are numerous indirect and anecdotal references which indicate that God does indeed shape personality. Cain and Abel, Moses and Aaron, Jacob and Esau, Peter and Paul are all biblical examples of conflicting and complementing personalities with unique traits that often directly shaped their stories in biblical history. Psalm 139:13-16 is a poetic picture of God's handiwork in the womb that seems to include personality. David observes that God "made my mind and heart" (v. 13, NET) and that "all the days ordained for me" (v. 16, NET) were known to God before David knew even one of them. Spiritual gifts in the New Testament seem somehow associated with personality.

Anecdotal biblical references aside, it is reasonable to say that personality is best considered an extrabiblical subject of study, based more on subjective observations of people than on biblical inferences and insights. However, as long as an attempt to understand personality does not violate Scripture or promote a distorted view of man's sinful nature, it can reasonably be assessed and used on its own merits as a helpful tool for better understanding how we are made. It is simply part of God's observable created order.

For the home educating parent, personality will be a constant factor in the learning process, touching on every aspect of family dynamic and child raising. How a child lives and learns—and how a parent teaches and trains—will be unavoidably shaped and affected by personality. It may be difficult to quantify or define it, but it is not difficult to observe that personality is a real and undeniably influential human characteristic. With everyone at home all the time, homeschooling is a personality laboratory that will give your children the best opportunity to test and discover their personality gifts and to understand how God has equipped them to invest their lives for his kingdom. On the following pages, we'll discuss personality and how others have applied it to teaching and learning, and then offer our own model that integrates personality and learning dynamics.

"For the home educating parent, personality will be a constant factor in the learning process, touching on every aspect of family dynamic and child raising. How a child lives and learns—and how a parent teaches and trains—will be unavoidably shaped and affected by personality.

For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.

— Psalm 139:13-16

The boys grew up, and Esau became a skillful hunter, a man of the open country, while Jacob was a quiet man, staying among the tents.

— Genesis 25:27

For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.

—Romans 1:20

Suggested Reading

There are many good books on personality and type written from both a secular and a Christian perspective. If you are interested in personality type and learning styles, these are some of the books we have found helpful and interesting. For more resources on personality type visit Center for Applications of Personality Type at www.capt.org.

- *Gifts Differing: Understanding Personality Type*, 2nd ed. (Isabel Briggs Myers, Peter B. Myers)
- *Please Understand Me II: Temperament, Character, Intelligence* (David Keirsey)
- *LifeKeys: Discover Who You Are* (Jane A. G. Kise, David Stark, and Sandra Krebs Hirsh)
- *The Way They Learn: How to Discover and Teach to Your Child's Strengths* (Cynthia Tobias)
- *Nurture by Nature: Understand Your Child's Personality Type—And Become a Better Parent* (Paul D. Tieger and Barbara Barron-Tieger)
- *One of a Kind: Making the Most of Your Child's Uniqueness* (LaVonne Neff)
- *Multiple Intelligences: New Horizons in Theory and Practice* (Howard E. Gardner)
- *In Their Own Way: Discovering and Encouraging Your Child's Personal Learning Style* (Thomas Armstrong)
- *Mother Styles: Using Personality Type to Discover Your Parenting Strengths* (Janet Penley)
- *Soul Types: Matching Your Personality and Spiritual Path* (Sandra Krebs Hirsch, Jane A. G. Kise)
- *Your Personality and the Spiritual Life* (Reginald Johnson, CAPT)

The Reality of Personality

The study of personality, despite the appearance of scientific credibility, is really very subjective. At this point, what we know about personality is based primarily on empirical study and observation, not from laboratory proofs derived from scientific method. There is, so far, no reliable way to prove personality, much less a limited range of distinct personality types. Yet most people would agree that personality exists and that there are probably a limited number of identifiable types of personalities.

You are in good Christian company if you accept the reality of personality. Most homeschool families who take personality into account would generally agree that personality is God-given and that children's personalities reveal something about how God designed them to live and learn best. However, though understanding personality is helpful, it should always be a secondary issue in your home education. You can study it and use it because it is helpful and even fun, but you can give your children a good home education with or without knowledge of personality-shaped learning styles. Whole books and real life will work with any child's personality, whether you know what it is or not.

The Personality behind the Person

Personality, though difficult to define, is certainly easy to observe—quiet vs. outgoing, visionary vs. details, leader vs. follower, analytical vs. relational, organized vs. unorganized, and so on. However, those kinds of differences comprise only a small part of the intricate creatures called man and woman that God created in his image. We are much more than our personalities in God's eyes. We are first and foremost persons, eternally stamped with the image and likeness of our Creator. Yet each person is original and unique—a testimony of God's infinite creativity. Each of us has a distinct personality that sets us apart from every other person and, in part, defines who we are.

However, studying personality is like studying butterflies. We initially appreciate the natural wonder and beauty of the delicate creatures themselves. Soon, though, we are drawn into separating them into groups according to unifying elements of intricate design and observable behaviors. Among the wide variety of butterflies, we discover not randomness and infinite variety but rather order and categories of common characteristics. In the same way, we initially see all persons as a unified whole—humanity. But soon we are drawn into seeing God's personal handiwork in individuals. We begin to observe and soon discover elements of unity within what appears at first glance to be random diversity. We begin seeing patterns of behavior and common traits. We see personalities.

God is a God of order, so it should come as no surprise to see order expressed in his creation of human beings through common characteristics of personality, just as it is expressed through common physical traits such as eye and hair color, body build, and vocal range. When we talk about personality, we are simply taking part in the great shared exercise of observing, studying, and classifying God's creation. It is a little like nature study—it helps us not only to learn more about ourselves but also to know more about the infinitely creative God who made us (Romans 1:20; Psalm 8).

The Person beyond the Personality

Though we can observe personality and attempt to discover and categorize patterns, any attempt to actually define personality can be no more than a limited effort to understand the mystery of our humanity better. There are simply too many other factors and influences that shape our own human behavior and that shape even our own “objective” observation and evaluation of human behavior in others. These variables don’t negate or change personality, which is innate and God-given, but they affect the expression of one’s personality. It is these kinds of variables that can create the impression of a seemingly random diversity of types or expressions of personality. Even though a theory or model might try to define four, or eight, or however many kinds of temperaments or personalities, these variables of human experience can create even more apparent diversity.

- **Character Training** — Christian maturity shapes how personality is expressed. A strong aspect of personality might be tempered or a weak one strengthened. Maturity can sometimes soften the edges of personality.
- **Biblical Values** — What a person values can shape behavior that otherwise would be shaped mostly by strength of personality. A strong sense of duty for a particular kind of behavior might override personality preferences.
- **Weaknesses, Temptation, Sin** — Patterns of sinful behavior and the effects of past sin can distort personality.
- **Spiritual Gifts** — God gives each Christian spiritual gifts for ministry in the body of Christ. Spiritual gifts may in fact be related in some way to a person’s personality gifts, but they are distinct concepts in Scripture.
- **Life Experiences** — Childhood experiences, both positive and negative, can either sharpen or distort personality.
- **Masculine and Feminine Traits** — How a person understands and expresses their masculinity and femininity can affect their personality.

The Personality of Your Child

You don’t need someone to tell you that your children have personalities—it’s readily apparent in the way they think, play, and relate. One child loves to read and entertain himself quietly; another is always moving and always wants to be with someone. One child excels at routine tasks such as sewing; another dreams up new and interesting projects. One child is very systematic and orderly but not so relational; another is very relational but not so organized. One child loves music; another loves sports.

In many ways, young children can often seem like pure personality because they freely express it without the restraints of maturity. By early adolescence, they will be more comfortable and more careful with their personalities; by adulthood, they will have developed a full and mature personality, normally with confident personality preferences. During childhood, though, they are still learning to be what they are—they are still growing into their personality. Part of your role as a parent is to understand, encourage, and direct the emerging personality development of each individual child.

Type development starts at a very early age. The hypothesis is that type is inborn, an innate predisposition like right- or left-handedness, but the successful development of type can be greatly helped or hindered by environment from the beginning.

— Isabel Briggs Myers, *Gifts Differing*, Consulting Psychologists Press, 1980

Birth Order Remix

Birth order does not give birth to personality. It is certainly another variable of human experience that may affect how a child’s innate and God-given personality is shaped or expressed, but personality is already in place prior to birth order influences. In our view, birth order may shape but it does not create personality. The idea that birth order actually creates personality is more consistent with the tenets of behaviorism, which asserts that the brain is a “blank slate” at birth on which all cognitive development (such as personality) is the result solely of external stimuli and behavioral conditioning. It is the nurture side of the nature vs. nurture debate. In contrast, the nature side of the argument asserts that certain aspects of who we are and will become are innate at birth—the slate has already been written on. Of course, we believe that God is the author of what is written. Birth order can be a fun and entertaining idea to enliven a family discussion. However, always affirm to your children that their personality was created and given to them by God, not formed out of a cognitive void by their place of birth in the family pecking order.

A Type of Homeschool Success

A little-known homeschooling success story is the life of Isabel Briggs Myers, co-author of the MBTI (Myers-Briggs Type Indicator). Whatever opinion you may have of her personality type theories, her life is certainly a shining example for home educators. Born in 1897, she was home educated by her mother, Katherine Briggs, who had also been instructed at home. (Isabel's father was a world-renowned scientist.) She entered Swarthmore College at the age of sixteen and graduated first in her class in 1919 with highest honors in political science. Her sixty-one-year marriage began her junior year of college. Until the outbreak of World War II, she was a dedicated mother and homemaker and a prize-winning author. In 1942, with her children grown, she tackled the MBTI with the help of her mother (who had inspired the idea) and her family. Isabel had no formal training in the field, no professional sponsorship, and no grants, yet she would nearly single-handedly go on to create the quintessential home business success story. In 1962, after twenty years of self-instruction in the field of psychological testing and measurement, and countless hours of self-directed research, writing, testing, and validating, her type indicator was finally accepted and published as a professional psychological instrument. It has gone on to become the most widely used personality inventory in the world. From biblical quotes in her writings and from the quality of her life and character, it is clear that Isabel was motivated by her faith and her deeply held Christian values. Friends have noted her phenomenal memory for poetry and biblical passages. Although the MBTI is a belief-neutral instrument, Isabel Briggs Myers believed and wrote that personality is innate and God-given. Concerning education, she was a strong advocate of phonics and encouraged reading widely. She also held biblical views on child training and discipline.

The Reality of Learning Styles

Nothing is new under the sun, and no personality theory—regardless of how clear or clever or Christian it may appear—is truly original. Nearly every popular approach to personality can be correlated to some degree with the four temperament types originally postulated by Hippocrates (c. 400 B.C.)—Sanguine, Choleric, Phlegmatic, and Melancholy. The personality model presented in this chapter is no different. It is simply a creative way of understanding observable personality types. The striking similarities among the various models serve to reinforce and strengthen the validity of their common elements. The four most common personality descriptions weren't discovered by primary research and statistical analysis—they were simply observed in human behavior, generalized into four categories, and reported.

For all the efforts to define personality, there is no clear consensus on exactly what elements constitute a person's personality. However, there seems to be agreement that a starting point for talking about personality may be the way you think—that is, how you gather information, organize it, and make decisions with it. So while there are certainly other factors that contribute to your personality, it is your mental processes—the way you think and the mental tasks you prefer to use—that could be considered the first cause of personality. If how you think is somehow intricately bound up with what you are like, then the personality God has given your children will help you understand the way he has designed them to learn. As a homeschooling parent, you can maximize your teaching efforts by understanding your children's personality-shaped learning styles. The following is a sampling of some of the better known personality models that have been applied to education in general and homeschooling. This is a representative, not comprehensive, list.

Survey of Learning Styles

- **Natural Learning Styles** — This is a widely used traditional approach to learning theory. Children learn by one or more natural processes. Most natural models include visual (see it), auditory (hear it), and kinesthetic (do it) learners. Some models also include print (read it) and social (relate it). These styles have also been correlated with other temperament and personality models.
- **Right/Left Brain** — This approach is more physiology than it is personality, but it does offer valuable insights on modes of thinking and learning. The brain is divided into two hemispheres, each with its own mode of thinking. You predominantly use either one side or the other. Some people are predominantly right-brained, global thinkers—they think more intuitively, subjectively, and conceptually. Some people are predominantly left-brained linear thinkers—they think more analytically, objectively, and factually. This is the closest science has come to a physiology of personality, although it does not go far enough to explain the empirical data.
- **Innate Aptitude** (Howard E. Gardner, Thomas Armstrong) — Children are born with one of seven intelligences or innate aptitudes that determine what and how they will learn best (musical, artistic, logical-mathematical, linguistic, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal). If given maximum opportunity and cultivation, they will excel naturally in their area of innate aptitude and intelligence.

- **Bible Models** — Some Christian authors have attempted to create personality models based on various biblical concepts such as spiritual gifts, ways to show love, or Bible characters. These models can be interesting and provide a good teaching outline, but they tend to read too much into the biblical text.
- **Temperaments** (Tim LaHaye, Florence Littauer) — Pastor Tim LaHaye popularized the concept of temperaments by putting them into a Christian framework. He described four temperaments based on the categories originally developed by Hippocrates. He later combined and differentiated each of those even further. Florence Littauer (*Personality Plus*) and others have followed his lead with differing terminology.
- **Personality Type** (Katherine Briggs, Isabel Briggs Myers) — Isabel Briggs Myers, creator of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), proposed sixteen personality types based on four preferences for thinking and living. The sixteen are often generalized into eight types or four temperaments. Myers based her model on theories about personality type originally developed by psychologist Carl Jung in his 1921 book, *Psychological Types*, in which he proposed eight personality types. Numerous practitioners, authors, and instructors, both secular and Christian, have used Myers’s expanded theory of type as a model for their own applications of personality type to personal growth, career, relationships, and learning. The MBTI is not a diagnostic psychological instrument or test, but rather a psychological indicator that measures only the strength of preference for four areas that Myers believed defined personality or type: how one focuses mental energy, gathers information, makes decisions, and orients to life. Her 1980 book, *Gifts Differing*, summarized her many years of work to refine her views on personality and type for the MBTI instrument. Her book contains chapters exploring the application of her type model to education and parenting.
- **The Gregorc Model** (Anthony F. Gregorc) — Children have one of four learning styles based on their Perceptual abilities or how they prefer to take in information (Concrete or Abstract thinking) and on their Ordering abilities or how they prefer to use that information (Sequential or Random thinking). Gregorc’s temperaments are based on the mental processes preferences of the Myers-Briggs model.
- **Temperament Types** (David Keirsey) — Keirsey’s personality and character model is based on variations of Myers-Briggs types. His book, *Please Understand Me II* (1998), is popular in government, church, corporate, and academic circles. Keirsey identifies four temperaments: Artisans, Guardians, Idealists, Rationalists. He also identifies four kinds of correlative intelligences: tactical, logistical, diplomatic, strategic. His view is extensively developed, including applications to parenting.
- **Learning Temperaments** (Keith Golay) — Dr. Golay developed a model of learning and teaching styles for use in the public schools (1982). Children fall generally into one of four temperaments or learning styles: Actual-Spontaneous, Actual-Routine, Conceptual-Specific, Conceptual-Global. These temperaments are derived from the Myers-Briggs and Keirsey models of personality type.
- **The 4MAT System** (Bernice McCarthy) — Children have one of four learning styles: Dynamic, Imaginative, Common Sense, Analytic. This educational model includes four learning activities—experiencing, conceptualizing, applying, creating. It is based on a synthesis of major personality and learning styles theories, modifying the Myers-Briggs personality model integrated with Right/Left Brain theory.

What About the Enneagram?

A new and different theory and language about personality type has gained a growing following since the 1980s. An enneagram, which in Greek means nine (*ennea*) writings (*gramma*), is an ancient geometric design of nine interconnected lines creating nine points around a circle. There is at this time no known historical record of any meaning associated with the design. The nine “Enneagram of Personality” types currently associated with its points were first created and defined by a wisdom teacher of self-improvement methods in South America. One of his students created his own version of the Enneagram and introduced the concept into the U.S. in the 1970s. Others added their own variations and insights as the model evolved and gained wider visibility and acceptance. The Enneagram design provides a visual expression of the nine personality types, identified by the cardinal numbers 1-9, and how they relate to and influence one another. Each type is also further defined by personal characteristics such as holy ideas and virtues, ego-fixations and passions, wing types, instincts, and others. The full model draws on numerous streams of religious, mystical, philosophical, and psychological thought about the human psyche, consciousness, and spirituality. The Enneagram is promoted as a tool to gain an understanding of one’s “True Self,” others, and life. Although it has no roots in Christian belief or doctrines about spirituality, it is growing in popularity among Christians, churches, and faith organizations. Also, though it uses the language of “type” for its model of personality, the Enneagram is not related to the recognized theory and school of personality study known as “psychological type” which originated in the early twentieth century. The Enneagram is a novel and original model of the human psyche and personality.

Type makes a natural and predictable difference in learning styles and in student response to teaching methods. An understanding of type can help to explain why some students catch on to a way of teaching and like it, where as others do not catch on and do not like it. Two distinct problems are involved here. Catching on is a matter of communication. Liking it is a matter of interest.

— Isabel Briggs Myers, Gifts Differing, Davies Black, 1995

“The human race,” someone once said, “is made up of two groups of people: those who divide people into groups, and those who don’t.” People who study personality development divide people into groups ... The number (of groups) isn’t important. What’s important is the enormous improvement in family happiness that can result when family members understand themselves and each other.

— LaVonne Neff, *One of a Kind*, Multnomah, 1988

WholeHearted Learning Styles

As part of the WholeHearted Learning model, we are including a WholeHearted Learning Styles model. Like many of the other personality type and learning styles approaches described on the previous pages, our model is a theory based on observation and practice. It is not a formula and certainly not a just-revealed secret for unlocking your homeschooling success. It is just our insights on learning styles based on our own study and twenty-five years of parenting and homeschooling. Our learning styles model is best understood as a lens with which to view your children and your homeschooling. The better you understand how your children think and behave, the better you will be able to fine-tune their learning experiences and respond to their needs more confidently. Our model simply offers you accessible language you can use to better understand how your children live and learn and insights that will help you be a better teacher. The rest of this chapter will explain and explore the different facets of the WholeHearted Learning Styles model.

Modes of Thinking

Observation, research, and common sense indicate that our minds operate in at least two definable modes of thinking—investigation or seeking out information to gain knowledge, and determination or sorting out information to reach conclusions. These two modes of thinking can be further broken down by mental tasks—investigating by facts or investigating by insights, and determining by logic or determining by values. Practically, we exercise whichever of those mental tasks are needed most for a given situation and in whatever order they are called upon. In reality, each of us prefers and uses more skillfully only one of the mental tasks from each mode of thinking. The learning style of your child is defined by the two mental tasks they most prefer using.

Thinking Mode: INVESTIGATION

Purpose: Seeking out information to gain knowledge.

- **Investigating FACTS** — You seek out information based on your objective five senses. You favor the practical—you look to the proven way. You are comfortable with routine and details. You are a concrete, linear thinker.
- **Investigating INSIGHTS** — You seek out information based on a subjective sixth sense. You favor the idealistic—you look for a better way. You are comfortable with theory and the big picture. You are an abstract, global thinker.

Thinking Mode: DETERMINATION

Purpose: Sorting out information to reach conclusions.

- **Determining by LOGIC** — You sort out information based on impersonal logic. You are systematic, analytical, and task-oriented. You strongly value competence and being correct.
- **Determining by VALUES** — You sort out information based on personal values. You are relational and people-oriented. You deeply value social skills and harmony in relationships.

Implications for Teaching

Although we haven't defined actual learning styles yet, you can put your knowledge of thinking modes to immediate use in your homeschooling. Your children need to exercise all four of the mental tasks, not just their preferred ones that will define their personal learning styles and also not just the ones you prefer teaching because of your own learning style. Your challenge, regardless of your children's actual learning styles, is to exercise and give each child experience in all four modes of thinking. In providing a balanced mix of teaching methods that will exercise all four mental tasks, though, don't become formal and rigid. The WholeHearted Learning model, if implemented fully, should exercise all four mental tasks naturally without requiring special planning. Knowing the four mental tasks, though, will help you think about providing variety and avoiding inadvertently limiting your methods to those that reflect your own preferred modes of thinking. The following are just a few suggested methods and learning situations to illustrate how to think about the four mental tasks.

Teaching Methods for the Investigation Mode

- **Investigating FACTS** — Research, context study, hands-on science, planning the logistics for a project, manipulatives, audiovisual aids, using any or all of the five senses.
- **Investigating INSIGHTS** — Reading, role-play, using imagination, considering long-range goals for a project, considering solutions to a problem, brainstorming, independent work.

Teaching Methods for the Determination Mode

- **Determining by LOGIC** — Analyzing, computing, categorizing and classifying, debate and discussion, question-and-answer sessions, solving problems, thinking skills exercises.
- **Determining by VALUES** — Group discussion and problem solving, relational skills, presentation skills, creative writing, meaningful projects, lecture with personal insights and stories.



IN OUR HOME

We have always worked to vary our teaching styles as parents, but our own learning styles always rise to the top. Sally is driven by insights and values, so our children have come to expect books that inspire and discussions about ideals, Bible stories, history, and visionary ministry. She is a natural inspirer of hearts. Clay is driven by insights as well, but also by logic. The kids can expect discussions and analysis of Bible concepts and passages, historical ideas, visionary ideals, and ministry plans. He is a natural challenger of minds. That's a good combination for a rich verbal home learning environment, but we also have to get the facts into the process—all the detail and data we aren't as good at. That's the real homeschooling part. The rest is just doing what's natural.

Modes and Methods

Plan learning activities for study projects that will engage and exercise all four mental tasks. Some examples might be:

Unit Study of Rome

- **Facts:** Read a chapter from a children's reference book on the history of the Roman Empire; make a salt-dough map.
- **Insights:** Role-play a scene from Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*; read aloud a historical novel on Rome.
- **Logic:** Evaluate the reasons for the fall of the Roman Empire; write a short report.
- **Values:** Discuss "What would I have done as Caesar?"; present a comparison of Rome then and America now.

Nature Study of Trees

- **Facts:** Study a field guide to determine types of trees in your area.
- **Insights:** Determine the best way to map the area and record the trees; design mapping materials.
- **Logic:** Classify and categorize the trees; use leaf samples; evaluate growth patterns.
- **Values:** Discuss what new trees should be planted; present reasons; discuss ecological issues of tree planting.

Study of Vivaldi

- **Facts:** Read aloud a story of Vivaldi's life; listen to the Classical Kids CD; listen to *The Four Seasons*.
- **Insights:** Imagine what Vivaldi was picturing in each movement of his work.
- **Logic:** Chart and time the movements; note tempo and feel of music in each one.
- **Values:** Create dramatic scenes to go with each movement, or select appropriate Bible readings.

Notes:

Living Styles: Adding Living to the Learning Styles

The two modes of thinking—seeking out information to gain knowledge (investigation) and sorting out information to reach conclusions (determination)—will be the best indicators of your children’s preferred ways to actually learn things. Simply stated, how your children think is how they will learn. We will define four learning styles based on those modes of thinking, but there is more to learning than just what happens in the mind. Your children’s learning styles are also affected by their living styles—how they orient to the world around them. They have a mental energy that will tend to be focused either internally or externally, and they will seek a life orientation that will tend to prefer either predictability or spontaneity. While these factors are not directly related to thinking, they directly affect the mode of life within which your children’s thinking will take place. Learning styles and living styles are two sides of the same coin.

Mental Focus

It is not unusual to hear someone say about a talkative, gregarious child, “What an extroverted little boy he is!” or about a quiet, introspective child, “She really is quite introverted, isn’t she?” Each is trying to describe a child’s mental focus and whether their mental energies are directed more externally or internally. However, these big but common psychological terms used to describe the direction of that focus can become somewhat cumbersome, especially when describing children. To simplify those terms, we choose to describe the extroverted child as having an active mental focus and the introverted child as having a reflective one.

- **Active** — Active children focus their mental energies and attention on the external world of people and events. These children tend to think with their mouths; whatever is on their minds is on their tongues. Active children are easily distractible but tend to finish their work quickly in order to move on to something else. They are not as quick to pick up on abstract concepts and ideas but rather are good with concrete facts. They are drawn to and derive energy from being with people and engaging in discussion and activity.
- **Reflective** — Reflective children focus their mental energies and attention on the internal world of thoughts and ideas. These children think before they speak, and they tend to be a bit mysterious because so much goes on inside them that they never let out or get out. Reflective children have strong powers of concentration and are slower to call an effort finished. They more easily pick up on abstract concepts and ideas. They are drawn to and derive new mental energy from being alone with themselves and being able to think and reflect.

Understanding your children’s mental focus will help you more easily engage them in learning activities. An Active child needs the freedom to think out loud without having their thoughts-in-process judged too quickly. A Reflective child needs the freedom to think it through before being expected to answer. If you have both Active and Reflective children in your home, you will need to ensure sufficient time in discussions for Reflectives to fully express their thoughts and yet keep the discussion moving so as not to frustrate the Actives who are ready to move on to the next idea or subject.

Life Orientation

For most of the hours of our lives, we are faced with managing the balance between work and play. That lifestyle choice, like so many other things in life, finds its purest expression in children. The preference conflict is the same, whether for children or adults: Do the work first and then enjoy life, or enjoy life and the work will always get done. Your child has a preferred way to orient to the world, which we call here their “life orientation.” It is expressed as a preference for either time or experience. Those words are simple, but the differences they spotlight are profound.

- **Time** — Time-oriented children value predictability, order, structure, schedules, and plans. They are motivated to move toward conclusions and decisions so they can know just what to expect and can plan for it. They tend to think they know what other people ought to do and are not shy about saying so. They are less tolerant of others and aim to be right. They tend to regard those who prefer an experience orientation as being aimless or lazy. Time-oriented children believe they (and others) should get the work done first and then play.
- **Experience** — Experience-oriented children value spontaneity, openness, flexibility, and curiosity. They are motivated to put off decisions as long as possible to avoid making wrong ones and to get more input. They tend to know what people around them are doing and want to see results. They are tolerant of others and do not want to miss anything. They tend to regard those who prefer a time orientation as being rigid and missing out on life. Experience-oriented children believe it is best to enjoy life and the work will get done.

Knowing how your children look at the world around them will change the way you look at your children. This life orientation can manifest as an actual conflict of preferences in how your children relate to one another and how things are done and why. Time-oriented children want a predictable schedule that Experience-oriented children will either ignore or try to neutralize. Experience-oriented children want a spontaneous schedule that Time-oriented children will either condemn or try to control. On a field trip, the timers will want to stick to the plan and schedule, and the experiencers will want to be free and unfettered. Your job as a homeschooling parent, regardless of your own life orientation, is to manage the balancing act so everyone is affirmed.



IN OUR HOME

Joel is an Experience-oriented Reflective—the only one in the family. His life orientation is very internalized and unstructured. From the time he was a little boy, his uniqueness as the only reflective experiencer in the family has been legendary. Everyone in the family has had the experience of talking to Joel for a while, only to have him turn and ask, “What did you say?” He was there all the time, but his mind was just somewhere else. It would drive the timers a little nuts, yet Joel was always so open, flexible, and eager to please others that it rarely turned into a life orientation preference issue. Joel was always easygoing when it came to plans and schedules. Now he’s a musician and a composer, and his preferences suit him well for the unstructured world of making music.

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Putting the Learning Style Pieces Together

If you are a student of other personality type theories, such as the Myers-Briggs model, you probably have already observed that the WholeHearted Learning Styles model employs a similar model of four scales, each with two dichotomous preferences (one or the other). Those eight variables could yield up to sixteen combinations, although we limit our model to four combinations. Here are the four preference scales discussed so far:

- ACTIVE** — or — **REFLECTIVE** (Mental Focus)
- FACTS** — or — **INSIGHTS** (Thinking Mode: Investigation)
- LOGIC** — or — **VALUES** (Thinking Mode: Determination)
- TIME** — or — **EXPERIENCE** (Life Orientation)

The Myers-Briggs model introduced a new way to think about personality that identified preferences using eight letters (EISNTFJP), which yielded sixteen four-letter personality types (ESTJ, INFP, ESFP, INTJ, and twelve more). It is a complex model that uses often unfamiliar terms, so it can be difficult to discuss meaningfully unless all parties in the conversation have some knowledge of the model. In the WholeHearted Learning Styles model we have attempted to reduce complexity by limiting it to four core personality types created from the two preferences in each of the two thinking mode scales (Facts and Insights from Investigation, and Logic and Values from Determination). To simplify further, rather than using letters or psychological terms, we gave each personality type a descriptive name to make it easier to understand and remember. Here are the four types:

- DOER** (Facts + Logic)
- HELPER** (Facts + Values)
- MOVER** (Insights + Values)
- SHAPER** (Insights + Logic)

The other variables in the WholeHearted Learning Styles model (Active or Reflective from Mental Focus, Time or Experience from Life Orientation) are purposely not integrated directly into the four personality types, but rather are used indirectly to provide additional insights about the type. For example, a Doer child will be motivated to get the job done, but one who is Active and Time-oriented will get it done differently than one who is Reflective and Experience-oriented. That fuller picture of your child’s personality gives you more insight into how they live and learn best. Our hope is that it is an easier, less complicated, and more memorable way to account for all the personality variables without getting bogged down in too much detail.

In the world of personality theory, types based on selected core elements from a model, commonly generalized as four, are often called temperaments. The WholeHearted Learning Styles model does not identify temperaments simply to avoid adding yet another layer of terminology and to focus on living and learning styles. If you know your child is a Doer, Helper, Mover, or Shaper, you will have an immediate personality profile to help you direct or respond to their living and learning needs quickly and effectively. It’s not about putting them in personality boxes; it’s about setting them free to be who they are.

Factoring in Growth and Development

We believe that personality, whatever it really is, is innate and God-given. However, in the same way that the physical body grows and develops, personality also matures over time. Children under 13 years old generally have not yet had enough experience with life to know with confidence which mental tasks they prefer and use most skillfully. Around the time of puberty (about seventh grade), however, they begin to differentiate which tasks they most prefer to use. Before that time, since your children are not able to accurately identify their preferences on their own, you can observe them in order to determine patterns of preference that are emerging throughout childhood.

During the elementary years, your children will routinely use all four mental tasks. They are trying everything on to see what fits best. This is a necessary step in learning development since all four tasks will be used throughout their lives. Avoid the temptation to isolate their preferred mental tasks, label them, and then focus your teaching methods exclusively on those emerging preferences. That is not the purpose of knowing your children’s learning styles! Your goal during the elementary years is to plan your methods so as to give your children a balanced experience of all four mental tasks while allowing them to develop confidence and skill in their emerging preferred tasks. As preferred mental tasks emerge, you can begin to use that knowledge to understand your child’s learning patterns and frustrations, to increase their motivation for certain subjects, or to make difficult subjects more understandable for them. In Discovery Studies, for instance, you can direct your children to explore selected subjects in a way that you know will help them to develop skill and competence in the use of their preferred mental tasks.

Don’t label your children too soon—the label might not fit in another few years! It’s fun to talk about personality and learning styles, but keep it general. Let them tell you what they think they are. Resist the temptation to evaluate everything they do or say through the grid of their learning style or personality. Be especially careful not to show favoritism for certain mental task preferences or personalities. If you are a Mover, you might find it easier to work with a child who is a Mover and inadvertently give that child more affirmation than, say, your Doer child. It is important for you to learn to value all preferences and personalities equally in your children.

Notes:

Horizontal lines for taking notes.



IN OUR HOME

Our family is a real study in personality types. Mom is an Active-Time Mover driven by ideals, and Dad is a Reflective-Time Shaper driven by ideas, which possibly explains why we started our own ministry and write books. Each of our children is in full bloom of personality. Sarah is a Reflective-Time Mover; Joel is a Reflective-Experience Mover; Nathan is an Active-Experience Shaper; and Joy is probably shaping up to be an Active-Time Shaper. We have spent many interesting hours identifying and analyzing one another’s personality preferences. It has helped us as parents think about how to better love and appreciate each of our uniquely designed children, how to better motivate them to learn and succeed, and how to touch their joys and delights in life. Besides all that, it’s just a lot of fun.

Disclaimer

Please note that this indicator has not been tested or validated professionally in any way. It is simply a tool to help you observe your children and better identify and understand their living and learning styles. It is based entirely on our own observations of children, our ministry and formal training, and our use of other similar personality inventories. We make no claims concerning either the effectiveness or validity of this indicator as a tool to identify learning styles.

Siblings

It is best to observe your children in relationship with other children their own age outside of your family setting. Basing your observations only on how your children relate to one another might give a skewed result. Sibling relationships are often unique and might not give a true indication of your child’s personality.

Changes

Your children will seem to change over time, and your observations of their personalities will change as well. Though their personalities are God-given and innate, it takes time for children to become comfortable with who God has made them to be. It is part of the growing and maturing process. You can record observations over several years, which is why there are three spaces for each child in the indicator. It is difficult to say with any certainty at what age to begin recording your observations, but your children will not begin differentiating personality preferences with any confidence or consistency much before their late elementary years.

WholeHearted Learning Style Indicator

An indicator is simply that—a tool to indicate what you think your child’s learning style might be. It is based entirely on your own observations of how your child thinks and orients to the world around them. An indicator is not a test, but simply a tool to reveal preferences. It’s like putting on reading glasses to bring words into clearer focus that before were fuzzy and undefined. With or without an indicator, you are the best and most accurate judge of your child’s personality preferences. Use this or any other indicator to help you better understand your children’s living and learning preferences, but trust your own instincts concerning your children. In the end, it is not what the indicator says that counts, but what you say. You can make the call.

Instructions for Using the Indicator

Evaluate each child’s personality using the following scale for all forty characteristics. (Rate all ten items in each of the four columns.) Use the number corresponding to the answer that best describes how consistently your child exhibits each characteristic.

Rating	Explanation
1 = Only occasionally	<i>This doesn’t really describe my child.</i>
2 = Fairly often	<i>This describes my child some of the time.</i>
3 = Most of the time.....	<i>This describes my child most of the time.</i>

When you have placed a 1, 2, or 3 value in all forty boxes, add the numbers in each column and place the total in the box below it. For each mode, one of the two mental tasks should be stronger. The two predominant tasks (one from each mode) indicate the learning style of your child’s personality type. For instance, if a child scored 24 for Facts and 14 for Insights in the Investigation Mode column and 16 for Logic and 22 for Values in the Determination Mode column, that child’s learning style would be the combination of the high score from each column, or FV (Facts+Values). Look at the personality types table to determine that your child is a Helper. Once you have determined your child’s indicated personality type, turn to the appropriate page in the section following the indicator to read a profile of that type. If you somehow end up with the same number in the total boxes at the bottom of a mode, you will need to make a personal judgment as to which best reflects your child’s own preference. For example, in the Investigation Mode column, your total might be 22 for Facts and 22 for Insights. You could either adjust some of the ratings in both columns to be more accurate or you could be the tiebreaker vote and simply make an informed personal judgment.

Record your child’s name and age, the date of the evaluation, your child’s learning style, and corresponding personality type. Mental Focus and Life Orientation are personal observations, not scored items, but it is very helpful to record them to enable you to see changes in perceptions through the years. Simply decide which mental focus and life orientation best describes your child—either Active or Reflective and Time or Experience. Record the first initial of each. For example, if you believe your child’s mental focus is Active and life orientation is Time, you would record A/T in the M/L space.

Thinking Mode: INVESTIGATION <i>Seeking out information to gain knowledge.</i>			
Investigating FACTS		Investigating INSIGHTS	
Enjoys familiar activities and regular routine.		Enjoys trying new ways and learning new things.	
Wants to know the right way to do things.		Enjoys being different.	
Carefully observes and remembers lots of details.		Learns quickly but tends to forget details.	
Asks, "Did that really happen?"		Enjoys pretending and making up stories.	
Is curious about how things work.		Looks for new ways to do common tasks.	
Enjoys books with lots of facts and information.		Enjoys imaginative books and stories.	
Cares about clothes and how they look.		Likes to invent and design things.	
Is good working with their hands.		Is good with words and ideas.	
Enjoys puzzles and coloring books.		Uses toys in new and original ways.	
Is known to be steady and reliable.		Goes quickly from one new interest to another.	
TOTAL: FACTS	<input type="text"/>	TOTAL: INSIGHTS	<input type="text"/>

Thinking Mode: DETERMINATION <i>Sorting out information to reach conclusions.</i>			
Determining by LOGIC		Determining by VALUES	
Asks "Why?" a lot.		Likes to talk or read about people.	
Insists on logical explanations.		Wants to be praised for caring for others.	
Likes to arrange things in orderly patterns.		Shows concern if someone is unhappy.	
Shows more interest in ideas than in people.		Tells stories expressively in great detail.	
Holds firmly to their beliefs.		Tries to be tactful, even if it means avoiding truth.	
Not always comfortable with affection.		Shows more interest in people than in ideas.	
Wants rules in games established and kept.		Generally agrees with opinions of friends.	
Likes praise for doing something competently.		Wants physical and verbal expressions of love.	
Can be perfectionistic.		Relates well to other children and adults.	
Controls his or her emotions.		Is upset by conflict with family or friends.	
TOTAL: LOGIC	<input type="text"/>	TOTAL: VALUES	<input type="text"/>

Ratings: 1 = Only occasionally 2 = Fairly often 3 = Most of the time

Records: Learning Style (LS), Personality Type (PT), Mental Focus/Life Orientation (M/L)

Child: _____

Date _____ Age _____ LS _____ PT _____ M/L _____

Date _____ Age _____ LS _____ PT _____ M/L _____

Date _____ Age _____ LS _____ PT _____ M/L _____

Child: _____

Date _____ Age _____ LS _____ PT _____ M/L _____

Date _____ Age _____ LS _____ PT _____ M/L _____

Date _____ Age _____ LS _____ PT _____ M/L _____

Child: _____

Date _____ Age _____ LS _____ PT _____ M/L _____

Date _____ Age _____ LS _____ PT _____ M/L _____

Date _____ Age _____ LS _____ PT _____ M/L _____

Learning Styles:

- FL: Facts + Logic
- FV: Facts + Values
- IV: Insights + Values
- IL: Insights + Logic

Personality Types:

- DOER (Facts + Logic)
- HELPER (Facts + Values)
- MOVER (Insights + Values)
- SHAPER (Insights + Logic)

Mental Focus:

- ACTIVE (outward on people and activities)
- REFLECTIVE (inward on thoughts and ideas)

Life Orientation:

- TIME (predictability, planning, order, structure, schedule)
- EXPERIENCE (spontaneity, openness, flexibility, impulse)

Notes about DOER children

The DOER Child

Thinking Modes: Facts + Logic

Description: The industrious child who gets things done

Life Motto: “I can do that!”

Personal Encouragement

If God has given you a Doer, he knew you could meet the challenges of educating this industrious and practical child. God designed your boy or girl to get things done, make decisions, and make things work. God will someday use your Doer child to take on difficult tasks and challenges and, through personal determination and persistence, get the job done.

If your Doer is a boy, his biblical role model might be the apostle Peter, who took on the challenge of starting and organizing the church in Jerusalem. He preached, baptized, taught in the temple, organized the people, and solved problems. He took on challenges and did what needed to be done.

If your Doer is a girl, her biblical role model might be Esther, who saved Israel through her resourcefulness and determination. She laid out a plan, carried it out carefully, and accomplished her goal by winning the king’s favor. She met the problem head-on and solved it by doing what she knew needed to be done.

Personality Profile

- **Summary** — Your Doer child is practical, resourceful, and especially good at routine physical tasks and details. This realistic child does things the proven way, learns from and relies on experience, and enjoys organizing and making things work. This child is consistent and reliable, uses logic and objective analysis to solve problems, is good with technical tasks, and values fairness (logic) over feelings.
- **Learning Style of a Doer** — Your Doer child learns best primarily by investigating facts and determining by logic. This child prefers hands-on subjects and activities, is good at learning facts and remembering details, values clear and direct instructions, and enjoys mastering and using skills. This child is quick to understand ideas, wants decisions to make sense, values fairness and logic over feelings, and respects competence in the quest to make sense of things.
- **Mental Focus** — Active Doers focus their mental energy on the people, activities, and events in their lives. These children organize and direct activities and people. Reflective Doers focus their mental energy on their thoughts and ideas. These children are very thorough, responsible, precise, and good at routine work.
- **Life Orientation** — Time-oriented Doers value predictable routines and plans that enable them to be decisive about accomplishing their tasks. They want to settle matters promptly. Experience-oriented Doers value flexibility that allows them to explore options for accomplishing their tasks. They want to be open to new challenges.

- **Teaching a Doer** — This child is the most hands-on and concrete. The Doer child prefers studying subjects that require specific skills but not subjects that require a great deal of disciplined study. Give them something to do or accomplish now. Assign tasks that require practical or repetitive skill, analysis, and organization. Fully explain instructions or directions step by step. Your teaching must be factual, organized, and orderly to be useful to the Doer. Ask questions that require specific, concrete answers and knowledge. This child likes to accomplish his own work but can become impatient if a lesson takes too long to complete and can be inflexible in how to complete a task or lesson. A Doer will not stay confined to a desk for long, so give them lots of room to move and freedom to do their work in other places.
- **Reading with a Doer** — This child will enjoy action books and dramas but especially real stories about real people and events such as history and biography. Fantasy is not as appealing to a Doer. They are interested in detailed, realistic illustrations. When reading aloud to a Doer, be sure to provide a task to do, such as drawing or coloring. Reading alone may be better accomplished in shorter reading times.
- **Motivating a Doer** — Demonstrate why a task or skill will be useful to this child right now; show what function it will play in the child’s life. Recognize manual and practical skills. Affirm them for how reliable, resourceful, competent, and skilled they are. Rewards must be concrete and immediate to be motivational for this child.
- **Correcting a Doer** — Retrace any steps taken in order to find the exact point at which a mistake was made. Start again at that point. Express your confidence in the child to do it correctly the second time. The Doer child often is very active and needs encouragement to develop disciplined study habits.

DOER	Strengths	Weaknesses
LIVING	Practical, productive, self-driven. Oriented to what can be done in the here and now.	Suspicious of change and unproven ways. Can be rigid about schedules and expectations.
LEARNING	Self-disciplined and competent. Enjoys completing assigned tasks. Thorough in project details.	Over-reliant on structure. May need a specific assignment to motivate learning desire.
LOVING	Calm, loyal, and diligent at actively doing things for loved ones. Loves by actions.	Not always able to express affection. May seem remote. Can be inflexible in an argument.
LABORING	Diligent and thorough at tasks. Will work on an assigned task with total devotion until completed.	May be perfectionistic and overly concerned or worried about the details of a task.
LEADING	Strong logical orientation. Sees what needs to be done and will galvanize others to practical action.	Task-focused. May lose sight of the big picture and get bogged down in small details. Can be insensitive.
LISTENING	Hears immediate facts, needs, and information about the present and forms a plan to deal with it.	May miss subtle emotional clues in conversations. Can be resistant to abstract ideas.

Notes about HELPER children

The HELPER Child

Thinking Modes: Facts + Values

Description: The serving child who encourages others

Life Motto: “How can I help you?”

Personal Encouragement

If God has given you a Helper, he knew you could meet the challenges of educating this serving and encouraging child. God designed your boy or girl to help and appreciate others. God will someday use your Helper child to serve others, organize people, and, through appreciation, encouragement, and relational skills, help them work together to help others.

If your Helper is a girl, her biblical role model might be Ruth, whose quiet life of service and loyalty to Naomi was rewarded by God. Ruth gave up her life in Moab to follow Naomi and be a daughter to her. Her servant heart and practical skills eventually led her to become the wife of Boaz and the great-grandmother of David.

If your Helper is a boy, his biblical role model might be Barnabas, who was a behind-the-scenes servant who helped establish the new church. He was the Son of Encouragement who knew how to work with people and help others become successful. When Paul rejected John Mark, Barnabas took him and turned him into a leader.

Personality Profile

- **Summary** — Your Helper child is practical, resourceful, and especially good at meeting existing needs that involve people. This realistic child does things the proven way, learns from and relies on experience, and enjoys working with tasks and details to make people fit together more harmoniously. This child uses relational skills to solve problems, likes to please, avoids conflict, and values feelings over logic.
- **Learning Style of a Helper** — Your Helper child learns best primarily by investigating facts and determining by values. This child prefers hands-on subjects and activities, is good at learning facts and remembering details, values clear and direct instructions, and enjoys mastering and using skills. This child values knowing and mastering social skills, works well in relational settings, likes to please others, values others’ feelings over thoughts, and cares about creating harmony.
- **Mental Focus** — Active Helpers focus their mental energy mostly on the people in their lives. These children love either to serve others or to make sure others are served. Reflective Helpers focus their mental energy on their thoughts and ideas. These children thrive working on projects related to the values they hold dear.
- **Life Orientation** — Time-oriented Helpers value predictable routines and plans that enable them to better serve others in their lives. They want to solve personal issues. Experience-oriented Helpers value spontaneity that allows them to respond to new and unanticipated personal needs of others. They want to be flexible to meet needs.

- **Teaching a Helper** — This child is the most willing to serve and appreciate others. The Helper child prefers informative subjects such as reading and history but not impersonal subjects that require much independent study and imagination. Give them something to do or to accomplish that will involve other people. The Helper child is good at practical skills that will benefit others. Create group projects for this child that allow them to offer practical ways to achieve harmony and cooperation. This child wants to be liked and accepted by others and is naturally driven to create harmony but can become passive and resistant to change and can also resist by attempting to avoid conflict. A Helper generally likes to do things in the company of others, so create learning spaces for them that keep them in proximity of others.
- **Reading with a Helper** — This child will enjoy books and dramas based on real events that involve real people working together harmoniously, whether fiction or nonfiction. They are interested in detailed illustrations of real people. When reading aloud to a Helper, emphasize that the reading is something special you are doing together. Reading alone is not nearly as appealing as reading with someone.
- **Motivating a Helper** — Warmly affirm your personal relationship with your Helper child. Work with them or create group situations that are relationally comfortable and nonthreatening. Recognize their ability to get along with others. Affirm their effectiveness in social skills and their friendliness and caring for others.
- **Correcting a Helper** — Express your love and appreciation for the Helper before correcting. Put the subject (especially a difficult one that is resisted) into the context of how much it pleases you to see them learn and grow. The Helper child might need encouragement to become more creative.

HELPER	Strengths	Weaknesses
LIVING	Highly relational and attuned to the present moment. Sensory with a high appreciation for beauty.	Resistant to change or novelty. Attuned to others' feelings, but may hide their own to keep harmony.
LEARNING	Detail-oriented. Interested in subjects dealing with people and life. Diligent in completing assignments.	May need clear instruction to motivate them. Easily frustrated by abstract ideas and subjects.
LOVING	Deeply loyal, openly affectionate. Thrives on affirmation. Accepting, sensitive, compassionate.	Will do anything to avoid conflict. Need for affection may make them insecure or clingy.
LABORING	Excels at hands-on tasks, especially if they involve tangible beauty or people. Great as co-workers.	Can get bogged down in details. May lose interest in a project if people are not involved.
LEADING	Relational and highly aware of others' emotions. Can persuade people to cooperate.	May abdicate leadership for the sake of harmony. Does not like to upset people.
LISTENING	Hears relationally and literally. Highly attuned to picking up on others' needs.	Slow to pick up on subtleties in conversation. Can become frustrated by abstract ideas.

Notes about MOVER children

The MOVER Child

Thinking Modes: Insights + Values

Description: The inspiring child who influences others

Life Motto: “Let’s do it together.”

Personal Encouragement

If God has given you a Mover, he knew you could meet the challenges of educating this influential and engaging child. God designed your boy or girl to influence others to do great things. God will someday use your Mover child to exercise their strong verbal and relational skills to motivate and move others to join in important ministries and causes and to accomplish great things.

If your Mover is a girl, her biblical role model might be Deborah, who used her personal influence to lead Israel to victory over the chariots of Sisera. She envisioned what could be done and influenced the people to follow her. She persuaded Barak to take up the battle against nine hundred chariots. Because of her vision and plan, Israel routed Sisera.

If your Mover is a boy, his biblical role model might be David, who unified Israel under his leadership. He was a visionary who knew how to move people to action and loyalty through building relationships. Though he had weaknesses, his strength was his close relationship with God, evidenced in the Psalms that still move people today.

Personality Profile

- **Summary** — Your Mover child is inventive, imaginative, and especially good at seeing what might be done with, by, or for people. This idealistic child naturally finds new ways to motivate people to aspire to personal ideals and enjoys promoting worthy causes and persuading others to join in. This child uses relational skills to solve problems, likes to please, avoids conflict, and values feelings over logic.
- **Learning Style of a Mover** — Your Mover child learns best primarily by investigating insights and determining by values. This child is drawn to hearing and creating new ideas, thinks globally about tasks, would rather learn a new skill than use an old one, and naturally looks for the new way to do things. This child values knowing and mastering social skills, works well in relational settings, likes to please others, values others’ feelings over thoughts, and cares about creating harmony.
- **Mental Focus** — Active Movers focus their mental energy on the people and events in their lives. These children might organize their friends to pursue a cause or make changes. Reflective Movers focus their mental energy on their thoughts and ideas. These children tend to try to influence others with their deeply felt ideals.
- **Life Orientation** — Time-oriented Movers value predictable routines and plans that provide structure for them to pursue their ideals. They want to purposefully influence others. Experience-oriented Movers value flexibility that allows them to pursue new ideas and ideals that matter to them. They want to stay open to new possibilities.

- **Teaching a Mover** — This child is the most idealistic and possibility-oriented. The Mover child prefers interesting subjects such as reading, writing, and performance arts but not impersonal subjects that require routine work such as drill or workbook studies. Give them something to believe in—a meaningful reason for learning. Create new, nonroutine learning opportunities that enable this child to persuade others to action. Allow them to express their natural leadership abilities. Look for ways to give lessons from an inspirational perspective. This child loves learning ideas and ideals but can become impulsive and imprecise when completing a routine task or lesson and can be overly optimistic about goals and plans. A Mover will create an ideal learning space but will be drawn to interaction with others.
- **Reading with a Mover** — This child enjoys imaginative books and drama that are inspiring accounts of people pursuing a cause, including imaginative books with ideals. They are interested in imaginative and inspiring illustrations. When reading aloud to a Mover, seek out their impressions of the relationships in the book. Movers enjoy reading alone if the book appeals to their sense of ideals and meaningful relationships.
- **Motivating a Mover** — Look for the sparks of inspiration and ideals in this child and draw them out. Recognize their verbal and leadership skills. Affirm their insight, enthusiasm, and commitment. Affirm your relationship with them and how much they mean to you. This child is motivated by recognition from respected individuals.
- **Correcting a Mover** — Engage this child in a discussion of incorrect material. Always offer verbal, interpersonal correction, working through the material with them conversationally. The Mover child is very relational and needs to be encouraged to pay attention to nonpersonal details.

MOVER	Strengths	Weaknesses
LIVING	Highly imaginative. Sees life as meaningful. Driven to communicate ideas and inspire others.	Impractical. Impatient with things that don't captivate interest. Overly sensitive to negative criticism.
LEARNING	Motivated by meaning. Loves the arts and history. Driven by ideas and ideals and loves to discuss.	Easily discouraged by too many details. Hates learning that seems pointless.
LOVING	Deeply devoted and highly aware of others' feelings. Thrives on giving and receiving affirmation.	Hates conflict and avoids it at all costs. Can be defensive and overly sensitive to criticism.
LABORING	Can be very diligent once they are convinced of a project's beauty, worth, or meaning.	Easily discouraged by mundane tasks. May abandon a project if feeling overwhelmed.
LEADING	Strong values and relational skills. Naturally persuasive in enlisting support for a cause.	May back down in the face of conflict. Can be rigid about ideals and values.
LISTENING	Hears conceptually and relationally. Always aware of new ideas and others' needs.	Values orientation may lead to missed or ignored concrete, practical information in conversations.

Notes about SHAPER children

The SHAPER Child

Thinking Modes: Insights + Logic

Description: The imaginative child who conceives new things

Life Motto: “I have a better idea.”

Personal Encouragement

If God has given you a Shaper, he knew you could meet the challenges of educating this creative and innovative child. God designed your boy or girl to be the architect of new ideas and concepts, new ways of doing things, and unthought-of possibilities. God will someday use your Shaper child to conceive, envision, design, and plan new and effective ministries for God.

If your Shaper is a boy, his biblical role model might be the apostle Paul, whom God chose to envision and build his church among the Gentiles. Paul communicated the vision and gave his life to seeing the church grow. He led by the strength, clarity, and logic of his ideas and purposes.

If your Shaper is a girl, her biblical role model might be Mary, the mother of Jesus, who saw God’s plan for the child in her womb. Mary’s song reveals her grasp of what God was doing in and through her. She committed herself to that plan and to all it entailed. Her obedience would shape eternity.

Personality Profile

- **Summary** — Your Shaper child is inventive, imaginative, and especially good at any mental task that requires ingenuity. This idealistic child naturally finds new ways to do things, looks for new skills to learn, and envisions future possibilities and strategies to accomplish them. This child uses logic and objective analysis to solve problems, is a visionary thinker and planner, and values fairness (logic) over feelings.
- **Learning Style of a Shaper** — Your Shaper child learns best primarily by investigating insights and determining by logic. This child is drawn to hearing and creating new ideas, thinks globally about tasks, would rather learn a new skill than use an old one, and naturally looks for a new or better way to do things. This child is quick to understand ideas, wants decisions to make sense, values fairness and logic over feelings, and respects competence in the quest to make sense of things.
- **Mental Focus** — Active Shapers focus their mental energy on the people and events in their lives. These children draw others into their visions. Reflective Shapers focus their mental energy on their thoughts and ideas. These children are the conceivers and architects who envision and design new ways to do things.
- **Life Orientation** — Time-oriented Shapers value predictable routines and plans that enable them to think about possibilities. They want to solve problems with new solutions. Experience-oriented Shapers value spontaneity that allows them to respond to new and unexpected challenges. They want to stay open to new possibilities.

- Teaching a Shaper** — This child is the most theoretical and abstract and consequently also the most independent. The Shaper child prefers creative and theoretical subjects such as math, science, and thinking skills but not subjects that require review, lots of written work, or group work. Give this imaginative child assignments that allow him to analyze and synthesize a broad range of ideas, concepts, and information. Create opportunities that exercise their desire to find new ways to do things. You need to tap into their natural creativity and quest for knowledge. This child has very high standards for their work but can become perfectionistic and negative about the work's quality and be generally pessimistic. A Shaper will create an orderly and logical learning space and will be quite content to do their work alone.
- Reading with a Shaper** — This child will enjoy fiction and imaginative books and drama that provide new ways to look at the world, including complex and interesting literature. They are interested in imaginative, creative illustrations. When reading aloud to a Shaper, ask for their opinion about concepts and ideas in the book. Shapers enjoy reading alone if they find the book thought-provoking.
- Motivating a Shaper** — Explain how an assignment fits into the big picture of learning. Recognize this child's creativity in analyzing and systematizing facts and information. Affirm their competence, intelligence, and ingenuity. A challenge met is its own reward for this child, but so is recognition for competence and innovation.
- Correcting a Shaper** — When possible, direct this child to find and correct their own mistakes. Appeal to their sense of competence. Create new assignments or challenges to correct an area of learning. This child tends to be very individualistic and will need to be encouraged to participate in group activities and work with others.

SHAPER	Strengths	Weaknesses
LIVING	Highly independent and inventive. Driven to create and implement new ideas. Values competence.	Very internal and individualistic. Can be unaware of the needs of others.
LEARNING	Always seeking new ideas. Is bright and grasps new concepts. Self-driven in areas of interest.	Can lose interest in a subject once understood. Deeply perfectionistic and may condemn own good work.
LOVING	Loyal, devoted, and deeply committed to trusted loved ones in a quiet, steady way.	Uncomfortable with too much affection. Not naturally attuned to others' feelings.
LABORING	Self-motivated and highly competent. Will work tirelessly on a project that is of interest.	Hates to fail. May get bogged down in minutiae and quit if loses interest in the project.
LEADING	Natural leader through strong convictions, creative and clear ideas, and impartial logic.	May need help being sensitive to others' feelings. Finds managing group relationships tiresome.
LISTENING	Possibility, big-picture thinker. Hears, thinks, and plans in realm of possibilities and ideas.	Doesn't easily catch relational clues. May dismiss mundane details as unimportant.

Deep down, all of us just want to be understood and accepted for who we are. This understanding is the greatest gift we can give our children. It's the real essence of self-esteem.

— Paul D. Tieger & Barbara Barron-Tieger, *Nurture by Nature*, Little, Brown & Co., 1997

Good type development can be achieved at any age by anyone who cares to understand his or her own gifts and the appropriate use of those gifts. Whatever stage people have reached, a clear understanding of the basics of type development will help them go on from there.

— Isabel Briggs Myers, *Gifts Differing*, Davies-Black Publishing, 1980, 1995

Understanding Your WholeHearted Child

This book is written for Christian homeschooling parents, so this chapter has been all about the advantages of understanding personality types and learning styles for you, the parent. But there is more to the personality story. There are also advantages for your children. They probably will not come to understand those advantages by reading a book but rather by reading you. Your understanding and conversations about their personality types will seep into their minds and hearts and become a part of their self-understanding and self-image. Over time, in concert with their growing relationship with Christ, that additional insight into who they are will give them a great advantage in how they perceive themselves and in finding their place in the world. Let me close this chapter by considering just a few of the advantages for your children.

- **Self-Confidence** — The world of secular education has decided that self-esteem is a priority of public school philosophy. But that kind of feel-good goal for children or teens is misdirected. The real goal should be self-confidence that grows out of a deepening understanding of who your children are in Christ and how God has uniquely made their personalities for a purpose. The more your children or teens understand who they are, both spiritually and personally, the more confident they will become. Self-confidence is a powerful maturing quality.
- **Acceptance of Others** — Part of our sinful nature, especially while we are growing up, is to compare ourselves with others and judge one another by our differences. Understanding that God has made different personalities, each with a unique set of preferences, can help to neutralize conflicts with others and even encourage the appreciation of differences. Your children can begin to see how personality gifts are often closely related to spiritual gifts in the body of Christ and that God's command for us to "love one another" includes personality.
- **Life Focus** — If your children have a good understanding of their own personality traits and how to maximize their strengths and strengthen their weaknesses, they will be better able to discern a work, career, or ministry direction for their lives. The teen years of moving from young adulthood into adulthood can be a time of great uncertainty and confusion. When your children understand how God has made them to be motivated and driven in certain ways, that knowledge and insight can help them evaluate life-path choices with more discernment and confidence.



IN OUR HOME

We have talked personality in our home since our children were young. They grew up with a seasoned understanding of their own types and an appreciation for the types of others in the family. Everyone likes to defend their own type preference and give humorous examples of why others in the family are so obviously what they are. Some of our most memorable late-night discussions have been about personality type. When Joel headed to college, it was his understanding of his personality type that helped him realize a traditional degree was not for him, which led him to quit one college in order to go to Berklee College of Music. And he was right.