UNIT II: UNDERSTANDING YOURSELF

Objectives:

1) Strengths and weaknesses
2) Esteem and confidence
3) Factors that shape your identity
   - Values, beliefs, ethics, and character
   - Six pillars of characters
4) Personal style preferences
   a) Six special letters
   b) Approaches to learning

🕮 Strengths and Weaknesses

Each person brings a different mix of strengths and weaknesses to any situation. The irony is that some of your strengths, overemphasized, become your weaknesses, and things you consider weaknesses may actually be seen as strengths by others. You may be a strong critical thinker who can readily find flaws in logic. That can be a terrific strength in helping your group prepare and present its position on a topic, or it can be seen as negative and blocking if someone is presenting an idea to you and you just naturally begin to be critical instead of trying to connect and listen. The converse can be true as well: to be humble and quiet may mean your opinion is never heard and your voice is left out of decision making. But it can also mean you are a keen listener who is very tuned in to others' thoughts. Leadership self-awareness grows when you can identify your personal strengths and weaknesses in working with others toward change.

Clifton and Nelson (1992) suggest that you pay attention to the things you see others doing and to your inner mind saying, "Oh, I would love to try that." Sometimes it is hard to identify strengths. Clifton and Nelson recommend that you learn five characteristics of a strength and scan your life for them.
1. Listen to yourself when you have done something well, even if no one else noticed.
2. Identify the satisfaction you feel when you know something you did was terrific and gives you a feeling of well-being.
3. Know what things you find easy to learn quickly: putting together a model, talking to strangers, mastering a new Nintendo game, reading patiently to a small child.
4. Study your successes for clues of excellence, for "glimpses" of what can be excellent—for what things you do very well. Whether giving a speech or helping someone feel very special, by examining whatever your success has been, you will discover what you can do well.
5. Think about your patterns of excellence—when a song pours out, when you focus on every word of the lecture and understand its deep meaning, when you practice a skill (whether cooking, playing basketball, or public speaking), and you feel it improve each time you do it.
Clues to your strengths are all around you. Identifying and labeling them can affirm your confidence and esteem by acknowledging that you do bring reliable talents to situations and can contribute to the leadership of a cause.

All of us can learn to overcome our weaknesses. Some think that weaknesses "can be removed but they cannot be transformed into strengths. The goal, therefore, is to manage weaknesses so the strengths can be freed to develop and become so powerful they make the weaknesses irrelevant" (Clifton and Nelson, 1992, p. 73). A person can either manage

weaknesses so that they do not repress other strengths or overcome them and turn them into strengths.

> "The biggest way I handle my weaknesses is to recognize my weaknesses. I used to believe that I was the perfect leader. Once I realized that I have weaknesses, my leadership improved greatly. Since I recognize my weaknesses, I surround myself with people who can help me in these areas."—Bret Fox is pursuing a master's degree in electrical engineering at the University of Akron and is governor of the Ohio District of Circle K International.

By any account, Stephen J. Cannell is a successful writer, having written and produced such television shows as *The Rockford Files, Wiseguy, and Hunter*. He always seems to have a show on the air. He is imaginative, creative, and clever. He also has dyslexia. He will never be a quick reader or an accurate speller, but he manages those weaknesses and has found ways to prevent them from blocking his strengths (as told in Clifton & Nelson, 1992, p. 71). Helen Keller could neither see, hear, nor speak, but she learned to communicate remarkably well. Olympic athlete Jackie Joyner Kersey deals daily with asthma. Their weaknesses vary, but these gifted people have learned to manage weakness so that it does not hold back their strengths.

Some weaknesses, however, may be problematic because they cause you to function poorly. These need to be tackled directly. For example, you may not speak well in front of a group. You can, however, manage this weakness by learning ways to make a presentation that are more comfortable for you, like using overhead transparencies, handouts, or encouraging group interaction. The actor James Earl Jones had a debilitating childhood stutter, which he overcame so successfully that he became a remarkable orator. John F. Kennedy was at first a poor public speaker but through carefully crafting speeches and practicing with diligence, he became inspirational. One of our students observed that she thought herself to be a terrible speaker, but she enjoyed class discussions and had fun arguing her points. One of her classmates pointed out how related those skills are. What she perceived as a weakness was viewed differently by others. If it is very important to you, then you can learn to do anything better than you do it now.

Esteem and Confidence

John W. Gardner tells a story of sitting beside Martin Luther King Jr. at a seminar on education. The first presentation was a speech entitled, "First, Teach Them to Read." After observing this title, King whispered to Gardner, "First, teach them to believe in themselves" (Gardner, 1990, p. 10).

How you think and feel, about yourself is the energy that fuels your motivation. Self-concept is how we objectively describe ourselves; usually, it is based on our roles and attributes. You might say, "I am a mother of a two-year-old and like to go with the flow, keeping all my options open" or "I am an older-than-typical student with above-average intelligence and high motivation" or "I am a creative person with musical abilities." Self-esteem is the subjective element of how you feel about yourself. For example, you might say, "I am a creative person with musical abilities but am unskilled socially and uncomfortable around those in authority. I feel proud of my musical and creative skills and feel disappointed in myself for not being more socially skilled." Self-awareness would lead to having an accurate self-concept. Honoring your strengths and addressing your weaknesses are essential first steps toward higher self-esteem.

Esteem is enhanced if you can identify your strengths and weaknesses and know that you are growing and progressing in the areas you want to improve. High self-esteem is a result of valuing your self-concept. Low self-esteem may mean you expect something better or different than you feel. You may have a 3.3 grade point average as a biology major, have a group of supportive friends, and have just been elected vice president of your campus chapter of Amnesty International. You may feel proud and have high regard for those accomplishments. If, however, you are working for a 3.9 because you want to go to medical school, you might feel badly about your grades and have low esteem about your academic ability.

Self-confidence is the ability to know that you can rely on your strengths,-competencies, and skills in the many contexts in which you find yourself. Some people consistently do well in whatever they do, but they are never sure they can do well and therefore have low self-confidence. Perhaps self-confident people have better memories and know that they have done well before and can do so again.

Accepting ourselves is perhaps one of the hardest life tasks. Realizing that you cannot change some things about yourself is a step toward higher self-esteem. For example, you will not become 6'2" if you are now 5'6"; you will not become another race, change your siblings, or get rid of your freckles. You can, however, learn new skills and add to your knowledge base.

If some aspects of yourself are negative influences on your self-esteem, you must differentiate between those you can actually do something about from those you just need to think about differently, which can lead to a higher level of self-acceptance. Perceiving things differently is called cognitive reframing—a different way of thinking. You may have felt bad when thinking of your personality as shy and quiet, but you might feel empowered to frame those same characteristics as thoughtful and reflective. Reflecting on her own youth, singer-actress Bette Midler said, "I didn't belong as a kid, and that always bothered me. If only I'd known that one day my differentness would be an asset, then my early life would have been much easier" (cited in *The Quotable Woman,* 1991, p. 39).

Understanding Yourself

What makes you the way you are? How much of your perception, values, temperament, personality, and motives come from the way you were raised, the influence of your surroundings, and your contextual environment? How much of the way you are is inborn or genetic?

Debates have raged for years over whether to attribute human behavior to nurture (socialization) or nature (heredity). Becoming aware of the influence of either nurture or nature in your own development is essential to understanding yourself. For example, you may be tall and may have learned that some people find you imposing; they assume you will be outgoing and aggressive, even though you are quiet and shy. Or you may be small but have learned that people react eventually to the quality of what you have to say. Some might even say, "You seem bigger than your height." You may have learned to be relational or thoughtful or funny or anxious.

Regardless of how you came to be the way you are, you can intentionally choose to develop desired traits or skills. You cannot change your height or some other genetic attribute, but you can address many of the things you have learned by bringing them into your awareness. Although you cannot always change the way others view you, because they bring their own biases and attributions, you can at least be authentic as you try to be the person you would like to be.

Discussing your self-awareness is a form of the psychological study of individuality. If you feel uncomfortable with the concept of individuality, it could be because describing human perception or behavior in categories or types makes you feel boxed in or stereotyped. You may feel constrained or categorized. You may also feel uncomfortable because focusing on your own needs or on yourself is considered selfish or inappropriate in your family or culture. Instead, we hope you welcome the opportunity for personal insight by reviewing the ways scholars understand the ranges of human behavior. By knowing how others respond, you can assess how their response is like or unlike your own. For example, if you have had a death in your family or the loss of someone you love, you may find comfort in knowing that there are predictable stages in the grief process for many people and that your reactions are very normal (Kubler-Ross, 1970). Because you are unique, however, you may find your grief reaction to be more pronounced or less severe than Kubler-Ross's model suggests, based on such factors as how close you were to the person who died, the comfort you receive from your family, or your religious practices. Whatever the phenomena being presented in various theories about human behavior, you can then connect with what is most like you or least like you to better-understand yourself and to see how others might be similar or different from you.

Factors That Shape Your Identity

Several central, salient characteristics have probably made you the person you are and the person you will become as you age. Consider how your ethnic, racial, or cultural background has made a difference and shaped the way you are. How do you believe or behave differently because you are a man or a woman? How has your sexual orientation influenced your attitudes and behaviors? How does your age influence your interests and views? Do you have specific abilities or disabilities that shape your perceptions or skills? How has your birth-order position in your family influenced your development? What significant roles do you have that bring responsibilities that shape your decisions—being a son or daughter, a volunteer, a parent, an office manager, a Sunday School teacher, or an athlete? How has your sense of spirituality shaped your worldview? How important is religion in guiding your thinking? Individuals may do things differently because they are male or female, old or young, Irish Catholic, Jewish, or Muslim. How has your family's socioeconomic status influenced your development and your views of leadership? Mapping your personal context must include many elements that contribute to your sense of identity.

We believe the capacity for leadership is within each of you. Many observers of leadership agree that leaders are made not born and that everyone has a "leader within"_ (Haas & Tamarkin, 1992). Meaningful interaction and effective leadership processes can result if individuals are aware of their own motivations and understanding of the personal context of others. The leader-within-you may be willing to assume positional leadership roles or may be more comfortable with active participant roles. Either way, within you is the capacity to make a difference.

Values, Beliefs, Ethics, and Character

As difficult as it may be to determine how characteristics like your sex, ethnicity, or religion influence the way you think and act, it is even more complicated and important to identify the values and beliefs that lead to your ethical behaviors and build your character.

Values and Beliefs

Among the hardest things to articulate are the values that guide actions. If your actions and thoughts are a mystery to you, you may not have adequately examined your own value

system. Beliefs shape .values, which influence thoughts and actions. If you can articulate your values, then you are likely aware of the principles and beliefs that serve as your guides.

Contrasts in value systems are rarely as clear as when *Star Trek's* Mr. Spock dispassionately says to Bones, a surgeon on the U.S.S. Enterprise, "You are too emotional, doctor. That is not logical." Bones always explodes and shouts back, "Mr. Spock, how can you be half human and not have one ounce of feeling in you?" Each of us has preferences in how we construct our own value systems. You may prefer to be logical and scientific, or you may be emotional; you may prefer to be concrete, or you may just come to know what's important by using your intuition. Knowing that you have preferences in how you construct your value system should help you understand yourself and others better. No one process is preferred over others; your process reflects how you have come to construct meaning from your experience.

> "Without ethics you are bound to lose your integrity, and who is willing to work with someone without integrity?"—Peter Tate is a biology and public health major at the University of Michigan and serves as president of the Black Greek Association.

The discussion of values should always raise the very good question, whose values for what purpose? Some values, such as promise keeping and nonviolence, are so fundamental that they have been found to be norms in most civilized societies (Bok, 1990). In a study of diverse men and women committed to meaningful change, researchers asked each person, "If you could help create a global code of ethics, what would be on it? What moral values, in other words, would you bring to the table from your own culture and background?" (Kidder, 1994, p. 17). Their findings led to eight moral values likely to be exceptionally important in our shared global future: love, truthfulness, fairness, freedom, unity, tolerance, responsibility, and respect for life (pp. 18-19).

Values such as these are integral to the development of character. Understanding values becomes a central component to understanding others and to achieving a common purpose. Imagine this scene:

> Shaking his head, Scott approaches his two friends, Khalil and Michael. "I just cannot believe it!" Scott laments. "I just heard that James vetoed the activity fee allocations to the student Hillel Association. I think he is biased and power hungry and I'm quitting student government. I just won't have anything to do with student government anymore, not with a president who does stuff like that!"
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> "Hey, just wait a minute, Scott," Michael implores. "I think James is exceptionally fair and reasonable, and I'd trust him with my life. Something else must be going on that we just don't understand. He must have a reason if he did this, and knowing him like we do, I bet it is a good reason. It also may not be coming down like you think."
>
> "Yeh, I agree completely. I know him pretty well and he's OK. Let's go talk to him," Khalil adds.

James's character and reputation for integrity among those who know him are solid and defensible. When a person is known for a solid value system grounded in integrity and authenticity, others may disagree with a decision but cannot find fault with the character of the decision maker.

Character and Ethical Behavior

Integrity in relationships is central to the value systems needed among people working together toward change. Authenticity is rooted in action that is "both *true* and *real* in *ourselves* and in the *world*" (Terry, 1993, pp. 111-112). Whether framed as integrity, authenticity, or credibility, the very core of your character is central to sincerely linking with others in the spirit

of community to work toward change. When asked what leadership qualities he looked for in leaders in the U.S. Army, Desert Storm's General Norman Schwarzkopf said, "Probably far more important to me than competence was character . . . integrity . . . ethics . . . and morality. . . . I looked for people who . . . were willing to serve a cause and were what I would call *selfless* leaders rather than *self-serving* leaders" (Wren, 1994, p. 2).

A person of character promotes ethical decision making and expects ethical behavior from others. The Josephson Institute of Ethics proposes six pillars of character that are "enduring and indispensable" to ethical leadership practices (Jones & Lucas, 1994, p. 4). These pillars are trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship.

> "I take great precaution when handling any ethical dilemmas because I feel once you fail to practice in an ethical manner, it is very difficult, if not impossible, to regain the people's trust. Turning to my adviser or other administrators for advice when dealing with dilemmas that I am either unsure of or inexperienced with has proven most helpful to me."—Zachary Hampton is a business administration, health care planning, and management major at Alfred University. He is president of the student senate.

Trustworthiness is far more than truth telling. Being worthy of trust means being honest, demonstrating integrity, keeping promises, and being loyal. It means being known for standing up for your own convictions. ***Respect*** means that you treat others seriously, not that you admire or agree with all their views or behaviors. Being respectful is a commitment to treating others in ways that do not demean or take advantage of them. ***Responsibility*** means accepting accountability for your own actions and being conscious of the moral and ethical implications of deciding not to act. Being responsible means being accountable, pursuing excellence, and exercising self-restraint. ***Fairness*** is working toward a just and equitable outcome. Being fair means being open-minded, willing to listen, and confronting your own biases that might influence your decisions. ***Caring*** means your awareness of being concerned for each person's well-being and your attention to not being hurtful. Care requires empathy and kindness. ***Citizenship*** is the civic virtue of knowing that as a member of a community, you have responsibilities to do your part to contribute to the well-being of the group. Citizenship means you are willing to abide by laws and obligations.

A Person of Character:

- Is trustworthy (is honest, has integrity, keeps promises, is loyal)
- Treats people with respect (is courteous, nonviolent, unprejudiced, accepting)
- Is responsible (is accountable, pursues excellence, shows self-restraint)
- Is fair (just, equitable, open, reasonable, unbiased)
- Is caring (kind, compassionate, empathetic, unselfish)
- Is a good citizen (is law-abiding, does his or her share, performs community service, protects the environment)

After a concert on campus one Friday night, two students were counting the ticket sales receipts. The money in the cash drawer was $ 120 short for the number of tickets sold. Baffled at the difference, the students turned in the accounts the next day and presented the problem to the Student Activities Office. That afternoon, a third student came into the office carrying an envelope containing $120. The money had apparently come in during a ticket sales rush and was set aside instead of being locked in the cash drawer.

The office accountant clerk asked her, "Why didn't you just keep the money? No one would have known."

The student's quick, indignant reply was, "But I would have known, and I don't do things like that!"

That student's consciousness of her own value system and commitment to integrity was so embedded that she could not imagine behaving any differently. The trust and respect she earned in her relationships led to an assessment other character that was above reproach. "Leadership . . . requires a special kind of dedication, a special kind of belief. I think that you must have defined for yourself a set of moral and ethical values in which you chose to make your decisions in life as you move along. Then you must be true to yourself" (Schwarzkopf, as cited in Wren, 1994, p. 5). Vaill's analogy (1989) that our values become our rudders in times of permanent white water rings true.

> "Leadership is a respect which must be earned anew each day. Leadership without respect is like fool's gold—it looks good, but upon closer inspection it becomes worthless."—Christopher Williams is a political science and speech communication major at Texas A&M, who plans to be a lawyer. He is president of the Memorial Student Union.

Personal Style Preferences

Understanding how you express your values through your preferred interactions or decision making helps you understand yourself and serves as a bridge to exploring diversity within groups. You may see yourself as a caring person committed to being fair and just, yet are puzzled as to why some people perceive you as judgmental or rigid. Understanding your personality preferences helps explain how you function in the world and how you are perceived by others.

Psychological Type

How humans adapt to the world around them is different for everybody because of personality preferences. The study of personality consumes the content of many psychology courses, books, and specialized journals. You are so accustomed to the way you view things, get things done, interact, and make decisions that you perhaps cannot imagine doing them differently. It is essential to realize that you have the capacity to broaden your approaches, but the first step is to identify them.

Carl Jung (1923) identified four core functions of human adaptation that he called personality archetypes or temperament types. These four functions include how we relate to the world, perceive the world, make judgments, and make decisions. Jung's typology includes four pairs of adaptive orientations that are diametrically opposed to each other. These combinations describe where we get our energy (extrovert-introvert), how we gather information from the world around us (sensing-intuiting), how we prefer to process that information (feeling-thinking), and ways we prefer to make decisions (judging-perceiving).

The first of these four core functions concerns our mode of relating to the world. There are differences between those who are oriented to the outer world (extroverts) and those who prefer their own inner world (introverts). Those who are extraverts (E) prefer the outer world of people and things. Extroverts do their best thinking out loud and in dialogue with others. Extraverts get energy from being around people; they are sociable. When given twenty minutes of free time before she has to leave her residence hall room, an extravert will go out into the floor lobby to see what's going on. People who are introverts (I) are more oriented to their inner world of feelings and ideas. Introverts prefer to think things through and reflect before forming or stating their opinions. They do their best work through internal reflection. Introverts gain energy by creating private space, even when in a crowd. Introverts may do very well in highly interactive settings but leave those settings drained of energy needing private time to renew. Given the same twenty-minute break, an introvert might write an entry in his journal or pull out the file on his upcoming meeting and review what will be covered. The use of these words is sometimes confusing because *extravert* does not mean outgoing, and *introvert* does not mean

shy and withdrawn. The terms refer instead to a preferred orientation to the outer or inner world.

The second core function includes your preferences for perceiving the world around you—sensing or intuiting. Sensing people (S) rely on the five senses and prefer concrete facts and details. Sensing people are very practical and realistic, preferring the present or past to the abstractions of the future. Intuiting people (N) prefer the big picture and like to see things as a whole. They are innovative and use imagination to develop many possibilities. Intuitive people like to project into the future, living in anticipation of how things can be better, improved, and changed. Sensing people might say, "If it's not broken, don't fix it," whereas intuitive say, "There has to be a better way" (McCaulley, 1990, p. 407). The differences in these two preferences are the source of great misunderstandings and it "places the widest gulf between people" (Keirsey & Bates, 1984, p. 17). You may hear this gulf being expressed in a discussion when one person says, "Wait a minute. We need more information before we decide" or "What do the rules in the student handbook say?" The other person then might say, "We cannot know everything, and we are close enough to have an idea of what might work. Let's just give it a try and see what happens." Groups need both kinds of people—those grounded in reality and those who think of possibilities.

The third core function is the mode of judging—thinking or feeling. Those who prefer thinking (T) use logic and rationality— the head rules rather than the heart. Thinking approaches are rewarded in school systems through critical thinking, analysis, and reliance on the objective scientific method. Feeling-type people (F) prefer to make judgments that account for relationships and the importance of human values and beliefs, with an emphasis on personal friendships. Those who prefer feeling (Fs) may find those who prefer thinking (Ts) to be cold and too objective, whereas Ts may find Fs too emotional and unable to stand firm on a decision. This is the only scale that shows a sex pattern, with men making up 60 percent of the T preference group and women making up 60 percent of the F preference group. Misunderstandings that are on occasion attributed to sex differences may actually reflect personality differences.

The fourth core function involves how you prefer to make decisions—by judging or perceiving. Those with judging preferences (J) prefer order and emphasize resolving issues and making decisions to create order. People who use J preferences like tying up loose ends and seeking closure; they like clear beginnings, deadlines, and endings. Perceiving-type people (P) prefer to keep things open-ended by gathering as much information as possible and being flexible. People with P preferences handle ambiguity well, are known to go with the flow, and are comfortable leaving things open-ended or unresolved. Those with J preferences may seem close-minded or driven, and those with P preferences may seem unfocused and have a hard time getting anything done.

We each have developed preferences of how we most comfortably perceive and judge our worlds. These pairs (and the sixteen primary personality types that emerge) help us understand ourselves and others (Myers, 1980). Your four-letter composite profile is a combination then of E/I, S/N, T/F, and J/P. See Exhibit 4.1 for cue words that provide additional explanation of these preferences. Which set seems most like you?

We can and do use all eight of these processes but generally prefer a consistent pattern. If you are right-handed, you could write with your left hand if you had to, but you prefer your right hand. If you are an introvert, you can and do enjoy people and good conversation, but you must have time and space to think and reflect to do your best work. If you are an extravert, you certainly can listen and reflect, but you prefer the energy of interacting with others to build and refine your ideas because you like to "think out loud." Understanding the impact of our

preferences and comfortably using our nonpreferred strategies is a skill to acquire. Indeed, the subtitle of Developing *Leaders* (Fitzgerald & Kirby, 1997) is *Integrating Reality and Vision, Mind and Heart.*

Perhaps the best-known method of assessing Jungian personality types is the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI). Your college counseling center will likely have this instrument. You might also like to complete the Keirsey Temperament Sorter, which is based on the same principles from *Please Understand Me* (Keirsey & Bates, 1984). You may not need the instrument at all if you identified with the descriptions of each of the four core functions and could identify your preferences.

The MBTI is useful in understanding relationships in a leadership setting. Research using the MBTI indicates that 65 to 75 percent of the general population are extraverts (E) and that women are slightly higher than men in this preference. Introverts (I) predominate in fields of study such as science and among careers as university teaching. Those who prefer sensing (S) are three times more prevalent in the population than intuitive (N). "Groups at the intuitive end . . . are more likely to include educators, consultants, and student leaders" (McCaulley, 1990, p. 407). Approximately two-thirds of men prefer thinking (T), and two-thirds of women prefer feeling (F). However, women who prefer thinking approaches are in the majority among graduate students, engineering students, and business executives. Men with feeling preferences predominate in the arts, counseling, and some health fields. The general population contains about 55 percent judging types (J), but studies of leaders show this to range upward to 91 percent, clearly indicating the preferences among positional leaders to reach closure and get decisions made (McCaulley, 1990). Leaders come from all groupings of preferences, but clearly certain patterns of preferences may exist in some careers or fields that draw on those preferences as strengths. McCaulley asserts, "From the type perspective, one would not ask the question, 'What type is the best leader?' Rather, one would ask, 'How does each type show leadership?'" (p. 412).

This theory of psychological type has been widely used in leadership assessments to understand self, others, and the dynamics of relationships and leadership processes, but it is not without flaws. There is some indication that type is not stable, that you can change your pattern over time. The action-oriented extravert may become a more contemplative and reflective introvert later in her life. Scores on the MBTI may be related to the context you have in mind when you complete the instrument. Assessments like the MBTI are occasionally used inappropriately. It would be inappropriate in hiring decisions to assume that someone can be no different than her four-letter score, when actually she may be well-developed in using several preferences. The three of us have found the concept of personality preferences so helpful in understanding ourselves that we encourage you to consider this framework for your own self-exploration.

Becoming aware of your personality preferences helps move you further toward self-awareness. As awareness grows, you begin to see the need to build other skills and to have a wider range of responses in decision making and in your relations with others. A useful application occurs when you realize that the conflict you have with another may be because of a clash in preferences, which can lead to more understanding ways of relating. You will then find it comfortable to say, "Sorry, I know it seems like I am jumping the gun, but I just do my best thinking out loud," or "I know I am asking lots of detailed questions, but it helps me understand the bigger picture" or "These were interesting ideas presented today; I am just not yet ready to decide. I need to think about this overnight. Can we decide at our meeting tomorrow?"

Approaches to Learning

One of the elements of leadership is that it is focused on accomplishing something or changing something. How individuals understand the need for change and how effectively individuals and groups can adapt to change is a learning process. Human beings go through a continual process of adaptation to changing conditions whether those conditions are imposed or induced. You may even be faced right now with the need to adjust to new challenges at home, at work, in classes, or in some of your organizational roles. At its root, this process of adaptation is the learning process: learning new knowledge, new skills, or clarifying attitudes and values.

Type and Learning Styles

Extroversion (E)	*Introversion (I)*
Es learn best in situations filled with movement, action, and talk. They prefer to learn theories or facts that connect with their experience, and they will usually come to a more thorough understanding of these theories or facts during group discussions or when working on cooperative projects. Es tend to leap into assignments with little "forethought," relying on trial-and-error rather than anticipation to solve problems.	Since Is may be more quiet and less active in the classroom, teachers may feel the need to press them into taking part in-group discussions. Such pressure, however, will often only increase their withdrawal. Teachers need to respect their need to think in relative solitude, for that is how they think best. Is will be more willing to share their ideas when given advance notice. This will allow them time to think about how they will become active in the classroom.
Sensory Perception (S)	*Intuitive Perception (N)*
Ss learn best when they move from the concrete to the abstract in a step-by-step progression. They are thus at home with programmed, modular, or computer-assisted learning. They value knowledge that is practical and want to be precise in their own work. They tend to excel at memorizing facts.	Ns tend to leap to a conceptual understanding of material and may daydream or act-out during drill work or predominantly factual lectures. They value quick flashes of insight but are often careless about details. They tend to excel at imaginative tasks and theoretical topics.

Type and Learning Styles-Continued

Thinking Judgment (T)	*Feeling Judgment (F)*
Ts are most motivated when provided with a logical rationale for each project and when teachers acknowledge and respect their competence. They prefer topics that help them to understand systems or cause-and-effect relationships. Their thought is syllogistic and analytic.	Fs are most motivated when given personal encouragement and when shown the human angle of a topic. Fs think to clarify their values and to establish networks of values. Even when their expressions seem syllogistic, they usually evolve from some personally held belief or value.
Judgment (J)	*Perception (P)*
Js tend to gauge their learning by the completion of tasks: reading "x"-amount of books, writing "x"-amount of papers, or making "x"—amount of reports. They thus prefer more structured learning environments that establish goals for them to meet.	Ps tend to view learning as a free-wheeling, flexible quest. They care less about deadlines and the completion of tasks. They prefer open and spontaneous learning environments and feel "imprisoned" in a highly structured classroom.