

Clash or Coordinate? Understanding Personality Styles

Patricia Mulkeen, Ph.D.
WVU Extension Specialist, 4-H Programs

“Why does she do that?”

“We were best friends from the moment we met.”

Do you ever wonder why you react the way you do? Or why you hit it off with one person and not another? This lesson is about personality styles and one system for categorizing them. You will understand the characteristics of the four styles in the Matrixx System as well as what builds up and what tears down the esteem of each style.

What are personality styles?

Personality is defined by Merriam-Webster’s Online Dictionary as “the totality of an individual’s behavioral and emotional characteristics.” Personality styles are the categories developed by students of human behavior in order to break down the complexity of human behavior. Many scholars have developed categories and assessment tools to determine an individual’s personality style. The theories of Carl Jung contributed to the development of two complementary systems for classifying personalities. In the 1950s, Isabel Myers and Katherine Briggs developed a personality assessment tool, the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator or MBTI. Around the same time, David Kiersey developed a theory of temperament also based on the work of Carl Jung.

The work of Myers and Briggs resulted in 16 combinations of four basic preferences: Extraversion/Introversion (E/I), Sensing/Intuiting (S/N), Thinking/Feeling (T/F), and Perceiving/Judging (P/J). After completing a 126-question assessment, an individual is given their results on each of the four preferences so that personality styles bear such labels as ESFP or INTJ. The MBTI requires complicated scoring and a knowledgeable facilitator to explain the results. The complexity of the 16 combinations and differences

between the meaning of terms in this system and in common usage make the MBTI results somewhat difficult to remember for your own personality and even harder to apply to others’ personalities.

“Real Colors” or the Matrixx System

The “Real Colors” or Matrixx System described in this lesson is based on the work of Carl Jung, Isabel Myers, Katherine Briggs, and David Kiersey. It makes understanding your personality style and that of

others easier by using colors to represent four components of personality style: Blue, Gold, Green, and Orange. For most people, one color is dominant, or primary. In Real Colors, everyone has at least some of each color in their personality, and all of the colors have positive and negative aspects. Any color expressed to an extreme will be problematic.

Usually, the Real Colors personality assessment is done with a group of at least 20 people using the Matrixx System booklets.

The booklets include three ways of assessing the order of your

colors: by looking at cards with pictures representing the colors, by looking at cards with text descriptions of the colors, and by answering a 10-item survey.

This approach appeals to different learning styles. Following the assessment, the group gathers by their primary color and discusses their values/needs/strengths/joys and at least one other task assigned by the facilitator. The more detailed assessment and the group interaction is valuable but requires a trained facilitator and a minimum of 20 people to have representation of all colors. This lesson will acquaint you with the Real Colors system; information on group workshops can be found in the Resources section.

Personality—

“The totality of an individual’s behavioral and emotional characteristics.”

Merriam-Webster’s
Online Dictionary

Have group repeat each statement after you:

1. All of the styles we talk about are good in moderation.
2. All of the styles we talk about are a problem in excess.
3. A healthy adult is able to use all of the styles and know when each is appropriate.

	<i>Blue</i>	<i>Gold</i>	<i>Green</i>	<i>Orange</i>
Orientation	People, feelings	Accomplishments, tasks	Ideas, information	Action
Values	People, harmony	Dependability, hard work	Rational thought, curiosity, logic	Risk-taking, competition
Needs	Authentic relationships, care for others	Stability, order, structure	Independence, intellectual challenge	Physical activity, attention
Strengths	Empathetic, accepting	Organizational skills, detailed planning, follow-through	Problem solving, analyzing information, objective	Energetic, persuasive, leadership
Joys	Helping, harmony, romance	Traditional values, security, order	Discovery, understanding things	Trying new activities, competing (winning!)

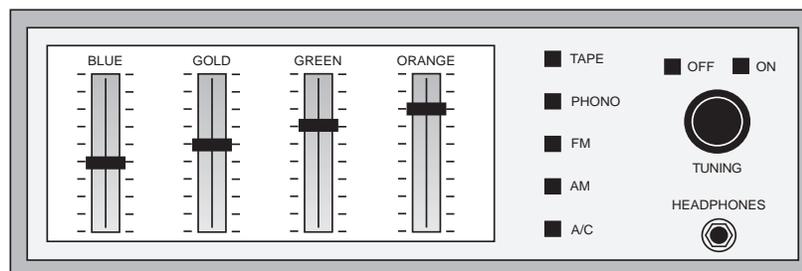
Here is some additional information about each color:

	<i>Blue</i>	<i>Gold</i>	<i>Green</i>	<i>Orange</i>
Stressed by	Feeling artificial	Lack of order	Feeling inadequate	Restrictions
On the job	Peacemaker	Organizer	Pragmatist	Energizer
Seek	Love and acceptance	Security	Insight and knowledge	Freedom
Proud of	Empathy	Dependability	Competence	Impact
Trust	Intuition and feelings	Authority and tradition	Facts and logic	Impulses

Adjusting your colors

Recognize anyone in these descriptions? For some people, the primary color really stands out from the rest. Others display a blend of the colors and may have a hard time identifying one primary color. At different times in our lives and to meet the responsibilities of different roles, we

need to be able to adjust our colors. With practice, you can learn to visualize each color as having a slide control and a display like a stereo tuner. Your natural “settings” will be the most comfortable for you. If Blue is your primary color and you are facing a deadline, you will need to tap into your Gold and “turn it up.”



To help you learn to adjust your color tuner, pick a color and think of a time or an event that brought out that color in you very strongly. Focus on how you felt. If you chose Blue, it might be falling in love or having a child that brought out your Blue. If you chose Orange, it might be the rush

of adrenaline you felt when you successfully led a group in games or even that rush of spring fever on an unseasonably warm spring day. What are some other events that would bring out your Gold and Green?

Clash or coordinate?

Discuss: Now that you can guess at your primary color (and probably that of others close to you), which colors do you think will complement each other? Will clash?

Similarities and differences can be drawn between all of the colors . . .

<i>Colors</i>	<i>Shared Value</i>	<i>Can Clash Over</i>
Blue & Gold	family	people vs. task
Green & Orange	freedom	deliberation vs. action
Blue & Orange	social activities	people vs. action
Gold & Green	competence	deliberation vs. schedule
Blue & Green	accepting of others' differences	feelings vs. ideas
Gold & Orange	"my way or the highway"	planning it vs. winging it

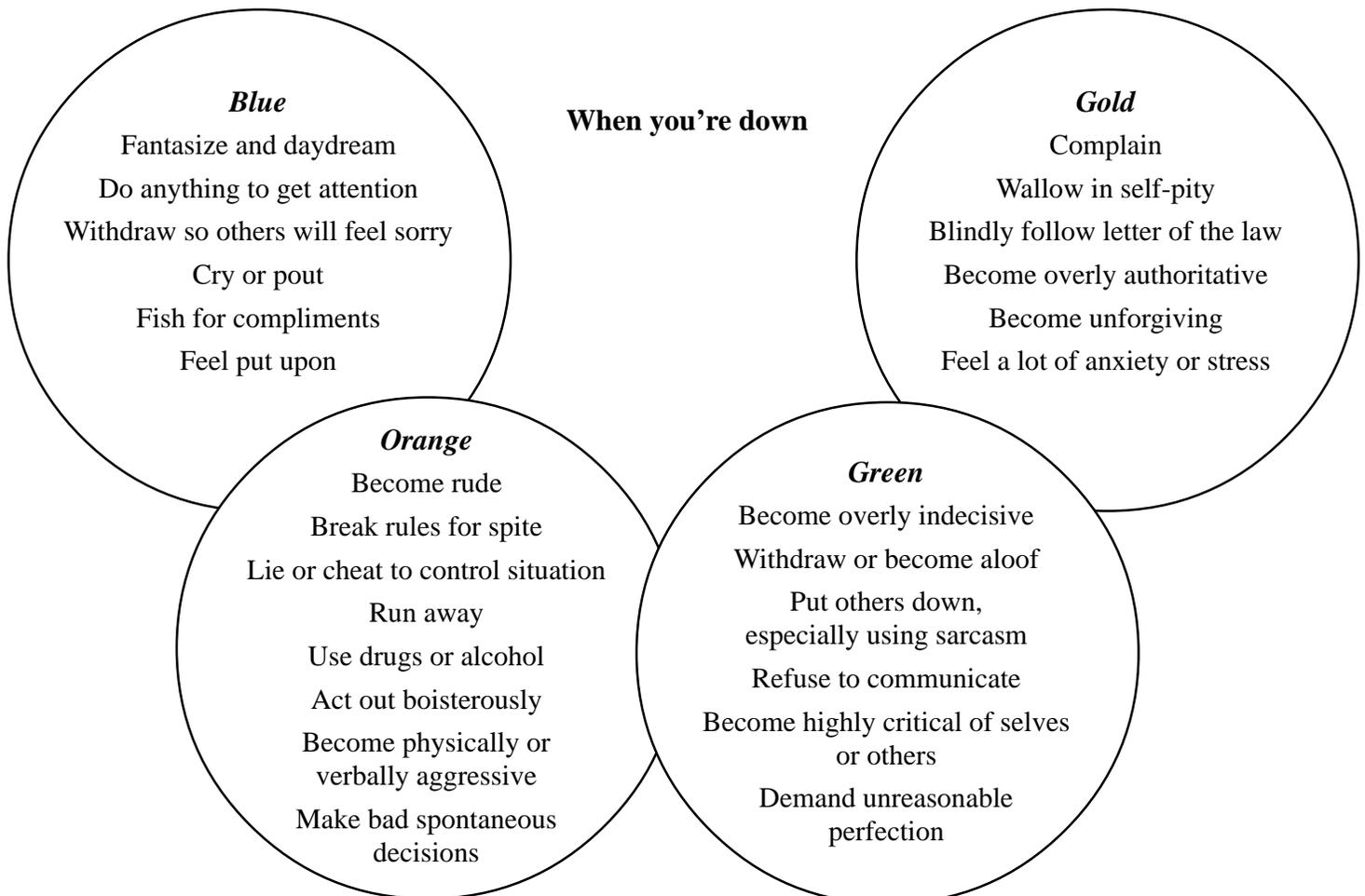
Of course, these are exaggerated somewhat in order to make the distinctions between colors more clear. The next time you find yourself irritated by someone else's action, consider the colors involved. Understanding what another person values may help to unruffle the feathers.

Breaking down

When you're feeling good about yourself, it's easy to adjust your "color tuner." But, when you're feeling down, you may retreat to your most comfortable settings. Some negative events will make any of the

colors feel down, such as the loss of a loved one, a personal health crisis, or serious financial trouble. Lesser events can affect the colors differently, though, and when they're down, the colors react differently and need different things to recover.

Blues can take the troubles of others to heart, so much so that the pain of friends and family members is their own. Golds can become frustrated when others do not show the same level of organization or attention to detail that they do. Greens are hurt when their competence is questioned. Oranges will react negatively when confronted with rigid structures or lack of activity.



Building up

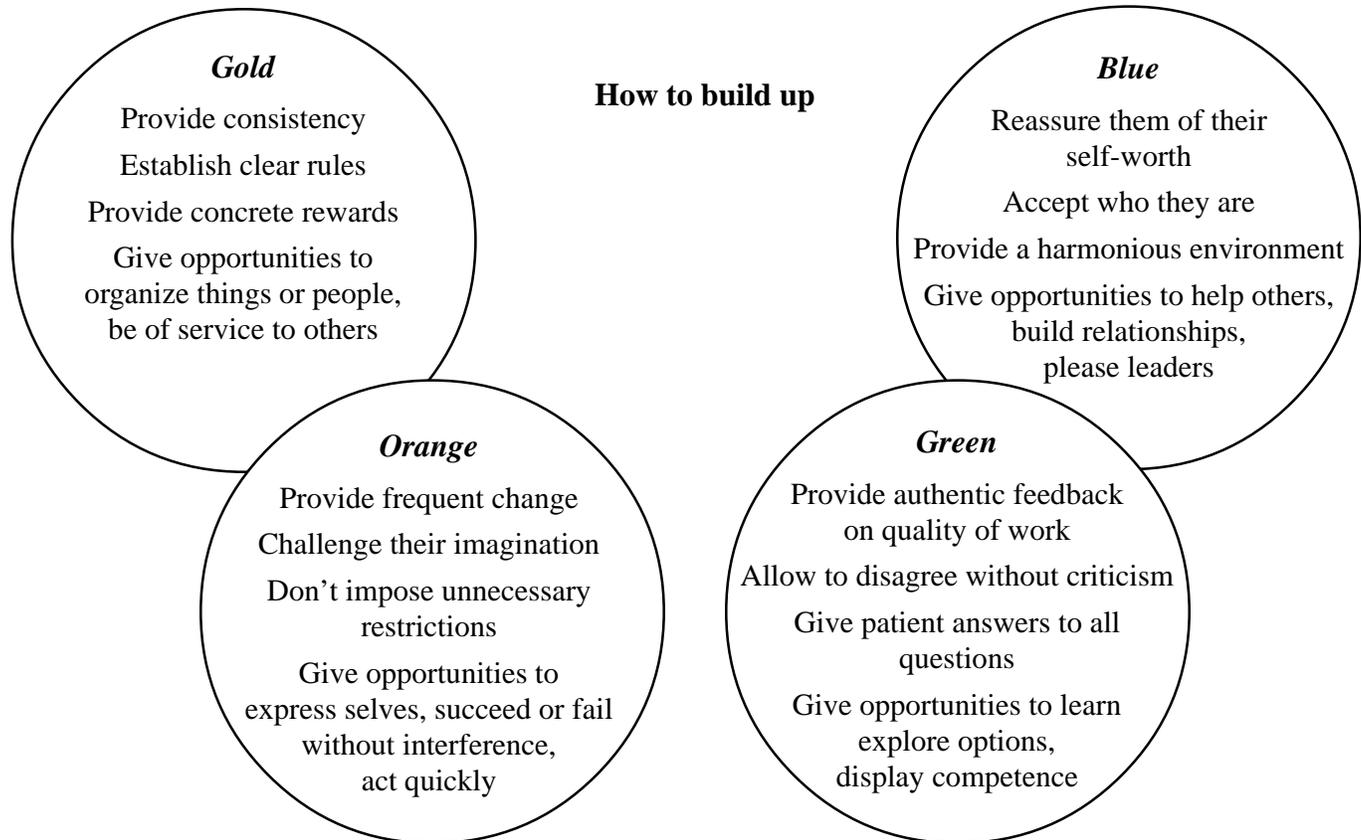
Do you know what you need to feel better after a bad day or when you're down? How we recover differs by color, also. These differences can be misunderstood, especially following the loss of a loved one.

Discuss: By now, you're getting the hang of the colors. Take a few minutes to talk with others, sharing your primary color and how you recover from a negative life event.

Basically, we recover by reverting to our primary color and the associated comfort zone of activities. Blues will

need people—to listen to them as they listen to others, without solving or judging. Golds often need to restore order or accomplish something—big or small. Greens will need to turn inward and spend time alone sorting out their feelings. Oranges will need to be active, preferably with others.

With your greater understanding of personality styles, you can help to build others up and allow them to recover in the way that best suits them.



Resources

To have the Matrixx System personality assessment administered to your group, contact:

Patricia Mulkeen, Ph.D. Extension Specialist, 4-H Programs <i>Patty.Mulkeen@mail.wvu.edu</i> (304) 293-2796 x3438	Julie Ferry, M.S. Extension Agent, Wayne County <i>Julie.Ferry@mail.wvu.edu</i> (304) 272-6839
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For additional information about the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator and Temperament Theory based on Jung:

- Baron, R. (1998). *What type am I? Discover who you really are.* New York: Penguin Books.
- Keirse, D. and Bates, M. (1984). *Please understand me: Character and temperament types, 5th ed.* Del Mar, CA: Prometheus Nemesis Book Company.
- Tieger, P. and Barron-Tieger, B. (1997). *Nurture by nature: Understand your child's personality type-and become a better parent.* Boston: Little, Brown.
- Kroeger, O. and Theusen, J. (1989). *Type talk: The sixteen personality types that determine how we live, love, and work.* New York: Dell Publishing.

Myers, I. B with Myers, P. B. (1995). *Gifts Differing.* Palo Alto, CA: Consulting Psychologists Press.
Association for Psychological Type (www.apcentral.org/)
For fun "personality" assessments (www.Emode.com)

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