

What do you have in common with Einstein, Ben Franklin, Madonna, Gandhi or Bill Gates?

- 1. How inventive are you?**
- 2. Do you consider yourself a creative problem-solver?**
- 3. Are you an "out of the box" thinker?**
- 4. How active is your imagination?**

Or, are you perhaps rigid, repressed, a slave to saving face or ego? Low scores on the above four questions indicate that you may be too protective of your ego.

Everyone is born with creative abilities, ingenious problem-solving abilities and an active imagination. These are normal, healthy urges. They're inborn traits that – with encouragement and practice – help us to be more productive and happier folks.

Too often, though, a child's daydreaming and doodling are discouraged and the ego takes over. It squelches all those impractical urges and we become slaves in service of preserving a false front.

On the other hand, we can overdo the pursuit of fanciful, magical thinking to substitute practical choices, making decisions in a timely fashion and seeing situations for what they really are. And, like everything else in life, balance is the key.

Now, let's imagine that we all have the same running start at creativity. There are some individuals who are simply hard-wired to be more creative than others. It has to do with our natural brain preferences for taking in information and arriving at decisions.

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® is the oldest and most respected psychological instrument available. I went through the "mind bending" training to become qualified to administer and interpret this instrument. If you'd like to investigate taking the MBTI® in order to understand more about "what makes you tick," contact me. That assessment is separate from this report and I do need to charge you for materials and the interpretation session. The cost is \$85.

For today, however, let's just start off with two excellent tests from a book by Salvatore V. Didato, Ph.D., "The Big Book of Personality Tests."

They are short and easy, and they'll give you good insights as to where you are on the creativity vs. ego scale.

Test #1. Are You an Undiscovered Creative Genius?

1. I would like to be hypnotized.
True False
2. Occasionally, I experience deja vu.
True False
3. I like trying to see shapes in the clouds.
True False
4. I have had the experience of staring intently at something until it slowly (or suddenly) became very strange before my eyes.
True False
5. Sometimes, while asleep, I carry on conversations with someone who enters my room.
True False
6. I have had the sensation of "highway hypnosis" while driving or riding in a car.
True False
7. I am often so deep in concentration that I fail to hear others who call me.
True False
8. I often get interesting thoughts when I am half- or fully asleep.
True False
9. I like to be engaged in several projects at the same time.
True False
10. I crack jokes, laugh a lot, and am generally known as a humorous person.
True False
11. I am resourceful when it comes to dealing with unpredictable circumstances, like the sudden arrival of unexpected guests, a switch in trip plans, or a spontaneous picnic.
True False
12. I have a wide range of interests in a variety of fields, such as the arts, outdoor sports, books, and crafts.
True False

SCORING

To tally your score, give yourself 1 point for each "True" response.

A score of 9-12 points: You are an ego-permissive person at the high end of the creativity scale. You would probably be happy taking part in tasks that call for this ability if you are not already engaged in such.

A score of 5-8 points: You have about average creative potential. You would probably be able to tap into it more if you let go and relaxed. If you push yourself to use more of your imagination and novel thinking you can boost your creativity.

A score of 0-4 points: You are low on ego-permissiveness and creativity, and may need some stimulation. Try to encourage yourself to look for the unusual aspects of a situation. Perhaps joining an artistic workshop or a group involved in imaginative projects will expand your creative capacity.

EXPLANATION

Quiz items 1 through 7 relate to an alternation of consciousness that experts call "dissociation." This semi-conscious state of mind causes us to leave the here and now, to disengage our brain from the demands of the moment.

This suspension of logic encourages our creative powers and has been called "regression in the service of the ego." People who can tolerate such unusual states of mind tend to be innovative thinkers. They are more imaginative, intuitive, impulsive, idealistic, and willing to take risks.

Quiz items 8 through 12 are based on the creativity research of J.P. Guilford, who directed a major study at the University of Southern California that yielded many important facts about human creativity. Guilford concluded that creative people usually have several irons in the fire at once, display good wit and humor, adapt to new settings and quick changes, and have a broad range of interests. He concluded that being creative is connected with the ability to overcome what psychologists call a "constraining mental set," – it is the flexibility to diverse from conventional views and thoughts. Such "breakaway thinkers" are our culture's artistic contributors: They compose new songs, write novels and plays, and invent devices that make life easier and more enjoyable.

Is originality of ideas an inborn trait? Scientific data suggest that it's not. Rather, creativity is developed over time. If a creative child comes from a creative family, his unconventional thinking was probably encouraged by parents and siblings, and not inherited.

One might assume that innovative reasoning isn't something to be pushed or hurried. But this isn't the case in professional areas that require "originality on demand." In fields such as advertising, public relations, and commercial art, employees can generate ideas even when they are pressured to produce. This shows that we can all prod our imaginations a bit more to bring originality to the things we do.

This next test has to do with measuring your imagination. If you've never had your imagination tested, or would like to test it again, take the following quiz. It's based on several imagination tests, including one developed at Yale University.

Test #2. How Far Does Your Imagination Stretch?

1. I can tell a white lie without becoming flustered.
a. Rarely b. Sometimes c. Often
2. I cry at the movies.
a. Rarely b. Sometimes c. Often
3. I can visualize patterns and images in clouds, mountains, wallpaper patterns, etc.
a. Rarely b. Sometimes c. Often
4. I get ideas that I think would make a good movie or book.
a. Rarely b. Sometimes c. Often
5. When I retell a story, I tend to embellish it somewhat in order to make it more interesting.
a. Rarely b. Sometimes c. Often
6. I vividly imagine extreme life situations, such as being stranded on a deserted island, or winning the lottery.
a. Rarely b. Sometimes c. Often
7. I worry about a possible accident when someone who is usually punctual is very late.
a. Rarely b. Sometimes c. Often
8. I enjoy abstract art.
a. Rarely b. Sometimes c. Often
9. I like to read fiction or stories about the supernatural.
a. Rarely b. Sometimes c. Often
10. When I awaken from a vivid dream it takes me a few seconds to return to reality.
a. Rarely b. Sometimes c. Often

SCORING

To tally your score, give yourself 1 point for each "a" response, 2 points for each "b" response, and 3 points for each "c." People with active imaginations tend to respond to many of the items with an answer of "often."

A score of 10-15 points: You're a concrete thinker based in reality. While it is not impossible for you to imagine situations, you prefer a practical, realistic approach to life. You would benefit from stretching your imagination. Perhaps taking a course in creative writing or art will expand your way of thinking and boost your imaginative skills.

A score of 16-23 points: You have an average level of imagination. A balance between practicality and creativity allows you to actualize your ideas and see your fantasies take flight.

A score of 24-30 points: You have a very active imagination. It is a powerful force within you, but be careful to keep it somewhat in check to avoid becoming impractical. If your creative mind already runs wild, try to control it somewhat by being more practical and conservative in your daily decision-making.

EXPLANATION

Human imagination has excited the interest of psychologists since the early 1950s. Experts are now confident that it plays a key role in mental health. There is evidence that those who have difficulty visualizing scenarios or who are discouraged from using their imagination productively tend to become rigid or insecure, and often display various symptoms of neurosis.

Still, an overactive imagination can also be problematic – it can put you out of touch with reality and create difficulties in dealing with responsibility. Researchers believe that a distinct advantage exists for behavior-therapy patients who can form mental images. Imagination is often at the core of treatments for phobia, obsessions, and bad habits. In these situations, patients are asked to imagine those things that cause them anxiety or create other problems for them. They are then taught to relax while still imagining the distressing situation or object.

Do imaginative people have more fun? Probably. They tend to enrich their experiences through creative thinking. Witness the child who receives a new toy and gets almost as much joy out of playing with the box as with the toy itself. The child imagines the box as any number of things and incorporates it into play fantasies.

If your imagination index is fairly low, take heart. Studies show that imagination can be improved. The imaginative powers of children can be strengthened and expanded through a series of games and play exercises. Surely, adults can broaden their minds in a similar fashion – by engaging in activities that require them to think about and perceive the world in new and unusual ways. California Psychologist Dr. Richard DeMille's work has verified this. DeMille's interest in imagination may well have been stimulated by his father, Cecil B. DeMille, the famous movie director.

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Now, armed with some new information about how you think, you may want to pursue filling in the whole picture and take the MBTI®. It not only gives you a complete psychological profile of yourself, it shows you your dominant and subordinate preferences and offers suggestions on strengthening your less developed preferences. It's those traits that show themselves when you're experiencing difficult times. They're the aspects of our personality that we probably wish we could change.

The MBTI® consists of approximately 90 very easy questions; it takes no more than a half-hour to complete. It assesses your preferences in four categories:

Ways of Gaining Energy Extraversion (E) Focusing on the outside world and getting energy by interacting with people and being active	Introversion (I) Focusing on one's inner world and getting energy by reflecting on ideas and experiences and having time alone
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Ways of taking in information Sensing (S) Noticing and trusting facts, specifics Past experience, and present realities	Intuition (N) Using imagination and trusting patterns and future possibilities
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Ways of making decisions Thinking (T) Using logical analysis, objectivity And intellectual criteria	Feeling (F) Using values, feelings, and subjective criteria
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Ways of living in the world Judging (J) Preferring structure, organization preparation, and closure	Perceiving (P) Preferring flexibility, spontaneity, and keeping options open as long as possible
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It's fascinating to understand why we act the way we do... and why other people behave the way they do toward us and others. The MBTI will explain a lot of the motivation behind the actions. And when we know more about others, and ourselves we can relax enough to act with confidence and compassion.

Understanding our thought processes helps explain past mistakes, missteps and missed opportunities. And it helps us approach new people, businesses decisions, and our family and friends in a more enlightened manner... for the benefit of all.

There's a wonderful book by two very respected teachers and authors of Type, Roger R. Pearman and Sarah C. Albritton, and it's entitled, "I'M NOT CRAZY, I'M JUST NOT YOU." That title sums up the refreshing new attitude you can have about yourself and others by taking the MBTI.

Call or email me and I'll be happy to answer any questions you have about the MBTI, and I'll walk you through the test-taking and explain what's involved in the interpretation session.

All the best,

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