

July 7, 2004

**Celebrating Differences—Part IV**  
**Judgers and Perceivers**  
**By Kenneth A. Sprang**

*Find the person who will love you because of your differences  
and not in spite of them and you have found a lover for life.*

--Leo Buscaglia

His desk is always piled high with papers, some of which have been sitting there for a long while. She, on the other hand, is orderly and tidy. Her closet and armoire drawers are carefully organized by type of clothing and color. She can assemble a perfectly matched outfit in a matter of seconds, and decides quickly what she will wear on a given occasion.

He tries hard to be on time for things, but is forever trying to cram too many projects in too short of time, and so he is perpetually late. She is always punctual, and often finds his “mismanagement” of time inconsiderate.

He always has a “to do” list which grows ever longer and is never completed, and he promises unrealistic deadlines. She, in contrast, is structured and efficient in her management of time and rarely uses lists.

He hates making decisions and often procrastinates. Buying a new car involves gathering volumes of information to compare features, gas mileage, cost, and colors, and before narrowing down to several models. Then he takes weeks deciding which to buy, perhaps delaying until the new models come out to check out the latest features. Why it takes him months to decide anything is a complete mystery to her, while he is equally mystified that she can make decisions so easily.

He may leave things out of place and walk by them daily, literally not seeing them. The vacuum may sit in the living room for months. He insists that he does not do it, but she is unconvinced, perhaps seeing him as lazy. She is similarly frustrated by his dirty clothes on the bedroom floor and his habit of setting his brief case on the dining room table on Friday evening, leaving it unopened until he goes to work on Monday.

He does not like to plan things much in advance; he is spontaneous and likes to keep his options open. She, on the other hand, is anxious and distressed when he plans a vacation without making advance reservations.

Welcome to the contrasting worlds of the Perceiver (he) and the Judger (she). These are the last of the four components of our Myers-Briggs types, which we have explored in this series. The population, both male and female, is about equally divided between the two.

Judgers need control of their lives and sometimes that control is extended to the lives of those around them. They are organized and they like predictability. They are usually comfortable conforming to standards of an organization, whereas Perceivers march to the tune of their own drummer. Perceivers can be organized, but it is learned behavior.

Judgers plan things—they *need* to plan. Judgers, of course are the ones who always hand in their term papers or work projects early. Perceivers are the ones staying up all night to finish a project, delivering just in the nick of time—or even delivering it late, and they love doing things on the spur of the moment.

Judgers are also tidy. When things get untidy or chaotic, they may actually feel

July 7, 2004

emotional stress or pain, in contrast to the Perceiver, who simply cannot understand what the fuss is about.

Judgers are quick to reach decisions, and find comfort in doing so. Those decisions may be experienced by others as judgments or criticisms, which can lead to tension in relationship.

In this, as well as all of the other elements of our Myers-Briggs types, it is important to understand that by the time we reach adulthood, our types are relatively immutable. Some changes may occur as we adapt to circumstances of life, and each of us can try to strengthen our less dominant side, e.g. a Perceiver can learn to be more organized, but our preferences are relatively fixed.

Despite the challenges when one partner is a Perceiver and the other a Judger, these different traits can also be a real gift. In our family, Carol is a Perceiver and so am I. We often joke about “hiring a Judger” to help organize our lives. We address the demands of life such as deadlines and the need to plan in advance, as necessary, but it takes a conscious effort. Moreover, these skills have been developed over time. Yet such skills are natural to a Judger.

One of the secrets of a fulfilling relationship is to recognize these type and temperament differences and to understand that they are part of your partner’s essence, the natural way of things in his or her world. You cannot change them any more than you can change your partner’s physical features. Celebrate the differences! See yourselves as complementing one another. Learn to laugh when *your* Perceiver or *his* Judger traits seem to be in conflict. If you do, you will be rewarded by a happier, healthier, more respectful relationship.

*Kenneth Sprang, MA, JD, and Carol Sprang, MA, RNC, LCPC direct Bethesda-Chevy Chase Counseling & Consulting in Bethesda, offering Imago Relationship Therapy, relationship and executive coaching, individual and couples coaching and counseling, and business consulting services. (301) 907-3377, ext. 93. [ken@bccounseling.com](mailto:ken@bccounseling.com). [www.bccounseling.com](http://www.bccounseling.com)*