

Type in Friendships and Relationships

A Dialogue of Similarities and Differences



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Friendships and relationships arise from a great many situations and for a great many reasons. Yet, type and typology offer ways to understand and engage with both casual acquaintances and the closest of friends. C. G. Jung, the father of psychological type, observed that

It is through the deepening of our relationships that we become more fully and vibrantly ourselves.

He called this process "individuation" (Jung, 1928/1966, p. 155). While we can become friends whether or not we know type and our type preferences, when you are able to appreciate your own type, as well as the type preferences of others, you can make your relationships even better by applying type knowledge. For example, you can minimize unnecessary conflict, avoid miscommunication, appreciate differing perspectives, and resolve disagreements. By applying an awareness of your own type, as well as others, you can bring relationships into ever greater levels of closeness and connection.

Similarities: Points of connection, points of contention

For many people, the ideal relationship is thought to be one based on similarities of interests and values. To be fair, there is certainly much to recommend this approach. Often times it is refreshing to be with those who "get it" or who "get us." It can be relieving and enjoyable to share experiences with those who appreciate our same likes and dislikes. This can be seen in typology as well. When two friends share a preference for thinking, they can often find common ground in their discussions of ideas and applied principles. In such a friendship, it can be relieving to share a prioritization of clear, unburdened consideration. Likewise, friends

that share preferences for extraverted perception functions might appreciate each other's willingness to be spontaneous in their plans and activities.

However, typological similarities can sometimes lead to clashes and someone feeling as if their toes are being stepped on. When the same type preferences are encountered in others, it can sometimes feel claustrophobic or, as the saying goes, that there are too many cooks in the kitchen. Similarities of type preference can lead to connection and enhancement of said function, or to a veritable function overload.

I have seen two people, both with ESTJ preferences, for example, get into some of the most contentious disagreements. These often arose from their approaching one another with the same extraverted thinking function but having come to a different conclusion. Additionally, when two people in a relationship have the same preferences, the same functions are left to the shadow. In this way, the relationship might benefit from the doubling of the same assets *and* struggle from a compounding of the same challenges.

Differences: Resolving conflicts, deepening connection

Many are quick to point out the difficulties that can arise from mismatches between the type preferences of those in relationships such as friendships or marriages. Just like the differences of pronunciation in the song, Let's Call the Whole Thing Off, many are quick to "call off" a relationship based on conflicting typological priorities and interpretations.

For example, for those with preferences for the feeling function, a pattern of well-formed but inconsiderate thoughts can sometimes be enough to leave the relationship and never look back. The stresses of such typological differences are generally obvious points of conflict and disagreement. However, it is working through and resolving such conflicts and misunderstandings that offers some of the best opportunities for better understanding ourselves as well as deepening our connection with one another.

In Jungian psychology, typological differences can create can actually increase our learning and growth. It is only through contrast and difference that we can truly understand ourselves as well as compassionately understand the perspectives of others. While certain approaches to conflict can of course be destructive, it is through the heartfelt resolution of conflict that relationships deepen and thrive. Relationships can survive disagreements if they both come from a caring place.

Revisiting the previous example of a friendship between someone with thinking preferences and their friend with feeling preferences, typology illuminates that neither approach has a monopoly on the truth. Both offer value when in dialogue. If your attitude is one of mutual care and respect, discussing differences of priority can help each person to better recognize their own perspective as well as appreciate the perspective and values of the other. Furthermore, when we learn to value a variety of typological approaches in our relationships with others, we

also can come to better appreciate those challenging and uncooperative parts of ourselves. Jung recognized that . . .

As we grow to our most full and thriving selves, we find not greater isolation but an ever-greater ability to relate beautifully to others.

Jung, C. G. (1966). Synchronicity: An acausal connecting principle (R. F. C. Hull, Trans.). In H. Read et al. (Eds.), *The collected works of C. G. Jung* (Vol. 8, 2nd ed.). Retrieved from <http://www.proquest.com> (Original work published 1928)