

The Theory Behind True Colors

The theory behind True Colors is not new. It can be traced back to Hippocrates, who identified four different types of human beings; the Sanguine (buoyant, cheerful, hopeful, optimistic, sunny), the Choleric (angry, cantankerous, peevish, irate, testy), the Phlegmatic (languid, lethargic, listless, indifferent, passive), and the Melancholic (dejected, despondent, gloomy, morose). While these definitions are derived from Webster's Thesaurus rather than from Hippocrates, you can see that each refers to very different personality or temperament characteristics.

In more recent years, Carl Jung described personality or temperament differences as a fundamental basis for understanding human beings. When his work, *Psychological Type*, was translated into English in 1923, it had a profound effect on Katherine C. Briggs, who had been studying differences in people for years. As a result, Briggs and her daughter, Isabel Briggs-Myers, developed the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), which is used worldwide. Their theory states that much of the random variation in human behavior is actually quite orderly. In their work, they identified and characterized sixteen (16) different types of people.

During the past thirty-five years, David Keirsey has refined the work of Myers-Briggs. In his publication, *Please Understand Me*, he returned to classifying personality and/or temperament into four types. According to Keirsey, these four different types are different in fundamental ways. They want different things. They have different motives, needs, and drives. They analyze, conceptualize, understand, and learn differently. These differences create natural barriers to interpersonal communication, making understanding between people of different types difficult.

The True Colors metaphor has been developed from the work of Keirsey. Don Lowry's book, *Keys to Personal Success*, translates his theory into simple and practically applied information. It brings complex ideas out of both academia and psychotherapy and sets them in clear, real-life applications.

A considerable body of information supports the theory that there are four patterns of habitual human behavior or temperament: (Adickes, 1907; Spranger, 1920; Kreschmar, 1920, 1960; Fromm, 1947; Keirsey, 1967, 1978).

A growing body of knowledge also supports the theory that these four patterns of behavior are the key to individual self-esteem and its growth: (Jung, 1920; Hillman, 1979; Keirsey, 1973; Lawrence, 1979, 1980; Provost, 1987)