Personality Priorities and Lifestyle Beliefs

Our "Personality Priorities" are what is important to us and are reflected in our relationships with others. The first four priorities can be expressed in positive and negative ways. People can become stuck and use a priority whether it's appropriate to the circumstances or not. This loss of flexibility creates imbalances and relationship problems. If we are unaware of the "Lifestyle Beliefs" that determine our choices, our problems and behavior aren't likely to change.

Control

Strengths:
- Well-organized, likes structure
- Good planners and leaders.
- Self-starters, industrious, persistent, self-sufficient.
- Provide structure and stability.

Beliefs:
- I must control myself & others
- I must have my own way
- I must not get too close to people or I'm vulnerable.

Potential Problems:
- Use logic, temper, charm, tears, dependency, resistance and stubbornness, to control.
- Must have absolute power.
- Afraid of being wrong.
- Resist being controlled.
- Get into power struggles.
- Try to make life predictable.
- Lack creativity &spontaneity.
- Fear the unexpected, resist change and flexibility.
- Have difficulty expressing feelings & keep people at a distance. Others avoid & controllers feel lonely

To achieve balance:
- Give choices in limits
- Focus on accepting what *is* and changing self, not others.
- See positive benefits of change and learn from mistakes.

Superiority

Strengths:
- Respect for excellence.
- Responsible, ambitious, courageous, perceptive.
- Helps others discover their strengths and resources.
- Idealistic, positive outlook.
- Works to improve.

Beliefs:
- I must be better than others.
- I must be competent and useful to be worthwhile.
- I doubt myself and need reassurance I'm the best.
- I must be perfect.
- I know what's best.

Potential problems:
- Others feel inadequate and turned-off.
- Others feel pressured and discouraged trying to live up to unrealistic standards
- Take over other people's responsibilities so it will get done the "right" way.

To achieve balance:
- Be more accepting of self and others.
- Avoid treating others as inferior.
- Build others' self-esteem
- Give responsibilities and let others find their way of doing.

Pleasing

Strengths:
- Concern about others.
- Friendly, perceptive, sensitive, and understanding.
- Generous affectionate, kind, make friends easily.
- Perceive others' feelings/wants
- Has few conflicts, diplomatic and avoid confrontations.

Beliefs:
- I must please others.
- Everyone must always like me
- I must get approval for all I do
- I must avoid rejection.
- Others should appreciate what I do for them.

Potential Problems:
- Must have approval from others and is willing to do anything to get it, even if not in own best interest.
- Divides energies pleasing all.
- Disrespect self, so others disrespect and use them
- Others turned off by need for approval.
- May spoil others or take over responsibilities to please.
- Try to buy love and approval

To achieve balance:
- Be firm *and* kind.
- Set boundaries for self/others
- Take care of self, too.

Comfort

Strengths:
- Easygoing and undemanding
- Keeps the peace and avoids conflict.

Beliefs:
- I must avoid pain, conflict, stress, responsibility.
- Don't expect anything from me.
- I am inadequate.
- Life should be easy.
- I should get what I want when I want it, without work.

Potential Problems:
- Don't make full use of talents.
- Not as productive as could be.
- Look out for own comfort.
- Others feel annoyed by their lack of drive or initiative.
- Put their own needs first, which creates resentment

To achieve balance:
- Recognize when inconvenience or investment of time/emotions is worthwhile for results achieved or to be responsible and helpful. In long-run, life will be easier.
- Develop self-discipline or you will be more inconvenienced in the long-run by the problems inaction causes.

Balanced

- Uses the other four priorities in positive ways, choosing priorities based on the needs of a particular situation.
- Work cooperatively with others, not in competition.
- Care about people and show compassion.
- Willing to give and take
- Set boundaries for self and offer choices in limits to others

Balancing our Priorities:

- Society has trained us to ask, "What am I doing *wrong*.?" Imbalanced priorities at one time had a good reason or served a constructive purpose, but now they are no longer needed and have become a liability.
- Become aware of what you are seeking to avoid...it will reveal why others are reacting negatively to your behavior.
- Recognize and build on your strengths.
- Find a positive way to use your priority to fit the needs of a situation.
- Be flexible in using priorities.
- Show others how to channel priority in positive day

Reference: *The Effective Parent*, © 1987, Don Dinkmeyer, Gary D. McKay, Don Dinkmeyer, Jr., James S. Dinkmeyer, Joyce L. McKay. Based on the theories of Alfred Adler and teachings of Rudolf Dreikurs. *Your Team Can Be One Big (Happy) Family* presentation © 2006, Jody Johnston Pawel, LSW, CFLE.