

Temperament is not destiny!

Written by Administrator

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Temperament is a part of your personality that is stable and unchanging. It relies on patterns or behavior that transcend such significant factors as culture, gender, and education. It's comforting to know that we can depend on our temperaments patterns and those of our friends and colleagues. We don't have to reinvent our personality. It's simply a part of us.

However, this constancy doesn't mean that we should allow ourselves – or our view of others – to be controlled by what we know about temperament.

Some people who learn about temperament use this knowledge to label everyone they meet. Rather than get to know someone by listening to their words, developing a relationship, or enjoying their company, they slot people into neat little boxes. With the person properly labeled, they feel there is no need to understand that person more deeply. These individuals use their knowledge of temperament to manipulate others or to get what they want from a colleague, spouse, or friend.

Similarly, when some people learn about their own temperament, they apply labels to themselves, thereby limiting their own promise and potential. For example, a relater may choose not to try to become more proactive or assertive, knowing that isn't his temperament. I remember one workshop participant saying, "Well, you see what you get with me. That's just the way I am." Her words seemed to be suggesting that she had no power to take responsibility for her decisions and actions.

But temperament is not destiny. We are much more than our temperament. Temperament is a great beginning, but it's not the be-all and end-all to understanding ourselves and others.