

Think Feel Know communication preferences

Background

The origins of Think Feel Know as a tool for understanding how people communicate can be traced back to the work of Karl Jung in the 1920's. His study on psychological types was ground breaking and defined the personality in four types:

Thinking

Feeling

Sensing

Intuition

In addition, each group had a further distinction of containing both introvert and extrovert characteristics.

This model, based on Jung's writings, has been the basis for the majority of the psychometric tools and personality tests that are in use today.

Personality vs communication

Jung's model is based on theories of personality, and is a model of choices. That is, someone is either thinking **or** feeling, intuitive **or** sensing.

The Think Feel Know process builds on this work, but moves away from the either/or model, towards a model of **communication preferences**. In this model, people are:

thinking **and** feeling **and** knowing.

People will have one preferred style of communication, but they will use all three at some point.

Understanding the three spaces

Think	Feel	Know
Data	Energy	Instinct
Lists, numbers, facts, lots of detail, structure, processes, instructions	Stories, pictures, analogies, colours, diagrams, hand gestures, enthusiasm	Short sentences, bullet points, quick, spontaneous, visionary, unprocessed

Think Feel Know profiles

Although we use all three communication methods of Think, Feel and Know, we will have preferences. This means that we can put an order to how we prefer to communicate. For some it will be Think first, followed by Feel, then Know at the end. This person's communication preference is then known as Think Feel Know – TFK. There are six distinct profiles:

TFK	TKF
FTK	FKT
KFT	KTF

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Applications

Since 1999, the Think Feel Know process has been used in both the commercial and education sectors. An online tool, the Think Feel Know indicator, has been developed. It allows people to receive an accurate assessment, including percentages, of their own communication preferences. To date, 6,500 assessments have been carried out, with the results showing the following preferences:

40% prefer to communicate in **Think**

45% prefer to communicate in **Feel**

15% prefer to communicate in **Know**

There are many areas that clients apply the process, including:

- **structuring meetings and conversations**
- **overcoming misunderstandings**
- **reducing tension in teams**
- **creating closer connections with other people**

Case study – school leaders

A head teacher was increasingly frustrated with her deputy, who he found to be abrupt and unclear. In turn, the deputy felt that the head was too vague and indecisive.

*The head was operating in **Feel**, whilst the deputy was in **Know**. Understanding this helped them to make choices, both about how they communicated, and how they interpreted the other person's communication.*

Result: harmony was restored and the pair now work as a strong and collaborative team. Meetings are quicker and more productive, staff know who to speak to about each issue, and both of the team have more time in their diaries.

Profiling with Think Feel Know

Everyone will, at some point use all three of the communication methods of Think, Feel and Know. Each person will also have a preference: one profile that they prefer to others. They also may have one method that is their least preferred. We can then use this information to work out personalised profiles.

Exercise: personal profiling

Using the grid below, mark down which of Think/Feel/Know is your preferred communication style. Then do the same for the least preferred, and the one remaining will be your second preference.

Position	Think/Feel/Know
Primary	
Secondary	
Least used	

Exercise: comparing preferences

Using the grid below, compare your profile with someone else that you know well.

	Your profile	Their profile
Primary		
Secondary		
Least used		

Strengths and challenges of the six different profiles

The table below is the collective thoughts of previous workshop participants, who have identified the benefits and difficulties of each of the profiles. It is to help understand ourselves and our reactions to others.

Profile	Strengths	Challenges	Identifying (verbal, non verbal)
Think Feel Know	Organised Well prepared Objective Perfectionist Will see things through Good for project	Don't use instinct Procrastinates Indecisive Impersonal Inflexible	Factual, statistical Uses technology Verbose Excited by detail Don't like interruptions. Need to follow a set order Head rules heart
Think Know Feel	All the facts Objective Rational Informed decisions Confident in decisions Reflective	Inflexible Not allowing for errors Insensitive Not good at reading people	Detailed Thorough Chronological Pedantic Tidy, organised Neat, meticulous Conservative
Feel Think Know	Empathetic Creative Contagious energy Organised, well thought out Thinks through process Don't get carried away – balanced	Indecisive Emotions get in the way Loss of control Wrong messages/signals Overwhelming Over analytical Lack of spontaneity Lose track of the key issue	Creative Enthusiastic Lively Empathetic Understanding Good at body language Reads situations well
Feel Know Think	Innovation Motivation Excitement Energising Extrovert	Not thought through Inconsistent Draining to others Oversensitive Ignores detail May be hard to manage	Long winded Stories Gestures Unstructured conversations Highs and lows Not always clear – specific points are buried
Know Think Feel	Decisive Assertive Confident Independent Leader, not follower	Poor at relationships Rude/aggressive Misses emotional cues Decisions too quick – may be wrong ones Unplanned	Short with people Straight to the point Closed body language Brusque gestures Formal Short emails No fluffy words or xxx's
Know Feel Think	Decisive Background info given Use experience Confident Energetic Big picture	Insufficient data Don't use all evidence Don't give enough detail Don't develop others Decisions unprocessed	Loose cannon Express what they want without saying why Talk a lot Easy to read their emotions

Further resources

Snowdon, Ruth. **Jung: the key ideas**. Pp. 115-129

Gigerenzer, Gerd. **Gut feelings: the intelligence of the unconscious**

Gladwell, Malcolm. **Blink: the power of thinking without thinking**