

The 5 Personality Patterns

Your Guide to
Understanding Yourself and Others
and Developing Emotional Maturity

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Our Eyes Deceive Us

OUR EYES DECEIVE US. Every day, every moment, we look out at the world and believe that what we see is the whole world, the only world, the world that everyone else sees. But we are mistaken.

The world we see is a filtered and distorted version of the real world. Some parts of the picture have been shifted to the foreground, brought into clear focus with vivid colors, while other parts of the picture have been moved to the background, dimmed and dulled until we hardly notice them at all. But we aren't aware of these distortions, so we think that the images we see are an accurate picture of the world.

Think of it this way: imagine that you live your entire life in a small room. The walls, floor, and ceiling of this room are made of TV screens, screens so big that they fill the entire wall, ceiling, and floor. Wherever you look, there are only screens. Everything you know about the world — everything that you see, hear, feel, touch, smell, taste, or perceive in any way — comes through the screens. Even how you perceive yourself comes through the screens.

Now ask yourself, “*What channel are my TV screens usually tuned to?*” Are you watching The Fear Channel, the channel which highlights all the dangers surrounding you? Are you watching The Love Channel, the channel devoted to feeling connected to others and pleasing them? Do you spend most of your time watching The Winning Channel, the channel which shows you who's up and who's down and how you can fight your way to the top? Are you watching The Avoid Losing Channel, the channel focused on how to stay small and hidden and avoid getting run over by those fighter types? Are you watching The Rules Channel, the one focused on keeping things ordered and correct and controlled, on doing it the right way and making sure that others do it the right way, too?

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Obviously, which channel you watch will make a huge difference in how you perceive the world and how you perceive yourself. And if you watch the same channel all day, every day of your life, you will have nothing to compare it to, no way to know that it is just one slice of the world, just a small fraction of the whole picture. You won't even know that there is a whole picture, a bigger, fuller world that you have never experienced. You won't know what you're missing.

You may notice that some people refer to things that you don't experience, or that they focus on things that don't make sense or just don't seem important to you. But you'll usually explain it by telling yourself a story, like *"They're stupid"* or *"I'm stupid"* or *"They're wrong"* or *"I'm wrong"* or *"They're mean"* or *"I'm not good enough"* — a story that boils down to either *"They're deficient"* or *"I'm deficient."* But, whatever you tell yourself, your stories won't challenge your belief that your view of the world is accurate. In fact, they will usually reinforce it.

So we go through life seeing a filtered, distorted picture of the world and making all of our decisions based on incomplete and distorted information. Then we wonder why life is such a struggle and why it is often so hard to get others to agree with us and cooperate with us.

Some of us try to find safety by being alone. Some of us look for safety through others, either by pleasing them or dominating them. Many of us try to persuade others to be more like we are. But whatever strategy we use, we are all seeking safety.

So how can we ever truly find safety? How can we ever learn to see the world as it really is and navigate skillfully through it? How can we get what we want? This book is about answering those questions.

The first step is to learn to change the TV channel you see in your head. Even one experience of changing your usual channel and seeing the world differently will decrease your certainty that your usual channel is the only channel and is showing you the whole picture.

To change the channel, you have to shift the way you are holding your attention. As you practice shifting how you hold your attention, doing it gets easier. You get better at telling what station you're currently tuned to just by looking at the theme running through what you're seeing. You learn that you have a choice: that you can change what you're seeing out there in the world by changing the channel inside yourself. And you get better at shifting your habitual stance of attention and thereby changing the channel.

But perhaps you find that the channel keeps changing back to your old habitual one. Over and over, you change it to something you like better, only

to find that it somehow changes itself back. So you start investigating: what is it that causes it to change back? Gradually you realize that whenever you get distressed or overwhelmed, you go back into your old, habitual survival pattern and the channel goes back to the same old station.

This book is about shifting out of those habitual survival patterns. It is about recognizing those patterns in yourself and in others, shifting yourself out of pattern and back into presence, and dealing with other people when they're in pattern. It is about how to come out of pattern so you can see the world as it really is and become the person you want to be.