

Life Styles Inventory™ & Myers-Briggs Type Indicator®: A Comparison of Two Surveys



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We are often asked: “What is the difference between the *Life Styles Inventory*™ and the *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator*®?” Whereas both of these surveys help individuals to better understand themselves and others, they differ in terms of what they measure, how they measure it, and how the results are used. Thus, the purpose of this paper is to highlight what we believe are some of the most important differences between these two popular instruments.

The *Life Styles Inventory*™ (LSI) measures twelve distinct thinking and behavioral styles that are distinguished by their orientations toward task versus people and higher-order needs for satisfaction and growth versus lower-order needs for security and safety. The LSI builds on the work of a variety of noteworthy psychologists, including Abraham Maslow, Carl Rogers, Albert Ellis, Karen Horney, Timothy Leary, David McClelland, and Harry Stack Sullivan, as well as management scholars such as Fredrick Hertzberg, Douglas McGregor, and Ralph Stodgill. It is designed to provide individuals with an opportunity to identify specific strengths in their thinking and behavior, as well as any “stumbling blocks” that may be standing in their way. As such, the LSI is used to initiate positive changes in how people approach their work and interact with others—changes that can increase both their personal and professional effectiveness.

In contrast, the *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator*® (MBTI) measures preferences rather than thinking styles. More specifically, it is a system for classifying the ways in which people become aware of, perceive, and judge events. The MBTI is an application of Carl Jung’s theory of psychological types. It is designed to help individuals become acquainted with their own preferences as well as the preferences of others based on the four dichotomies specified by Jung’s theory. In turn, the MBTI is used for career development and to help individuals understand others’ preferences in the workplace.

The differences between the two instruments can be summarized as follows:

- The LSI measures personal orientations toward different thinking and behavioral styles based on one’s needs and interests. The MBTI measures preferences based on personality and related characteristics.
- The LSI orientations and styles can change over time due to experiences and learning; changes in needs, interests, roles, or organizational membership; and personal self-development efforts. The MBTI types are relatively stable and intractable.

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- Some of the LSI styles are positively associated with problem solving and management effectiveness, individual health and well-being, high-quality interpersonal relationships, and personal satisfaction, whereas other styles detract from these outcomes. In contrast, none of the MBTI types are considered to be “superior” or generally more effective than the others. Rather, the relative effectiveness of the different types depends on the situation.
- The LSI is part of a larger, multi-level measurement system that can be used to promote coordinated, complementary changes at the individual, leader, group/team, and organizational levels. The MBTI is strictly an individual-level tool with options for producing group/team and organizational averages.
- LSI results are most useful for personal development, team building, and multi-level organizational change programs. Results on the MBTI are useful for understanding oneself, identifying teammates with complementary preferences, and career planning.

The following tables summarize the core components and features of each instrument. Because the instruments measure different concepts, a comparison between the LSI styles and the MBTI types is not possible. Instead, more specific information about the instruments is provided in the appendices.

Table 1. Scales

Life Styles Inventory™ (LSI)	Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® (MBTI)
<p>The LSI measures twelve thinking and behavioral styles that are organized into three general clusters: Constructive, Passive/Defensive, and Aggressive/Defensive.</p> <p>Constructive styles characterize self-enhancing thinking and behavior that contribute to one’s level of satisfaction, ability to develop healthy relationships and work effectively with people, and proficiency at accomplishing tasks. Specific styles include Achievement, Self-Actualizing, Affiliative, and Humanistic-Encouraging.</p> <p>Passive/Defensive styles represent self-protecting thinking and behavior that promote the fulfillment of security needs through interaction with people. Specific styles include Approval, Conventional, Dependent, and Avoidance.</p> <p>Aggressive/Defensive styles reflect self-promoting thinking and behavior that is used to maintain one’s status/position and fulfill security needs through task-related activities. Specific styles include Oppositional, Power, Competitive, and Perfectionistic.</p> <p>The twelve styles represent normal patterns of either generally effective or potentially self-defeating thinking and behavior. Scores along the styles are profiled on a circumplex, a circular diagram around which styles are organized based on their degree of similarity. The overall profile describes the respondent’s self-concept and identifies his/her primary (strongest) and secondary (second strongest) styles.</p>	<p>The MBTI measures preferences along four dichotomies: Extraversion-Introversion, Sensing-Intuition, Thinking-Feeling, and Judging-Perceiving.</p> <p>Extraversion (E) describes those who draw energy from the outer world of people and activity. Introversion (I) describes those who draw energy from and pay attention to the inner world.</p> <p>Sensing (S) characterizes those who prefer information that is real and factual. Intuition (N) characterizes those who prefer to see patterns, connections, and the “big picture.”</p> <p>Thinking (T) describes those who use logical analysis in decision making. Feeling (F) describes those who use personal values in decision making.</p> <p>Judging (J) characterizes those who prefer a structured and planned life. Perceiving (P) characterizes those who prefer a flexible, adaptable life.</p> <p>Each of the MBTI types represents normal human behavior. Combinations of these preferences result in sixteen personality types identified by the four letters that best describe the individual.</p>

Table 2. Items

Life Styles Inventory™ (LSI)	Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® (MBTI)
Consists of 240 items based on a 3-point Guttman scale.	Consists of 93 items based on a forced-choice format.

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Table 3. Comparative Data

Life Styles Inventory™ (LSI)	Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® (MBTI)
<p>Each profile has been statistically adjusted (or “normed”) to correct for the differences in the way people respond to different items. This allows users to convert their unadjusted (or “raw”) total scores into percentile scores that provide a more realistic picture of their thinking and behavioral styles.</p> <p>The LSI is normed based on a sample of 9,207 adults:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3.9% Owner/Officer 10.3% Key-Level Managers 17.2% Mid-Level Managers 8.6% Division/Dept. Heads 16.7% Supervisors 0.6% Sales 0.8% Teachers 0.5% Medical 4.1% Engineers 3.4% Accountants 1.3% Bankers 10.1% Consultants 22.5% Other <p>The LSI <i>Leader’s Guide</i> contains six “conversion profiles” that enable individuals to compare their results to salespeople, supervisors, mid-level managers, female managers, key-level managers, or owner-officers. Sample profiles of different occupational groups; effective versus ineffective individuals, leaders, and teams; and individuals experiencing stress, various symptoms of strain, or specific types of medical symptoms are also available.</p>	<p>Standardized scores can be computed based on a sample of 3,200 adults. Tables are also available that detail the frequency of the sixteen types in specific samples.</p>

Table 4. Development Materials

Life Styles Inventory™ (LSI)	Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® (MBTI)
<p>The LSI includes a 76-page <i>Self-Development Guide</i> that includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to use the LSI and <i>Self-Development Guide</i> • What the LSI measures • A detailed description of the 12 styles • The LSI thinking styles and effective management • The challenge of change • Suggested readings • Selected <i>Life Styles Inventory</i> research articles 	<p>The MBTI provides a 43-page booklet, <i>Introduction to Type</i>, that includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the MBTI • What is psychological type • What are preferences • The MBTI preferences • What is your type • A detailed description of the 16 types • Using differences constructively • Using type preference combinations • Applying type • Things to remember about type • Additional readings

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APPENDIX A: LIFE STYLES INVENTORY™

Based on Lafferty, J. C. (1989). *Life Styles Inventory, LSI 1 Self-Development Guide*. Plymouth, Michigan: Human Synergistics International.

Constructive Styles

Humanistic-Encouraging

The Human-Encouraging scale measures our interest in people, our tendency to care about others, and our ability to encourage them to improve. Humanistic-Encouraging people are accepting of themselves, and accept others for who they are without question or criticism.

Characteristics:

- A focused concern for the growth and development of people
- Appreciation of the strengths in others, and belief in their potential for improvement
- Optimism regarding what people can accomplish
- A nurturing approach to relationships
- The willingness to assist others with self-improvement
- The ability to inspire and motivate others

Affiliative

The Affiliative scale measures our degree of commitment to forming and sustaining satisfying relationships. This style represents a need for social interaction and interpersonal contact.

Characteristics:

- A tendency to value relationships above all else
- A need to build relationships that are meaningful and reciprocal
- Strong, well-developed interpersonal skills
- A tendency to motivate others using genuine praise and friendliness

Achievement

The Achievement scale measures a way of thinking that is highly associated with personal effectiveness. Scores for this style indicate our interest in, as well as our proficiency at, attaining high-quality results on challenging projects.

Characteristics:

- A focus on achieving a standard of excellence
- The belief that things have specific and definable causes; a lack of belief in fate, luck, or chance
- The knowledge that individual effort counts
- A commitment to making things better
- A preference for setting and accomplishing realistic, attainable goals, rather than goals imposed by others
- A belief in the benefits of asking for and giving honest feedback

Self-Actualizing

The Self-Actualizing scale measures a way of thinking that results in the highest form of personal fulfillment. Becoming self-actualized is the final step in one's growth and maturation process.

Characteristics:

- Concern for self-development
- Strong instincts and intuition
- Relative freedom from feelings of guilt or worry
- An energetic, exciting approach to life
- A strong desire to know about and experience things directly

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Passive/Defensive Styles

Approval

The Approval scale measures our need to be accepted by others to increase or sustain our feelings of self-worth. While the desire to be approved of is natural, problems occur when approval-seeking becomes a need, and ultimately our standard way of interacting with others.

Characteristics:

- Low self-esteem
- Preoccupation with the opinions of others
- An over-concern with being “popular” and well-liked
- A tendency to be too agreeable, “wishy-washy,” and compliant
- Difficulties with conflict, negotiation, and confrontation

Conventional

The Conventional scale measures our tendency to act in a conforming way. While some conformity is necessary in life, too much can be restrictive. The Conventional style represents a preoccupation with adhering to rules and established procedures, maintaining a low profile, and “blending in” with our particular environment to avoid calling attention to ourselves.

Characteristics:

- A tendency to view rules as a source of comfort and security
- A preference for staying unseen and unnoticed
- A tendency to cover up mistakes
- Reduced initiative
- A preoccupation with appearing average, “normal,” and like everyone else
- Unquestioned obedience to authority figures and rules
- A reduction in originality
- Feelings of security within a bureaucracy

Dependent

The Dependent scale measures the degree to which we feel our efforts do not count. Dependent behavior originates in a need for security and self-protection. Dependent people typically feel that they have very little control over their lives.

Characteristics:

- An over-concern with pleasing people, and not questioning others or taking independent action
- A passive attitude
- Feelings of helplessness
- The presence of rapid change or traumatic setbacks in one’s life
- A tendency to be easily influenced
- A lack of self-respect, which results in feeling unable to accomplish things
- Difficulty making decisions

Avoidance

The Avoidance scale measures our tendency to use the defensive strategy of withdrawal. We do this by hiding our feelings, or by shying away from situations we find threatening.

Characteristics:

- A strong tendency to deny responsibility for one’s own behavior
- Feelings of guilt over real or imagined mistakes
- Fear of failure
- A preoccupation with one’s own concerns
- Lack of self-disclosure that eventually leads to emotional isolation

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Aggressive/Defensive Styles

Oppositional

The Oppositional scale measures our tendency to use the defensive and aggressive strategy of disagreeing with others, and to seek attention by being critical and cynical.

Characteristics:

- The ability to ask tough, probing questions
- A tendency to seem aloof and detached from people
- A need to look for flaws in everything
- A tendency to make others feel uncomfortable
- A negative, cynical attitude
- A sarcastic sense of humor

Power

The Power scale measures our tendency to associate our self-worth with the degree to which we can control and dominate others. Individuals who seek power are motivated by a need to gain prestige, status, and influence.

Characteristics:

- A high need for power, status, prestige, influence, and control
- A tendency to dictate, rather than guide, the actions of others
- An aggressive and possibly vengeful attitude
- Narrow, rigid thinking
- A tendency to be threatened by perceived attempts to undermine authority

Competitive

The Competitive scale measures our need to establish a sense of self-worth through competing against and comparing ourselves to others. While it is largely encouraged and accepted as a measure of success, competitive behavior is not an effective predictor of achievement in business.

Characteristics:

- The association of self-worth with winning and losing
- A need for recognition and praise from others
- A tendency toward aggressiveness
- Reckless “hip-shooting” behavior and unnecessary risk-taking
- A “win-lose” orientation that distorts perspective and goals
- An extreme fear of failure

Perfectionistic

The Perfectionistic scale measures the degree to which we feel a driven need to be seen by others as perfect. A dramatic difference exists between the act of perfecting something and the concept of perfectionism.

Characteristics:

- A tendency to attach self-worth to accomplishment of tasks
- Repetitive, sometimes ritualistic behavior
- Low self-esteem
- A tendency to place excessive demands on self and others
- A preoccupation with detail that distorts perspective and judgment
- An excessive concern with avoiding mistakes
- An inability to deal with, or express, emotion

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APPENDIX B: MYERS-BRIGGS TYPE INDICATOR®

Based on Myers-Briggs, I. (1998). *Introduction to Type*. Palo Alto, California: CPP, Inc.

The Extraversion-Introversion (E-I) Dichotomy

Extraversion

People who prefer Extraversion focus on the outer world of people and activity. They direct energy and attention outward and receive energy from interacting with people and from taking action.

Characteristics:

- Attuned to external environment
- Prefer to communicate by talking
- Work out ideas by talking them through
- Learn best through doing or discussing
- Have broad interests
- Sociable and expressive
- Readily take initiative in work and relationships

Introversion

People who prefer Introversion focus on their own inner world of ideas and experiences. They direct their energy and attention inward and receive energy from reflecting on their thoughts, memories, and feelings.

Characteristics:

- Drawn to their inner world
- Prefer to communicate in writing
- Work out ideas by reflecting on them
- Learn best by reflection, mental “practice”
- Focus in depth on their interests
- Private and contained
- Take initiative when the situation or issue is very important to them

The Sensing-Intuition (S-N) Dichotomy

Sensing

People who prefer Sensing gather information that is real and tangible—based on what is actually happening. They are observant about the specifics of what is going on around them and are especially attuned to practical realities.

Characteristics:

- Oriented to present realities
- Factual and concrete
- Focus on what is real and actual
- Observe and remember specifics
- Build carefully and thoroughly toward conclusions
- Understand ideas and theories through practical applications
- Trust experience

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Intuition

People who prefer Intuition gather information by seeing the big picture, focusing on the relationships and connections between facts. They want to grasp patterns and are especially attuned to seeing new possibilities.

Characteristics:

- Oriented to future possibilities
- Imaginative and verbally creative
- Focus on the patterns and meanings in data
- Remember specifics when they relate to a pattern
- Move quickly to conclusions, follow hunches
- Want to clarify ideas and theories before putting them into practice
- Trust inspiration

The Thinking-Feeling (T-F) Dichotomy

Thinking

People who prefer to use Thinking in decision making like to look at the logical consequences of a choice or action. They want to mentally remove themselves from the situation to examine the pros and cons objectively. They are energized by critiquing and analyzing to identify what's wrong with something so they can solve the problem. Their goal is to find a standard or principle that will apply in all similar situations.

- Analytical
- Use cause-and-effect reasoning
- Solve problems with logic
- Strive for an objective standard of truth
- Reasonable
- Can be "tough-minded"
- Fair, wants everyone treated equally

Feeling

People who prefer to use Feeling in decision making like to consider what is important to them and to others involved. They mentally place themselves into the situation to identify with everyone so they can make decisions based on their values about honoring people. They are energized by appreciating and supporting others and look for qualities to praise. Their goal is to create harmony and treat each person as a unique individual.

- Empathetic
- Guided by personal values
- Assess impacts of decisions on people
- Strive for harmony and positive interactions
- Compassionate
- May appear "tenderhearted"
- Fair, wants everyone treated as an individual

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The Judging-Perceiving (J-P) Dichotomy

Judging

People who prefer to use their Judging process in the outer world like to live in a planned, orderly way, seeking to regulate and manage their lives. They want to make decisions, come to closure, and move on. Their lives tend to be structured and organized, and they like to have things settled. Sticking to a plan and schedule is very important to them, and they are energized by getting things done.

Characteristics:

- Scheduled
- Organize their lives
- Systematic
- Methodical
- Make short- and long-term plans
- Like to have things decided
- Try to avoid last-minute stresses

Perceiving

People who prefer to use their Perceiving process in the outer world like to live in a flexible, spontaneous way, seeking to experience and understand life, rather than control it. Detailed plans and final decisions feel confining to them; they prefer to stay open to new information and last-minute options. They are energized by their resourcefulness in adapting to the demands of the moment.

Characteristics:

- Spontaneous
- Flexible
- Casual
- Open-ended
- Adapt, change course
- Like things loose and open to change
- Feel energized by last-minute pressures

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REFERENCES

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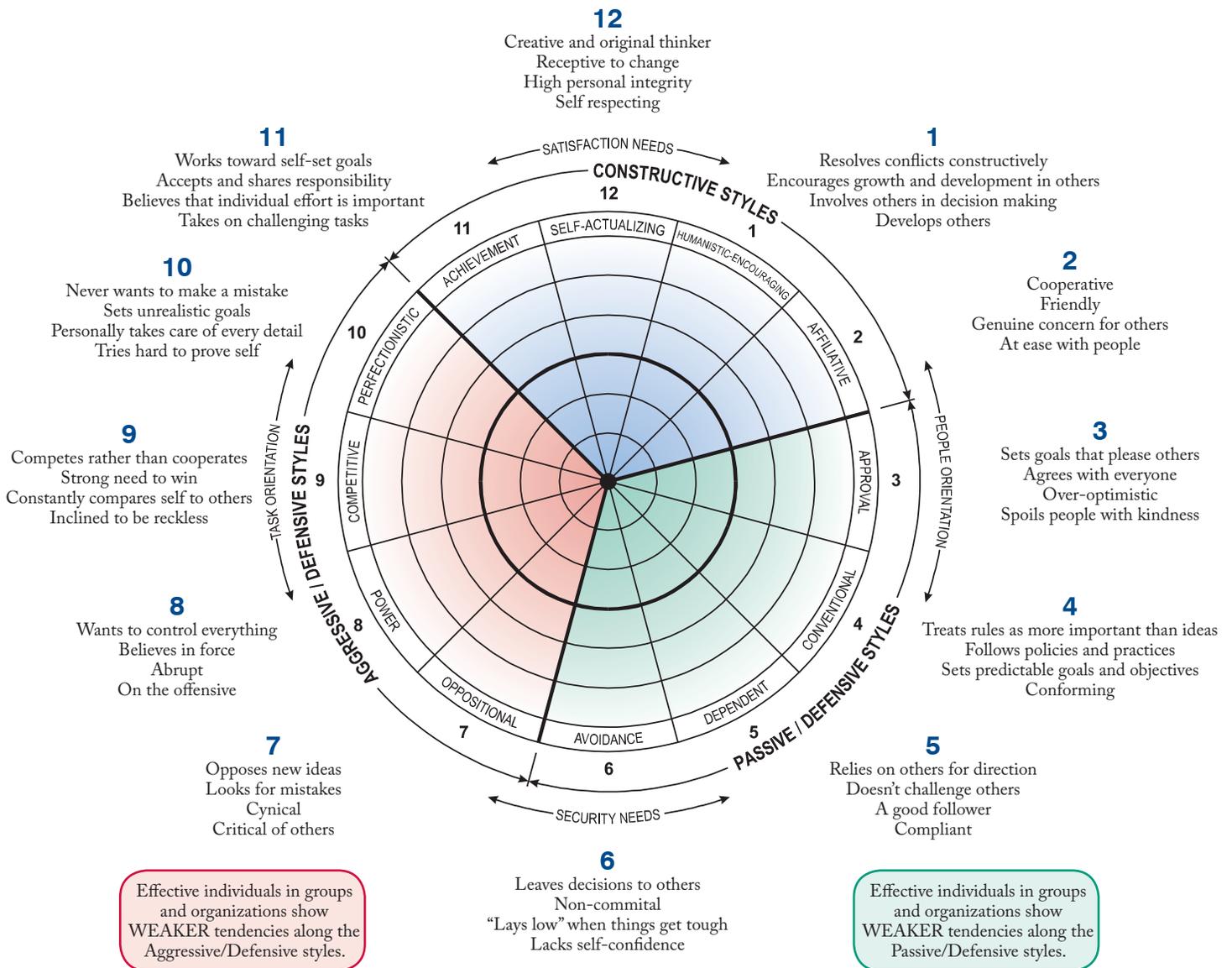
A special thanks to Allan Stewart and Colin Pearson of Human Synergistics Canada and Dr. Robert Cooke for their contributions.

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About the Circumplex

Human Synergistics International's Circumplex provides a way to "see" what drives the performance of individual contributors, leaders, work teams and, in short, the entire organization. It illustrates the factors underlying performance in terms of 12 styles of thinking and behaving. Some styles lead to effectiveness and productivity; some do not. Regardless of their impact, they all describe what's happening inside the organization and provide a direction for change and development.

Effective individuals in groups and organizations show **STRONGER** tendencies along the Constructive styles.



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