

# The Thinking Function and Physical Exercise

To gather information about the connection between type and physical exercise, I have been interviewing individuals of the 16 types who regularly exercise, asking the following questions:

1. Describe a typical week of exercise.
2. Where do you exercise? What aspect(s) of the environment is (are) important to you?
3. Do you exercise alone or with a friend or family member?
4. What motivates you to exercise? Describe the benefits.
5. Describe your history of physical exercise.
6. What types of exercise, exercise interactions, or environments turn you off?
7. What coaching/training styles work or don't work for you?
8. What advice would you give people of your type who do not exercise to help them exercise?

This is the first of two articles on the judging functions. It will describe thinking in the extraverted and introverted mode. My next article will be on the feeling function.

## Thinking

The thinking function is a rational judging function driven by principles of cause and effect. It links ideas through logical connections and is impersonal in its application of reason to decisions.

## Extraverted Thinking

### ENTJ, ESTJ, INTJ, ISTJ

Organization, logic, order, and structure guide the outer world of the extraverted thinking types whether in the dominant or auxiliary position. Their manner is decisive and their behavior task focused and results oriented. These



extraverted thinking types set goals and create a plan of action to achieve their goals. People with extraverted thinking are typically motivated to exercise in the following ways.

- Exercise with a structure and plan in mind
- Regular and routine
- Motivated by completion of their intention
- Classify exercise into categories

## Results driven

### ESTJ, ENTJ

Extraverted thinking in the dominant position is characterized by a high energy level, decisiveness, structure, and results. Results are the prime motivation for exercise; these thinking types are not too occupied with whether or not they like to exercise. When the auxiliary is introverted sensing, the structure is based on what was found to work in the past and recommendations from established authorities. People with these types have little interest in experimental or innovative approaches to exercise. Those with introverted intuition as an auxiliary tend to develop an exercise program with cat-



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This is the fourth article (*APT Bulletin*, Vol. 25, No.3, Vol. 26, No. 1, 2, 3) on the connection between psychological type and physical exercise. Brue's research indicates different motivations, styles, and requirements influence the approach to exercise and environments preferred by each of the 16 types.

egories and routines designed to achieve specific results.

### **Creating a Program for Results, the ENTJ Way**

Tricia, an attractive 48-year-old woman, has owned a fashionable woman's clothing store for over 25 years. In that time, her store has encountered stiff competition, as well as many changes in the women's clothing business. Tricia is fashionably dressed and her store reflects the current fashion trends. Tricia exercises three to four days a week, incorporating a great deal of variety in her program. In our interview, Tricia was very direct in describing her exercise likes and dislikes.

Tricia likes exercising outside, weather permitting. She particularly enjoys hiking, biking, rollerblading, skiing, and walking. For strength training, Tricia works out on a Bowflex machine in her basement. In addition, she takes a Pilates class once a week at a downtown studio which she describes as "a beautiful space and immaculately clean."

Tricia used to belong to a fitness center, but recently let her membership lapse. "I now hate going to the gym. The younger, buff guys were treating me like a middle-aged woman. They played music I didn't like. The TV was always on sports channels. I had no control over what was happening there."

Tricia exercises because she likes what exercise does for her body. "I do it for the end result. However, there's one thing I love, and that's ballet. If I had time, I would take a ballet class everyday."

When I asked Tricia what types of exercise turn her off, she was quick to respond, "I hate running, and I never snowboard. Extreme stuff doesn't appeal to me. I hate all the kid stuff. I avoid games and competition. I don't want to look stupid."

"As a kid, I didn't play sports because I wasn't a very good runner. However, I was a cheerleader. Whatever I yelled, the people in the stadium yelled back the same thing. I loved that."

### **ISTJ, INTJ**

Those with extraverted thinking in the auxiliary have a deliberate approach to exercise. Given their powers of concentration, these auxiliary thinking types prefer exercising alone and without interruption. Those with sensing as their dominant, typically approach exercise in a simple and straightforward manner, based on experience and a plan. They resist any exercise that does not make sense to them. Those with intuition as their dominant tend to envision and plan their exercise in categories. They are consistently trying to improve on their exercise programs either by modifying a specific aspect of their routine or by incorporating a change that will increase the effectiveness of their overall exercise program.

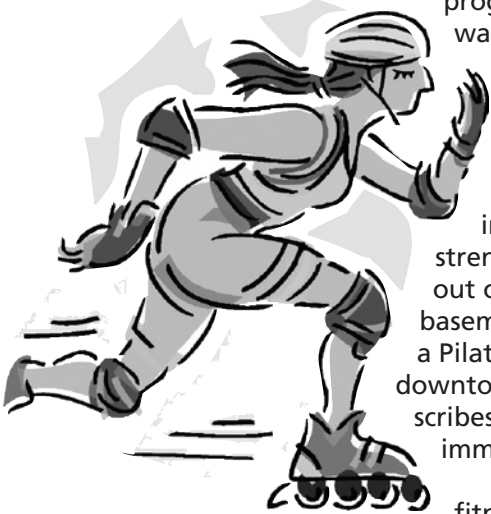
### **Getting the Job Done and Keeping Track, the ISTJ way**

"I like exercise that can be measured because I'm not doing it for pleasure." So began my interview with Ruth, a 55-year-old historical writer, well known for her careful and precise research on Lake Champlain.

Ruth described her workouts with characteristic precision and detail. "I go to the 'Y' twice a week. I bike for 15 minutes, do the StairMaster for 30 minutes and lift weights between 30 and 45 minutes. I prefer not speaking to anyone when exercising. When the weather is good, I run on the golf course. Because of work, I exercise at the end of the day. I wish I could do it in the morning and get it over with."

"I *a/ways* put in a program when I'm on the StairMaster. Then I have to do the program whether I like it or not. Writing down and keeping track of my workouts is important to me. The 'Y' provides a card to keep track of weight lifting workouts. Filling up the card lets me know that I'm sticking with my program. In addition, I record my workouts in my calendar. I like to see that I've done what I said I was going to do."

Ruth, a dominant introverted sensor has outstanding powers of concentration and has a significant preference for exercising alone. She frequently listens to unabridged books on tape, preferring



English novels with a strong plot line, read by a British voice. Listening to these books on tape is an important exercise motivator for Ruth as it is the only time she allows herself to listen to the book.

"I love hiking, being outside in nature. That's one reason I work out, to stay in shape for outdoor activities, weekend stuff. I also love hiking because there is a goal – the top of the mountain. I always go to the top. I love being away from people, not surrounded by people. I notice the plants, the foliage. I really notice the smells. I love the scents of the mountains, the balsams, and the ferns. I notice how the air feels. I love the cool air. When I retire, I want to be outside more, less indoors."

## Introverted Thinking

### ISTP, INTP, ESTP, ENTP

Introverted thinking in the dominant or auxiliary position is concerned with subjective analysis, ordering, and clarification of ideas. The analytical flow is inward and their interest is in creating internal order. They apply logic to their assessment of reality. Introverted thinkers are not concerned or motivated toward influencing or winning agreement from others. People with introverted thinking are typically motivated to exercise in the following ways:

- An efficient, often intense, approach to exercise
- Independent and self-directed
- Time of day tends to be flexible
- Specific about instruction (if any) they want to receive
- Often enjoy exercise inside a strategy or game
- Results driven

### ISTP, INTP

Those with introverted thinking in the dominant position approach exercise in what appears to be a very casual, easy-going manner. This outward casualness lives side by side with the attraction to efficiency, the best way to get "from here to there." Easily getting "lost in thought," these dominant introverted thinkers often enjoy exercise allowing them long periods of solitary time.

When the auxiliary is sensing, the

attraction is toward solitary activities in the physical environment that provide an opportunity to use their outstanding observational skills and natural preparedness. Introverted thinkers with auxiliary intuition are strategic thinkers, constantly engaged in analysis and in search of conceptual clarity. This can result in shifting through various approaches to physical exercise, getting easily bored with an established routine and needing change.

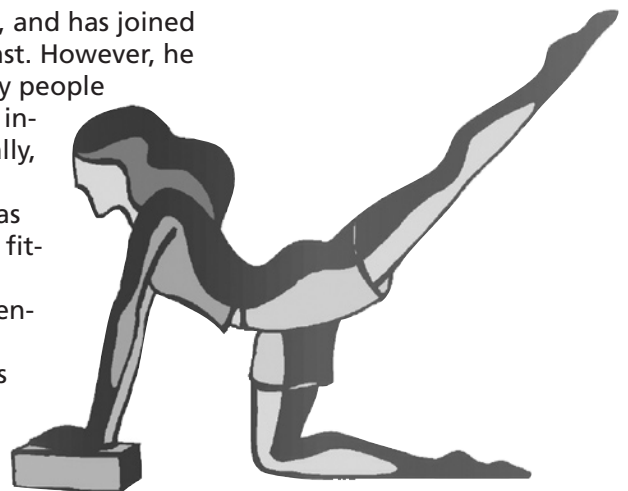
### Keeping it Interesting, the INTP way

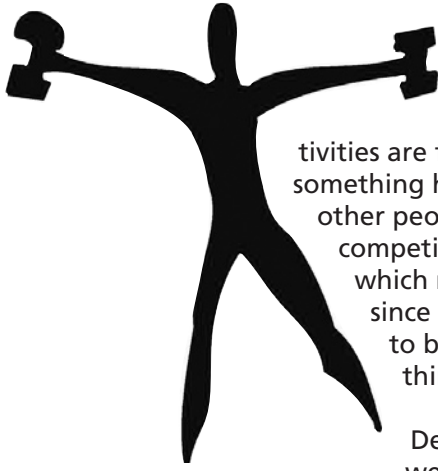
Derek, at 28, is a recent law school graduate. He is thin, handsome, and well-conditioned. The mainstay of his physical exercise is running. Derek has always been an endurance-oriented athlete, excelling in cross-country skiing and cross-country running in high school. On his college soccer team, he was well-known for his speed and endurance.

Derek always maintains a relatively high level of fitness, although from time to time he falls out of his exercise routine. He gets bored with what he is doing and drops his routine. However, he soon picks it up, with modifications to make it interesting again, and is back on track.

Derek's exercise program changes according to the seasons. He has a strong preference for being outside and sees exercise as a way of getting outside, especially on a beautiful day. A day of solitary biking seventy or eighty miles, spontaneously stopping at convenience stores to refuel on snacks and water is exhilarating. He is not averse to biking with other people, and has joined a biking club in the past. However, he finds getting too many people involved in an activity inconvenient. Occasionally, he likes to bike or run with another person, as long as they are at his fitness level.

Derek has always enjoyed physically active games. He plays tennis with a friend one day a week. During the spring, he plays





Ultimate Frisbee in an organized league. These activities are fun and relaxing, and something he enjoys doing with other people. He is not seriously competitive in these activities which makes them relaxing, since he is highly motivated to be competent in anything he takes seriously.

At the moment, Derek is running twice a week and weight lifting

twice a week. Recently, he began working out with a trainer. "My trainer pushes me. It's nice. He has a lot of information about the muscle groups and how to more efficiently work them."

## ESTP, ENTP

The introverted thinking function in the auxiliary position provides logic and analysis for the extraverted perceiving types. When the dominant is sensation, the approach to exercise is to seek out active sports and physical activities that excite the strongest sensations and physical realism. Dominant extraverted intuitives tend to pay little attention to their physical needs. Given this tendency, their approach to exercise can take two forms: tightly structure exercise by limiting stimulation and options (being very specific and intense about exercise), or disguise exercise by staying in the extraverted intuition mode (doing something else at the same time, e.g., walking and talking with a colleague).

### Stay In the Present and Never Count Yourself Out – the ESTP Approach

Jim, 31, is an investment consultant and a former professional tri-athlete. Although not presently training and competing at that level, Jim still competes in local triathalons and marathons. Today, he sees his physical conditioning and training as supporting his professional life and other activities, not at the center of it.

For many years, Jim trained full-time. While there is much valuable type information in learning the approach of elite athletes, it is important to note that this is the area in which they have chosen to compete and work. Therefore, their approach to physical exercise is on a completely different level. That being said, there is still much to learn from this ESTP young man and his approach to physical exercise.

Jim is highly motivated by competition. "I always wanted to be a world champion, to be the best." With a smile, he added, "I still don't rule myself out."

Competing is at the center of Jim's motivation for exercise. Even now, Jim approaches every race with the feeling he can win. "I always go into races thinking that I have a stab at winning. I grew up thinking I had no limitations. I never count myself out." Jim went on to say, "If you're *not* competing, you're just going to accept ordinary effort. I always do 100%. I always try my hardest." This seemingly mild young man talked about competition with surprising intensity. "I attack like I'm being chased. It's life or death. You must keep the attack on."

"What's a good coach?" I asked. Jim responded easily, bulleting every characteristic with emphasis:

- "A good coach is there every day."
- "He knows you and your goals."
- "He directs his efforts to help you improve."
- "He is interested in helping you improve."

At the end of our interview, I asked Jim what recommendations he would give to fellow ESTPs not in an exercise program.

"They should break down goals, that is, long term, intermediate, and short term goals. Then create cards with the goals written on them. Have the cards in front of you every single day. Make sure the cards are in front of you. Put them in a place where they are always visible. The cards should be right in front of you."

## Closing

This piece, the fourth article on the connection between psychological type and physical exercise, has summarized and provided examples on the different approaches to exercise of the thinking types. It is important to note that the actual exercise that is preferred by each type is not significant. The significance lies in the motivation, style, and requirements influencing each type's approach to and choice of exercise. For instance, an ENTP and an ISTJ could each prefer running as the mainstay of their physical activity, yet use very different motivation to establish and maintain their exercise program. The next article will explore the feeling function and physical exercise.

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