

How to Keep the "Happy" in Your Holidays

By Mary Miscisin, M.S.



When it comes to Holiday stress, the thing many people dread the most is interacting with certain relatives.

You ring the doorbell and brace yourself for the holiday visit. The door swings open and your mother appears.

She quickly scans you up and down and makes a comment about your weight before you have even taken a step inside.

You exchange smiles and hugs.

Although you've only been married for 3 months, she's already asking questions about when you will be having children, wonders out loud how you ever stay warm wearing such a flimsy coat like that, and tells you if you need to freshen up, the bathroom is down the hall.

Dad is inside watching TV practically ignoring you and your sister is letting her kids play tug-o-war with your new scarf...

Welcome to the Holidays - picking out gifts, decorating, traveling, connecting with others... When it comes to Holiday stress, the thing many people dread the most is interacting with certain relatives.

Instead of banning Holiday visits with your relatives, learn how to use the insights of Personality Lingo® to unwrap those personality packages and find the gifts inside.

Personality Patterns

Not everyone reveals their true nature during the Holidays. Some individuals simply slip back into family dynamics and their roles as family members. When this happens the behaviors you observe are more likely associated with the person's role in the family than their true personality.

However, many folks definitely show personality patterns that are recognizable and quite predictable. This report will help you understand the motivations behind the actions of others, as well as help you notice whether you are coming across in ways

other than you intended. This way you can pay attention to the contributions you are bringing to the situation. You will also receive tips for taking action to more effectively deal with the different personalities you encounter. Try them out especially when you recognize your own actions are not accomplishing your intended goals.

Using this E-Report

Read through the descriptions of the four dominant personality styles. Order the styles from most like you to least like you. Pay close attention to your first and second styles. Individuals that tend towards extraversion will commonly show their most dominant style to the outside world. However, those who tend toward introversion will frequently show their *second* style to the outside world, using their most dominant personality style to process internally.

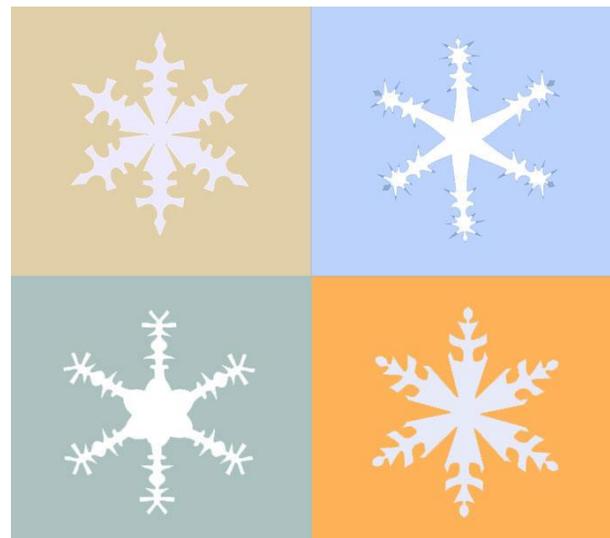
Think of the various people you will be interacting with this Holiday season, from your significant other and children (if this applies to you) to your relatives and/or friends. Read the descriptions with them in mind. In addition, try to identify the person's second style as you read the descriptions. See how well you are able to recognize the personality styles of the people in your life.

Once you have recognized their personality styles, read the next sections to find out what some of the greatest challenges might be during the holidays. Remember to also note the challenges mentioned for your own personality style. It may just so happen that others are having these challenges with you!

Finally...

Study the tips for what to do so you have a positive mindset and resources ready for relationship building. Keep in mind your goals for the Holidays. Do you view this season as a chance to spend quality time with your family or a time for rest, solitude, revitalization and introspection? It's best to figure it out ahead of time so you can set the stage for success.

Practice the suggestions and put them into action.



Having these tools available to use will help you keep (or put more) "Happy" into your Holidays.

THE MOVER (SP-ORANGE) HOLIDAY STYLE



"I don't worry about the gift-giving thing. If I see something during the year I want to give someone, I buy it and give it to them immediately. I don't wait till Christmas. Although I do like to take my nieces on a shopping spree during the Holidays, but it's a surprise not a promise."

- Fun-loving Movers typically look forward to all the Holiday parties. They like to dress to be noticed, dance, and celebrate with food, drink, and fun!
- Instead of planning, may like to "hang loose", keeping their options open for what ever comes up at the moment.
- Like to be physically involved in making the holidays fun, whether it's decorating their house so flamboyantly it looks like a cross between Las Vegas and an amusement park or going places and doing things that surprise everyone.
- Especially like the big responses they get from giving outrageous or extravagant gifts.
- Enjoy challenging physical activities like playing games, competing and performing.
- If they can be the center of attention with a good story, karaoke song, or gut-busting jokes they'll take any opportunity they can get.
- Need a lot of space and freedom to make the holiday fun and may have a hard time following rigid traditions—they just want everyone to have a good time.

MOVER COMMUNICATION PATTERNS

Movers have a tendency to be very straightforward and actively involved. The more extraverted Movers will use large gestures and body movements and speak rather fast-paced and animated. Since they are "now" oriented, Movers may have an inclination to make quick decisions and interrupt to share immediately what is on their mind at the moment. They are most likely at the center of attention, telling colorful stories or jokes, entertaining all that will listen. They are master multi-taskers. For instance, they might walk around while eating, tell a story while dancing, or cook while visiting.

MOVER MOTIVATIONS AND LIKES:

Fun
Success
Variety
Using their skills

Entertaining
Saving the day
Taking a risk
Competition

Negotiating
Adventure
Physical movement
Choices

THE CONNECTOR (NF-BLUE) HOLIDAY STYLE



"Last year I volunteered to pack and deliver gifts for underprivileged families with the 'Toys for Tots' program. It really touched my heart and brought tears to my eyes to see the joy on the children's faces when they opened their gifts. It felt good to know my efforts made a difference."

- Kindhearted Connectors will be full of joy in anticipation of showing love in all the thoughtful ways they do, such as baking, making special cards, and finding or creating unique gifts.
- Look forward to connecting with their family and friends and making others feel special.
- Like to play holiday music and decorate the house, office, car...helping everyone feel warm and welcome.
- May enjoy dressing for the season wearing holiday theme clothing.
- Since they fully experience their emotions and the dramas of life, if they recently broke up with a significant other or lost a loved one, the holidays may be especially painful and lonely.
- Find symbolism in people's actions, circumstances, and gifts.
- Pay attention to the less fortunate during the Holidays and may volunteer their time for gift-giving organizations such as "adopt-a-family" projects. They aspire to help others, include everyone in the festivities, and spread holiday cheer whenever and wherever possible.

CONNECTOR COMMUNICATION PATTERNS

Connectors are typically friendly, personal, and interactive. They like to connect first before getting to their agenda and may often put the needs of others before their own. They will listen empathetically and provide positive feedback and appreciation, sharing some personal anecdotes of their own. Connectors will often express emotion in conversation and may use metaphors to explain their ideas. Adept at reading body language, Connectors tend to read between the lines for deeper meaning or the underlying message. In general, Connectors are optimistic and ready to help cheer up others. However, since they experience a rich range of emotions they are also inclined to feel "blue" if they feel left out, disconnected, or unappreciated.

CONNECTOR MOTIVATIONS AND LIKES:

Seeing others happy
Making a difference
Growth
Friendship

Unity, harmony
Self expression
Finding meaning
Personal connection

Helping
Being included
Intimate conversations
Symbols of love

THE PLANNER (SJ-GOLD) HOLIDAY STYLE



"Thanksgiving is always at Mom's house. We start planning for the event Nov. 1st. We figure out who will be coming, discuss seating arrangements, decorations, the menu...and create a schedule of what needs to be cooked when - so the food all comes out at the same time. Dinner is served promptly at 12:30."

- Planners find the holidays a time to honor tradition, keeping customs that have been practiced year after year.
- Like to feel useful and belong and will go out of their way to make sure every detail of an activity is attended to, making sure things go smoothly every step along the way.
- Enjoy their set holiday routines and organized ways of doing things.
- Place family and religion as a high importance when planning holiday events.
- Usually a bit stressed making sure that everything gets done on time (house cleaned, decorations displayed, food cooked, gifts wrapped...)
- Knowing how busy the stores are during the holiday they plan ahead and start their gift-shopping early and to get their Christmas cards mailed out the day after Thanksgiving.
- Like their friends and family to be careful with money so they don't expect to receive flashy gifts themselves.

PLANNER COMMUNICATION PATTERNS

Planners are commonly purposeful and task focused in conversation. They like to talk about what has worked the past, social events, and the "right" way of doing things. Often they speak chronologically, including specific steps. During the holidays, conventional Planners will pay close attention to etiquette, preferring to stick with appropriate subjects (which does not include your sex life) and what others "should" and "should not" be doing. They take pride in membership and may share their roles, responsibilities, and community involvements. Many Planners are direct and assertive, stating their views firmly. They like to bring proper closure to events, projects, and discussions.

PLANNER MOTIVATIONS AND LIKES:

Family time
Status and respect
Being prepared, planning
Organization, completion

Upholding tradition
Loyalty, commitment
Security, stability
Rules and protocol

Efficiency, productivity
Doing the "right" thing
Acknowledgement
Clear expectations

THE THINKER (NT-GREEN) HOLIDAY STYLE



"I hate it when someone plans an event and expects me to show up at their designated time...and gets mad if I don't. It's my holiday too. I don't want to be put on a schedule or rush to be on time. What if I want to work on my own projects? Why should I have to do what everyone else is doing?"

- May seek non-traditional ways to appreciate the holidays.
- Don't particularly like to conform to a schedule or feel forced to participate in social rituals (like office Christmas parties) during the holidays.
- The most likely of the four personality styles to sneak in some work, read a few books, or use vacation time to catch up on projects as opposed to attend holiday events.
- Social chit-chat can be tiring so they may appear somewhat reserved and non-participatory at social functions.
- Like their personal space and time to think and ponder, studying people and situations before fully engaging in conversations and activities.
- Prefers "come as you are" celebrations where they don't have to put a lot of effort into dressing up.
- Values time spent sharing theories and exploring their conjectures with other interested parties. Frequently a source of interesting facts, they typically know something about practically everything – a good partner at trivial pursuit!

THINKER COMMUNICATION PATTERNS

Because Thinkers like to gather information in order to solve problems or make improvements, they often skip right over the small talk and dig for the data. They have a habit of offering critique and advice before connecting or complimenting. Persuasive and convincing, they may engage in debates with those they deem worthy and can pepper their conversations with witty remarks and word puns. Often well-informed, Thinkers like to be concise with their wording and may use "big" words as a result. They can become irritated at redundancy and those that don't think before asking questions with obvious answers. When mired in details and side stories, may ask the speaker to "get to the point".

THINKER MOTIVATIONS AND LIKES:

Fixing things
Problem-solving
Innovation, improvement
Objectivity

Privacy, independence
Gaining expertise
Exploring new ideas
Competence

Intellectual challenge
Wit, irony
Theoretical conversations
Strategy, systems

Challenges and what to do about them

Every year for the past 20 years Lisa has invited her sister-in-law, Julie, over for Thanksgiving dinner. It's a tradition and her husband insists, so Lisa endures.

The problem is, in most interactions with Julie, Lisa has found her to be an abrasive, condescending, "know-it-all" that has a habit of dishing out personal insults and criticism. In the earlier years, Lisa tried very hard to figure out the conflict. She tried making conversation, only to be shut down; smiling only to be ignored; and even pouting, which seemed to provoke irritation in Julie instead of evoke empathy. These days Lisa has vowed to simply "tolerate" Julie's behavior for the sake of her husband and to avoid conflict. Lisa practically holds her breath during the dinner and endures her "cutting remarks and constant critique".

So what is going on?

It's easy to jump to conclusions about situations and make guesses about ego battles and family dynamics. However, some circumstances are actually simple misperceptions about personality styles.

To begin to unwrap these challenges, pay attention to notice the actions and intentions of the other person. How are you perceiving and describing their behaviors? If you really tried, how well can you come up with a counter- positive description for each negative one? Here's how it works. Let's take the story above and examine some of the adjectives that Lisa uses to describe Julie. Then we'll take a more positive view of them as follows:

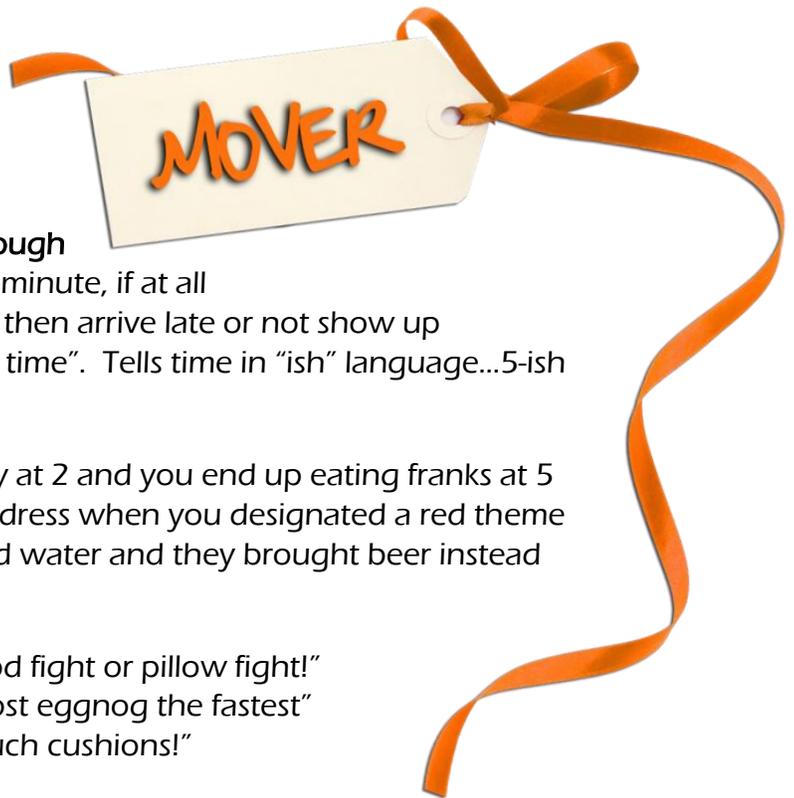
Past description:	Positive view
Abrasive	Objective
Condescending	Confident
"Know it all"	Knows a lot
Dishes out personal insults and criticism	Keen eye for "flaws" or inconsistencies

Now that we have some more positive descriptors for Julie's behaviors, can you recognize a personality style that seems to match? Yes, **THINKER!**

So now what?

If you take another look at the previous section, "THINKER MOTIVATIONS AND LIKES" you'll discover some possible motivations or "intentions" behind the behaviors. When we shift our perception of someone's intention to a more positive light, our perception of him or her as a person begins to shift as well. Read the next sections that describe some of the typical challenges encountered by others when interacting with each style during the Holidays. Notice which ones are similar to the challenges you are experiencing. We'll come back to Lisa later and find out how she used these insights to resolve the relationship woes with her sister-in-law, Julie.

Typical Challenges



Getting them to Commit or follow through

- Will not RSVP until the very last minute, if at all
- Says “yes” to several invitations, then arrive late or not show up
- Has a different definition of “on time”. Tells time in “ish” language...5-ish

Springs Surprises

- Tells you they are serving turkey at 2 and you end up eating franks at 5
- Will show up wearing a purple dress when you designated a red theme
- You asked them to bring bottled water and they brought beer instead

Tendency to Instigate

- “Let’s have a snowball fight, food fight or pillow fight!”
- “Let’s see who can drink the most eggnog the fastest”
- “Let’s make a fort out of the couch cushions!”
- “Who can BURP the loudest?”

What to do:

Give them some wiggle room

- You have a choice: *do you want to be right... or have them around?*
- Is a little bit of time with them better than no time at all, or a rotten time because you are mad at them?

Be ready to go with the flow

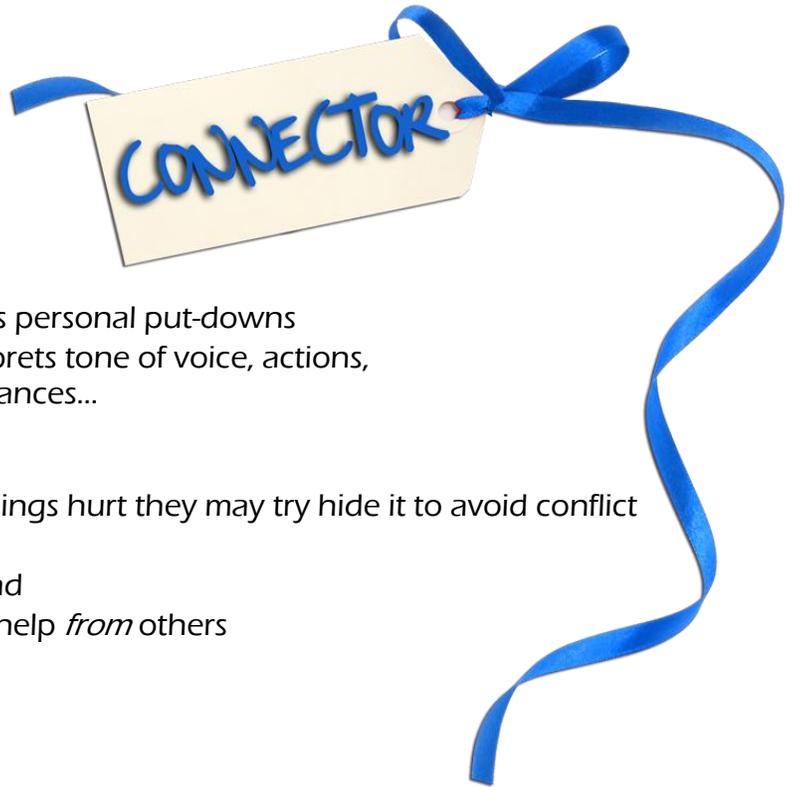
- Plan back-ups.
- Pack a snack.
- Create a contest- “bet you can’t find a red dress anywhere in this town, it just can’t be done!”

Give them the floor but know your limits

- Plan opportunities ahead of time to keep them moving, participating and entertained (or providing approved entertainment). For example provide games, fun tasks and karaoke (with only the songs you have chosen).
- Know your limits- state your boundaries clearly, calmly, and firmly. They’ll keep pushing if they detect a chance they’ll get their way, if they notice it is getting a rise out of you, especially if it’s entertaining or funny to others.

Past description of characteristic:	Positive view
Flakey	Likes to keep options open
Irresponsible	Spontaneous
Trouble-maker	Keeps things interesting

Typical Challenges



Sensitive – Takes Things Personally

- Can get feelings hurt
- Takes critique or suggestions as personal put-downs
- Reads between the lines: interprets tone of voice, actions, (or lack of actions), gestures, glances...

Hides Their Feelings

- If they are mad or got their feelings hurt they may try hide it to avoid conflict
- Pouts or withdraw their love
- May act “cheery” even when sad
- Helps others but won’t ask for help *from* others

Invades Your Privacy

- Asks personal questions
- Shares intimate information
- Hugs and holds eye contact longer than other styles

What to do:

Pause and pay attention

- Show appreciation for them personally. Help them feel included and special.
- Think before you speak. Make sure your words match your body language.
- When offering feedback, sandwich anything that could be taken as criticism between a positive opening and positive closing.

Reassure them that you value them

- If you are ready for intense emotions and are willing to really listen with an open heart, then in total privacy encourage them to share. Otherwise, appreciate their efforts to keep the peace for the sake of others.
- Pay attention to recognize when they need help and offer it if you really want to be of assistance.

Set the stage for success with you

- Remember their intention is to connect. Let them know how to best do this.
- Redirect their attention. For example, “You know what I’d really love to share with you is...”
- Acknowledge them with a smile and nod and hold your boundaries nicely

Past description:	Positive view
Sensitive	Appreciates a positive approach
Passive	Nice
Nosey	Caring, interested

Typical Challenges



Tries to make you feel guilty

- Gets mad if you show up late
- “After all I’ve done for you, the least you can do is visit me on Christmas day”
- “Grandma might not be around another Christmas”
- “I worked hard on this dessert and you are not going to even try it?”

Getting them to flex their schedule, tradition or rule

- Thanksgiving is celebrated on Thanksgiving day
- “We’ve always done it this way, midnight mass *then* open presents, not the other way around!”
- The rule is to wait at least an hour after eating before having dessert

Handling their advice about the right and wrong way to do things

- “You should have kids by now”
- “You should find yourself a good man and settle down”
- “When are you going to get a “real” job?”

What to do:

Plan ahead

- If you are late, saying you are sorry goes a long way
- No one can make you feel guilty without your consent.
- Remember they are just sincerely trying to help you be a better guest, wife, husband, citizen, or person.

Minimize Surprises

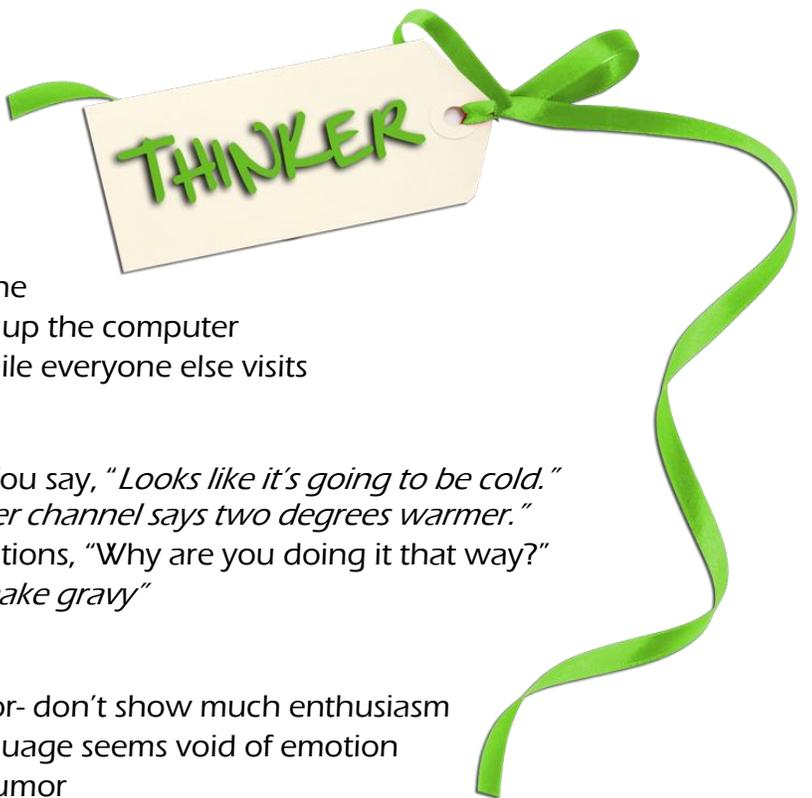
- Appreciate all the preparation they went through.
- When you are at their house, follow their rules.
- Why are you visiting? If it is to connect with them, do it in a way they appreciate.
- To get off on the right foot show up on time! If this isn’t possible, let them know as far in advance as possible.

Thank them for caring

- Mention how your present goals support your spouse, family, organization you belong to, and even your country!
- Shift the conversation to an old tradition you enjoy and ask them to recollect and share some of their favorite holiday memories.

Past description:	Positive view
Manipulative	Traditional
Rigid	Organized, dependable
Judgmental	Specific expectations

Typical Challenges



Seem to Ignore You

- Reads a book/magazine/iPhone
- Drifting off to the den to boot up the computer
- Watching the game on TV while everyone else visits

Relentless Questioning and Critique

- Will dispute your comments: You say, *"Looks like it's going to be cold."* They say, *"Actually the weather channel says two degrees warmer."*
- Seem to interrogate with questions, *"Why are you doing it that way?"*
- *"That's not the right pan to make gravy"*

Hard to Read

- Cool, calm, collected demeanor- don't show much enthusiasm
- Facial expression or body language seems void of emotion
- Callous or sarcastic sense of humor

What to do:

Allow them room to breathe and time to think

- They are not wrong because their interests are different from yours.
- If you want their company, join them. Perhaps ask questions about the game or what they are reading or doing. Be prepared to listen. If they ignore you, don't take it personally, they may just want to be alone. Give them their space.
- Realize that social chit-chat can be exhausting to them. Keep it to a limit.

Keep in mind, when they offer advice it is to share their expertise and help

- Take it as a compliment that they are interested in you and what you are doing.
- When they offer tips for improvement, ask for their help.
- Get curious instead of furious at their questions or critiques.

Recognize they are most comfortable keeping their emotions on the inside

- IT DOES NOT MEAN THEY DO NOT FEEL THEM - THEY JUST DON'T LIKE TO DISPLAY THEM!
- Give them time to get to know you, this may be years!
- Find ways to appreciate their sense of humor.

Past description:	Positive view
Anti- social	Introvert, private
Criticizes	Points out ways to improve
Uncaring, unemotional, uninterested	Keeps emotions on inside

Putting it into action!

How well were you able to discern your Holiday Style and the style of others? Keeping in mind the information you just learned. Let's find out what happened with Lisa and her sister-in-law, Julie.

Lisa's Thanksgiving was definitely different this year. She was in the kitchen preparing dinner when Julie arrived. When Julie walked into the kitchen, Lisa looked up from her task to greet her. Before Lisa could get the word "hello" out of her mouth, Julie said, "That's not the right pan to make gravy." Lisa looked up at her in disbelief...she thought to herself, "No hello, no how are you? No thank you for having me over for dinner? Nope! The first words out of her mouth are a critique of my cooking, a personal insult."

Then Lisa interrupted her own line of thought to remember the personality concepts. "Wait a minute," she thought. "Julie is most likely a Thinker. Thinkers like to make improvements and fix things. Her intention is not to insult me, but to help me."

Instead of getting angry and hurt as she would have in the past, Lisa got curious. She looked up at Julie and instead of pouting and ignoring the comment she asked, "Really? Which pan is the right one to use?"

Julie beamed. She proceeded to show Lisa the "correct" pan and the "best method" for making gravy. Lisa was amazed at how the tension that has sparked earlier dissipated almost immediately. She enjoyed her "cooking lesson". The gravy was the smoothest consistency and the most delicious she had ever tasted. The rest of the dinner was a wonderful success too.

Lisa later reported that 20 years of animosity melted away during their interaction that day; because she finally recognized the motivation behind Julie's communication style. In the past she had interpreted Julie to be arrogant, when really she was just internally driven to "improve." Lisa said she felt a bit sad that she had missed out on the "wonderful side" of her sister-in-law all those years because she simple did not understand her. From now on, she vowed to "get curious" instead of furious and enjoy her new-found friendship as well as apply what she learned to other areas of her life.

In a nutshell:

Determine *why* you are visiting others during the holidays. Is it out of obligation... to have fun... connect with others... tradition? When challenges arise, think of your intention for being there in the first place. This will help you stay focused on your goal.

Identify your personality and the style of the person that you've had difficulty with in the past. Discern some of their possible motivations and likes. See how well you can figure out their reasons for visiting during the holidays. Using the insights you've gained, how can you take a more positive view on characteristics you have found challenging? What ways can you understand and appreciate their style? Doing so will add more "happy" to your holidays!