

# Leadership in Shelters Final Reflection Fall 2023

Jennifer Buergermeister

*"I get antsy when I am not learning something."*

(StrengthsFinder, Annie M., Learner, 2023)

Leadership is multifaceted and requires an expanded view of our world and our influence on others, including those we touch along the way, as a purpose in our life's mission. Sometimes we have more than one mission. At some point, we may become students, wives or husbands, mothers or fathers (sometimes both mother and father in some situations), scholars, grandparents, and activists, either simultaneously or staggered throughout our lives. We all strive to achieve things in life. Still, high achievers often combat self-doubt about their abilities and competence or can't acknowledge the fear they sometimes feel by focusing on facts and strengths when talking with others about their concerns. Leadership is balancing all aspects of our human life and, even more so, the needs and expectations of others. In this course, I learned to be flexible and evaluate how we show up in the world. By looking at my strengths and weaknesses through many assessments, I can better share how I may face the challenging tasks vital to me – animal welfare.

Before enrolling in this course, I understood my Jungian Typology. I am an INFJ/INTJ on the cusp – the two rarest personality types in the Myers-Briggs testing spectrum. Until 2015, I routinely tested as an INTJ, or the Architect. INTJs take pride in their ability to think for themselves and see right through hypocrisy. An architect's mind never rests, and others often struggle to keep up with their "nonstop analysis of everything around them" (16personalities.com, 2023). Yoga and meditation tremendously influenced this aspect of my personality. Since 2015, I have regularly tested as an Advocate or INFJ. An INFJ has introverted, intuitive, feeling, and judging personality traits and approaches life with deep thoughtfulness and imagination. As Albert Einstein said, "Imagination is everything." I'd like also to think so *is music* (Rumi). Still, to keep things simple, I embrace inner vision, personal values, and a quiet, moral version of humanism in all things, and score above average or high in self-efficacy, cheerfulness, orderliness, openness, artistic, assertiveness, modesty, and self-consciousness (I can be sensitive).

Advocates (INFJ) want to stand up and make a difference. For Advocate personalities, success comes from "helping others and being a force for good in the world" by never losing sight of what truly matters according to their wisdom and intuition rather than those of others (16personalities.com, 2023). Other personality tests helped fill in gaps in the personality puzzle as either strength or weakness. After completing the personality test, IPIP NEO, it was confirmed that I am the most "extroverted introvert," as one of my best friends, Dave, shared with me. Depending on the context, I show up differently. Comfort makes a massive difference in how I feel around others. I am an only child, so I spent most of my early childhood living on a lake in solitude with my family and, of course, my imagination. Our lake house occupied a peacefulness in my heart that would influence who I'd become later when I gravitated toward movement, yoga, and meditation in my adult years.

An introvert who scores high on the agreeableness and openness dimension does not seek others out but can be "quite pleasant and trustworthy." I can now appreciate how important a slower and steady pace, allowing others to also work at their pace, can get the same results without suffering burnout. Introverts spend a lot of time observing and thinking, which is an excellent start to developing leadership skills. Four distinct domains of leadership strengths emerged in StrengthsFinder: Executing,

Influencing, Relationship Building, and Strategic Thinking. Though an introvert, I can be extroverted in the proper context - *fake it until you make it*, perhaps. When needed, I can wear the extrovert hat.

Leaders with dominant strength in the Executing domain take ideas, get traction, and push things until they are done. I am an idea machine! "Leaders with the strength to execute can "catch" an idea and make it a reality" (StrengthsFinder, 2020). Additionally, Influencers help reach a much broader audience since they are always "selling the team's ideas inside and outside the organization." My motto has always been *just keep moving, and there are no problems, only solutions*. I would charge forward on my own sometimes just to get things done, which isn't an example of working smarter but working harder.

Those who lead through Relationship Building are the "essential glue" (StrengthsFinder, 2020) that holds a team together and supports the "Affiliative Leadership Style." Without these strengths on a team, in many cases, the group is simply a composite of individuals. In contrast, leaders with exceptional Relationship Building strength have the "unique ability to create groups and organizations that are much greater than the sum of their parts," which is evident in my work building the Texas yoga community and pushing two bills through the House and Senate, something I intend to do again with my SMART goals to influence legislation at state and Federal levels to incentivize fostering and adoption.

Leaders with great Strategic Thinking strengths are "the ones who keep us all focused on what could be. They are constantly absorbing and analyzing information and helping the team make better decisions" (StrengthsFinder, 2020). People with strength in this domain correlate with the INTJ/INFJ personality type and are said to "continually stretch our thinking for the future." I am learning to strengthen strategy in three styles I use leading: affiliative, democratic, and pacesetting.

Morrow's (2023) lecture described several styles of leadership. Affiliative leadership as a collaborative style encourages cooperative relationships within and between teams by strategically focusing on people who gain loyalty and support to move forward. Democratic leadership involves asking for feedback and input from those they lead and encouraging conversations about how to get things done. Team building is essential in this style. Pacesetting is a high-standard approach that holds others accountable for the work they produce through rewards for meeting goals, standards, and deadlines that are sometimes seemingly impossible to achieve. Think Elon Musk and Steve Jobs. I use this when we are in emergencies, with strict deadlines. For example, I accomplished advocacy work with the Texas Yoga Association, which passed two bills through the Texas House and Senate into law to protect the sanctity of yoga in 2012.

In conclusion, we can approach personality and leadership dynamically, using Myers-Briggs and IPIP NEO personality tests, StrengthsFinder, and other leadership style surveys (Morrow, 2023). I align with doing good in all that we do with cheerfulness and strategies that are affiliative and democratic, sometimes setting the pace to get to the finish line. Results are manifested through positive, efficient, and practical approaches that are a win-win for members of teams with relationships built in trust, conscientiousness, agreeableness, openness, a growth mindset, and support. I am developing greater confidence in my skills and abilities to reduce self-consciousness and feelings of imposter syndrome while strengthening dutifulness, staying on task, managing time and self-care, and seeking others for support.

#### References:

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