

# Relationship Type Combinations



**Vicky Jo Varner** (INFJ) is president of Type Insights ([www.TypeInsights.com](http://www.TypeInsights.com)), practices as a Self-Discovery Specialist and Psychological Life Coach, and has published an audio CD that provides an introduction to the 8-level model of psychological type. [vj@typeinsights.com](mailto:vj@typeinsights.com)

“What type is best for me?”

**T**his question comes up frequently in my coaching practice. Relationship experiences range the spectrum from paradise to nightmare, and people often want to do some social engineering in order to gain control. In many situations, type is seen as a life saver. I confess – it felt like that to me!

A self-help junkie, I read David Keirsey’s book, *Please Understand Me*, in one day while answering phones at a temporary job assignment. Apparently it did not have much impact. The book that hooked me was *16 Ways to Love Your Lover* (Kroeger and Thuesen, 1996) which I stumbled across at another temp job. It analyzed and explained the failure of every one of my relationships. That got my attention since relationships are the most important thing in the world to me. Speaking as a Catalyst, I was hooked. In 2006, Linda Berens developed new names for the four Temperaments which highlight the core values of each (see Figure 1).

I have spent the past ten years soaking up new type knowledge and greater awareness on the strength of that one “aha” experience. To this day, even while I downplay the J/P scale in my own work, I still revere one gold nugget of

Kroeger’s advice: “When giving a J a new idea, drop the information in his or her lap, get out of the way, then come back and discuss it later. This gives the person ‘moan space.’”

I strive to live my life according to that caution, and even train others to use this strategy with me to benefit our mutual relationship. I am protective of my moan space.

Because people struggle so much with relationships (“can’t live with ‘em; can’t live without ‘em”), it is common for my self-discovery clients to inquire about what types they *should* foster relationships with, and which types to avoid. Hey, I did! Here is a catalog of every type relationship formula I have encountered, and I have been collecting them for a decade.

## Friendships

Friendships tend to be qualitatively different from romantic relationships and less emotionally charged, so we will explore them first. Most friendships are based on common ground. Sometimes that means there is instant affinity and friendship between people with identical type patterns, such as INFJ + INFJ, but it is not a rule! I have also seen INFJs dislike one another on sight, react to another INFJ with vicious criticism, or even engage in flame wars on Internet type lists. It is possible that perceiving types are slightly less inclined to butt heads with represen-

tatives of their identical type pattern, but I have witnessed a number of perceiving types display animosity toward each other.

Having the same type pattern does not translate to automatic accord and friendship. This notion of common

**Figure 1. Table showing Berens’ temperament terms mapped to Keirsey’s and to the 16 MBTI® types**

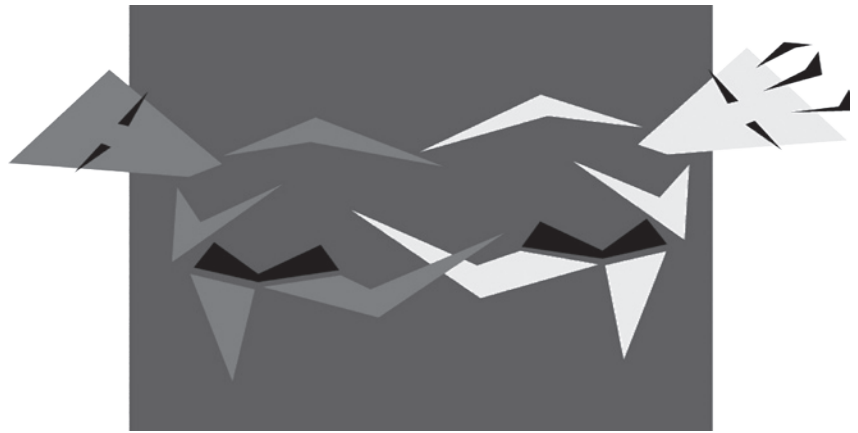
Keirsey’s Terms	Berens’ Terms	MBTI® Type Codes
Idealist	Catalyst	INFJ, INFP, ENFJ, ENFP
Guardian	Stabilizer	ISTJ, ISFJ, ESTJ, ESFJ
Artisan	Improviser	ISTP, ISFP, ESTP, ESFP
Rational	Theorist	INTJ, INTP, ENTJ, ENTP

ground as a basis for friendship, however, *is* a fairly consistent and reliable formula. So the obvious question then is, “What qualifies as common ground?” Unfortunately, the unsatisfying answer is, “It depends,” since the answer changes depending on which type or temperament model you use.

Having a temperament pattern in common often creates instant rapport between two people. After all, their core temperament needs match; their temperament values match; and their talents and behaviors generally match. Thus, Catalysts are likely to gravitate toward other Catalysts, Theorists toward other Theorists, etc. On the other hand, some folks are attracted to different temperaments and feel they can support others in areas where they seem deficient.

Having similar or complementary Interaction Styles may also yield relationships from this magical common ground (Berens, 2001). In the past month, I have heard two ENFJs report thriving relationships with ESTJs, probably due to similar Interaction Style energies. Interaction Styles is a model of how we use our energy – it is about the way we express our *joie de vivre*. So, in many cases, enthusiastic people are drawn to other enthusiastic people or reserved people are drawn to other reserved people. Sometimes, enthusiastic people try to jolly up reserved folks and reserved people try to settle down enthusiastic people, but overall it is easy to see how matching innate energy levels creates a sense of instant compatibility or kinship.

Now if we turn to the familiar psychological type model, first identified by C.G. Jung and later used and further developed by Isabel Briggs Myers in the MBTI®, we learn about the four basic functions: Thinking, Feeling, Sensing, and Intuition. Naturally, each of these



processes holds the possibility of being common ground. At this level, it is nearly impossible to draw too many precise conclusions about what attracts people to one another. It seems like anything goes!

In the more complex version of this model, enhanced by the work of John Beebe, there are some refinements germane to this exploration of relationships. This type model takes into account the introverted or extraverted attitudes of the 4 basic processes, and thus presents us with eight components of potential common ground (see Figure 2).

As Berens and Nardi have emphasized, these 8 processes always manifest in particular pairings that they call “tandem processes” (see Figure 3). So an INFJ and an ISFJ might experience affinity around sharing the extraverted Feeling  $\leftrightarrow$  introverted Thinking dimension. Or an INTJ and an ENFP might experience affinity around sharing the extraverted Thinking  $\leftrightarrow$  introverted Feeling dimension. Or how about ENTJ and ISTP around extraverted Sensing  $\leftrightarrow$  introverted Intuition? The richness of this model lends itself to in-depth exploration of potential sources of common ground since these innate predispositions may attract or repel others. My ISFP brother and I have always connected around our Se  $\leftrightarrow$  Ni dimension.

**Figure 2: The four basic functions split into the eight function-attitudes**

Sensing	Se, Si
Intuition	Ne, Ni
Thinking	Te, Ti
Feeling	Fe, Fi

**Figure 3: Table showing types that share tandem processes**

Ni $\leftrightarrow$ Se:	_NTJ, _NFJ, _STP, _SFP
Ti $\leftrightarrow$ Fe:	_NTP, _STP, _NFJ, _SFJ
Si $\leftrightarrow$ Ne:	_STJ, _SFJ, _NFP, _NTP
Fi $\leftrightarrow$ Te:	_NFP, _SFP, _NTJ, _STJ

**Figure 4: Keirsey's Opposites Attract model**

Compatible Pairings
ESTJ and INFP
ESFJ and INTP
ENTJ and ISFP
ENFJ and ISTP
ISTJ and ENFP
ISFJ and ENTP
INTJ and ESFP
INFJ and ESTP

**Figure 5: Keirsey's modified compatibility model**

Compatible Pairings
_STJ and _SFP
_SFJ and _STP
_NTJ and _NFP
_NFJ and _NTP

**Figure 6: Duniho's compatibility model**

Compatible Pairings
ESTJ and ESFP
ESFJ and ESTP
ENTJ and ENFP
ENFJ and ENTP
ISTJ and ISFP
ISFJ and ISTP
INTJ and INFP
INFJ and INTP

## Romance

Let us turn now to the topic of romance and soulmates, the *sine qua non* of a Catalyst's existence.

It is amusing to note that many people discover the type model and leap instantly to the conclusion that finding a mate with an identical code guarantees a match made in heaven. Unfortunately, while it is true that many type-alike couples thrive blissfully together, it appears they are generally the exception rather than the rule.

There was a short-lived dating service, MatchNet, that began connecting couples according to similarities, all the way down to precisely matching their type codes, but it fizzled. In the flesh, each of the pairings they recommended liked each other well enough and seemed to get along, but there was no attraction, no heat, no sizzle, and no passion. By the time the dating service figured out its mistake and began MISmatching couples, it was too late. They sold their client list to American Singles and closed their doors.

The moral is surely obvious: setting your cap for a mate with an identical type pattern will not necessarily kindle romantic interest, much less ensure success or happiness. As a gambler would say, "It's not a sure bet."

Probably the most infamous type combinations for romantic involvement are those decreed by David Keirsey in *Please Understand Me*. In this book, Keirsey takes the resolute stance that op-

posites attract. The algorithm he outlines in painstaking detail simply consists of mismatching every letter of a pair's type code (see Figure 4).

Keirsey's prescription has subsequently met with every possible reaction – ranging from shock and horror to remarkable success.

What few people know is that Keirsey changed his formula in a lesser-known sequel, *Portraits of Temperament*. In this book, Keirsey presents a different ideal: he dismisses the first letter of the code as unimportant, matches the second letter, and MISmatches the third and fourth letters. This formula pairs NFJs with NTPs, STJs with SFPs, and so on (see Figure 5).

In this update, Keirsey seemed to highlight the importance of matching couples on their perceiving preferences, perhaps so they would see things in the same way, but it mismatches them in some areas to create attraction and interest. Interestingly, his revised system reflected his own choice of marriage partner more accurately.

Before he passed away, Terence Duniho (associated with the DDLI) corresponded privately with me to share his own thoughts on this subject which were nearly identical to Keirsey's. His formula was to match the first two letters of the type code and MISmatch the last two letters. Terence believed this was the ideal combination, and his own choice of spouse reflected this conviction. This particular combination matches couples on their preferences for introversion or extraversion and, just like Keirsey, recommends

**Figure 7: Example of Beebe's 8-level compatibility system**

	ESTP	INFJ
Conscious Processes	Se	Ni
	Ti	Fe
	Fe	Ti
	Ni	Se
Unconscious Processes	Si	Ne
	Te	Fi
	Fi	Te
	Ne	Si

**Figure 8. Functions in opposing attitudes**

Fe vs. Fi
Te vs. Ti
Se vs. Si
Ne vs. Ni

that couples perceive in like fashion (see Figure 6).

If you are keeping score, that is now two type experts recommending this same essential formula as the prescription for relationship success. John Beebe, curiously enough, happens to agree with Keirsey's *original* formula in his own investigation of relationships. He reprises Keirsey's first thoughts on having no letters in common (see Figure 4). However, Beebe's reasoning is vastly different! Far from setting up type opposites (more about that later), Beebe labels this particular kind of matching opposed codes "inverse relationships."

Let me provide an example using ESTP and INFJ. If I compare these two type codes, it seems apparent to anyone that they are opposites simply because they have no letters in common. However, if I extend the diagram so it reflects the entire pattern of all eight cognitive processes (see Figure 2), what do you notice?

Beebe classifies this mismatched pairing as an "inverse relationship" because the order of the conscious preferences is the same, albeit *inverted*. The favorite process of the ESTP is the inferior process of the INFJ, and vice-versa, and the order of processes mirrors one another, both in the four conscious function-attitudes and in the unconscious four.

Using Jungian terms to describe these combinations, Beebe states that each partner will "cradle gently" the other's anima/animus. Ooh, that phrase makes me swoon! In other words, due to the strengths and weaknesses inherent in this particular combination, each partner will have buckets of patience with their

mate's inferior process or "inferiority complex." This sounds like a lovely and highly desirable situation!

Beebe introduces another complex layer. He states that seduction most often occurs when a person meets their favorite process as the 5<sup>th</sup> process in another person. He indicates there is an overwhelming attraction between two processes in this combination: 1 + 5.

Let me clarify with an example. An INFJ's favorite cognitive process is introverted intuition. Their 5<sup>th</sup> process is its attitudinal opposite: extraverted intuition. A difference of direction here *typically* generates conflict, since what one person shares with the world is what the other person uses in the inner realm (see Figure 8).

According to Beebe, when dominant introverted intuition encounters dominant extraverted intuition, it is as if they magically combine to form a "giant intuition" together and characterizes an instance where opposites overwhelmingly attract. Beebe suggests this compelling attraction is far more common than the inverse relationship previously described, and claims the sensation can be highly seductive. I know what he means; I was in an intoxicating relationship of that sort for several years.

Beebe has also identified archetypal attractions that create various forms of relationship, up to and including codependence! According to Beebe, we all use our auxiliary function to support others and help other people rather than using it on or with ourselves. Thus it is possible to stumble into situations where we feel needed because it gives us an opportunity to express our auxiliary process. Beebe,

**Figure 9: Berens' Interaction Styles grid**

Chart-the-Course	Behind-the-Scenes
In-Charge	Get-Things-Going

**Figure 10: McAlpine's "Opposing Personality" example**

	INFJ	ENFP
Conscious Processes	Ni	Ne
	Fe	Fi
	Ti	Te
	Se	Si
Unconscious Processes	Ne	Ni
	Fi	Fe
	Te	Ti
	Si	Se

ENTP, has said he tends to "think" for other people; as an INFJ, I know I often "feel" for others; one of my ENFJ clients tends to "intuit" for her kids; and I have noticed my ISFP friend "senses" for his family! It is easy to see where we can get into a codependent relationship with others when we feel we are contributing something so fundamentally necessary. It is an easy way to get hooked or validated, and we persist even when the rest of the relationship is unfulfilling.

## Incompatibility

Now we can explore romance's corollary: the type opposite. Here we switch from attraction to repulsion as we delve into what constitutes type incompatibility. Once again, this notion of type opposites appears in each of the different models.

Keirsey caused mass confusion about what constitutes a type opposite. In one analysis, he implies Idealists and Artisans are opposites; in another treatment, he declares Idealists and Rationals to be opposites. Which are we to believe?!

In the Interaction Styles model, whatever style is listed *diagonally* from our preferred style in the grid causes us the greatest social styles stress (see Figure 9). It might therefore be considered our opposite. Thus, Chart-the-Course and Get-Things-Going would be opposites; and, In-Charge and Behind-the-Scenes would be considered opposites – and it is true. I

have seen (and experienced!) great stress between these dissimilar styles.

In the psychological type model, people who refer to Jung's original type model, represented by 4 functions rather than 8, interpret entirely mismatched codes as opposites (see Figure 4). Using that framework, INFJ and ESTP would once again be opposed in every way.

This stance apparently overlooks an assertion by Marie Louise von Franz (Jung's contemporary) that Jung claimed the hardest thing to understand is the same function type with the other attitude. In other words, there may be great conflict between a pair where one favors Introverted Sensing and the other prefers Extraverted Sensing (see Figure 8). Particularly when these individuals are the same gender, they tend to clash.

Bob McAlpine specifies two particular kinds of opposites derived from Beebe's 8-function model. The first opposite has been named "Opposing Personality." In this version of opposites, an INFJ's opposing personality would be the ENFP pattern. Between these two particular patterns, all eight of the processes are entirely Mismatched, albeit not in precisely opposite order (see Figure 10).

The hypothesis that mismatches in the 8-level model would generate tension was verified recently through live research done by Ken Liberty. He took an intimate look at what he calls "attitude-antagonistic couples." This description fits couples who have matching letters in their codes, but their favorite processes are in opposing attitudes, as displayed above. Individuals with these particular combinations reported more challenges within their marriages than couples who were *not* attitude-antagonistic. Beebe characterized an attitude-antagonistic relationship he was in by saying, "there was a fight every other minute."

I do not mean to imply this sort of relationship will never work – I am merely reporting how certain combinations appear to be fraught with greater challenges than less-opposed combinations, and often have more issues to overcome.

The second opposite McAlpine details is called a "Dynamic Opposite." With this pairing, an INFJ's dynamic opposite would be ISTJ (see Figure 11).

What is different about this pattern is how the INFJ's favorite process is the ISTJ's last, or least-conscious process, and vice-versa. These types seem uniquely configured to bring out the worst in each other. Just my rotten luck: that is the formula of the relationship I have with my sister.

One model not detailed at length in this examination is Beebe's Archetypes model, which I will address some other time. It introduces too many variables to summarize succinctly here. Using this model, we would explore Shadow and all our complexes and the impacts they have upon the relationship. From the perspective of this model, it seems only one conclusion may be deftly drawn:

*Each individual loves in the other sex what he lacks in himself.*

— G. Stanley Hall

## Conclusion

So, "What type is best for me?"

The culmination of my research indicates that type is not a divining rod. There is little knowing whether any person will hook up with another, and it is foolish to predict or try to control attraction. Type cannot help anyone accurately identify an ideal friend or romantic partner. After all, you do not have a relationship with a type, but with a person.

But when a relationship materializes through whatever magical mystical means it may, type goes a long way toward showing where conflicts and blind spots occur in the relationship. It provides an excellent system for support, understanding, and forgiveness with each other.

Overall, relationships point unerringly to where our developmental issues lie and present one of our most powerful avenues for learning. Within the context of a relationship, type is an invaluable tool for understanding oneself, working on oneself, and consciously grappling with one's own personal development. Since relationships act as mirrors of our Selves and present unique opportunities for growth, they are the perfect tool for individuation. This is the one type formula you may absolutely rely on.

Figure 11: McAlpine's "Dynamic Opposite" example.

	INFJ	ISTJ
Conscious Processes	Ni	Si
	Fe	Te
	Ti	Fi
	Se	Ne
Unconscious Processes	Ne	Se
	Fi	Ti
	Te	Fe
	Si	Ni

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