

Can Your MBTI Type Help You Be



By Debra Shigley

Healthier?

Learning
your fitness
type can help
you get – and
stick – with
the program

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Suzanne Brue of Delray Beach, Florida could tell right away this was not going to work. She was watching a physical therapist work with her mother, who was rehabilitating a torn rotator cuff. Her mom is the type of person who likes instructions with very specific detail. The physical therapist, however, was giving her mom very general directions – and her mom was not “getting” it.

Brue advised the therapist how to better connect with her mom: Focus on only one movement at a time, show her the correct form and don't give her choices. The suggestions clicked. “My mom's face instantly relaxed,” says Brue.

Brue is a former college administrator who had for decades studied psychological type and used personality tests to advise students on their careers. Having seen how simple changes in approach made such a difference in her mom's exercise experience, she wondered if such a tool might help people find the right exercise that fits their personality. Maybe her mom and the therapist's ultimate “meeting of the minds,” Brue thought, had something to do with their personality types, as determined by the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), a widely used instrument used to identify distinct personality types.

A lifelong exerciser, Brue was also

curious about why she herself was drawn to certain physical activities, such as swimming laps, but not others. Brue began interviewing and surveying hundreds of people that regularly exercised, and discovered that individuals' exercise preferences correlated directly with their MBTI types. Her six years of research led to her book, *The 8 Colors of Fitness*. (Oakledge Press, 2008).

In her book, Brue summarizes workout preferences reported by people from each MBTI type, and assigns each type one of eight color-coded “fitness personalities.” The goal, Brue says, is to help readers figure out their exercise likes and dislikes and, ultimately, stay motivated for fitness.

How It Works

To use Brue's “8 Colors” system, users must first learn their MBTI types by taking her mini MBTI test in the book or online (you

What's Your Fitness Personality?

Check out the chart for characteristics of fitness types, including exercise likes and dislikes, and ways to keep fitness routines fresh.

Fitness Types	Core Activities	Activities to Avoid	Activities to Try
Blue (ISTJ, ISFJ) Steadfast, systematic, methodical, practical	Basic and familiar exercises, such as swimming, walking or jogging	High-impact activities, such as aerobics classes	Keep a log of workouts to gauge progress, and increase activities incrementally.
Gold (ESTJ, ESFJ) Traditional and conservative, safety-oriented, competitive	Social sports that involve etiquette such as golf, tennis, shuffleboard and bocce	Innovative and trendy workouts	To help keep a competitive edge, train for a walk or race by following an established, regimented program.
Red (ESTP, ESFJ) Thrill-seeking, spontaneous, restless	Adventurous and fast-paced activities, such as basketball, racquetball, biking and triathlons	Exercise videos and classes	Text a few friends for a spur-of-the-moment Sunday bike ride.
Green (ISTP, ISFP) Outdoorsy, solitary, minimalist	Outdoor activities, such as gardening, horseback riding, hiking and kayaking	Gym Workouts	Ditch the car or subway for short distances, and walk to destinations instead.

If people better understand who they are and exercise in a way that's consistent with their personality, they're likely to exercise more frequently

can take the MBTI for \$9.95 at www.myevt.com/purchase_mbti). Brue's 8 Colors quiz was adapted from the work of psychiatrist Carl Jung that defines four "dimensions" of people's personalities. Responses to the questions determine which one of two possible types you are for each dimension i.e., Extroverted (E) or Introverted (I); Sensing (S) or Intuitive (N); Thinking (T) or Feeling (F); Perceiving (P) or Judging (J). At the end of the quiz, each test taker ends up with a four-letter type, such as "INTJ." If it sounds a bit confusing, you're not alone - which is why after Brue's research revealed the correlation between type and fitness preferences, she came up with her color scheme. "I wanted this to be accessible, so I started thinking about different types of categories I might use. I decided colors would work," Brue says.

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and exercise in a way that's consistent with their personality, they're likely to exercise more frequently, Brue explains. While fitness buffs may already know their workout preferences, the color connection might help people who are reluctant to exercise find the type of exercise that best suits them by intuition or the process of trial and error.



"This whole notion of exercise buddies, for example, has gotten way overblown in our culture," says Brue. "That might work for some people, but it's certainly not for everyone. The book offers information about where your path of least resistance will be in exercise." Critics of her

program may argue that simply knowing your color can't give you the discipline to hunker down and commit to making exercise part of your lifestyle. Brue agrees - but knowing what kind of

Fitness Types	Core Activities	Activities to Avoid	Activities to Try
Silver (ENTP, ENFP) Social and open-minded; preference for fun and convenience	Yoga, tai chi and innovative exercise classes, like Zumba (a fusion of Latin dance and aerobics) or boot camp	Traditional weight training	Meet friends for a small-group session with a personal trainer. E-mail them the night before to confirm
Saffron (INTP, INFP) Easily bored, flexible, playful, expressive	Dance classes, martial arts	Treadmill walking and running	Sign up for a salsa dance class.
White (INTJ, INFJ) Organized, reflective, independent, efficient	Pilates and Eastern practices, weight training, meditative walks and runs, home gyms	Adventure sports	Create a challenge by doing a little more of the same, like one more strenght-training session per week.
Purple (ENTJ, ENFJ) Disciplined and consistent; experimental, but routine-oriented	Swimming laps, biking, circuit and weight training, running outdoors	Social workouts	Change up the weekly routine with a new activity, such as yoga or interval runs.

Physical therapists have found the 8 Colors test can provide a simple way to understand a patient's innate tendencies and build rapport

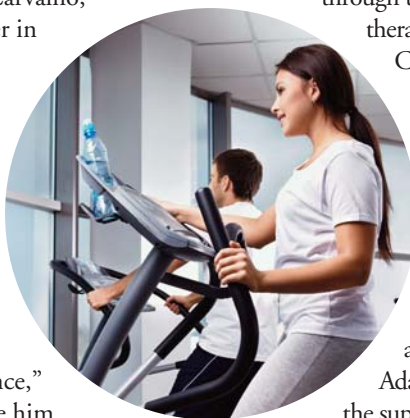


exercise you like is a good first step.

“Many readers tell me it was such a relief [to discover their fitness color] because they stop doing things that don’t work for them,” such as going to the gym, Brue says.

8 colors in action

Physical therapists and fitness trainers find the program useful as a guide to best work with their clients. Ligia Carvalho, a certified personal trainer in Atlanta, often gives the 8 Colors test to clients she can’t quite figure out. One client, a middle-aged man, had a detached attitude during workouts. “He never wanted any compliments on his form, and if I started to chat, there would be silence,” she says. When Ligia gave him the 8 Colors test, she learned he was a “blue” – economical with language, steadfast and self-assured. It was a revelation. Now she sees his demeanor as a



natural response, given his color type, without worrying they are having a personality conflict she says.

The program has helped Ligia mold personalized routines for others, too. One client who tested as a “red” likes spontaneity and fast-paced, playful, forever-changing routines. Jokes Ligia, “I practically need to have a circus going on for her to get through the workout!” Physical therapists have found the 8 Colors test can provide a simple way to understand a patient’s innate tendencies and build rapport. “It can’t be used in isolation or replace a thorough clinical evaluation, but it’s another piece of the puzzle to maximize fitness and function,” says Julie Adams, a physical therapist and the supervisor of Rehabilitation and Outpatient Services at Fletcher Allen Health Care in Burlington, Vt. Adams works with chronic pain, rheumatoid arthritis and neuromuscular-disorder patients. The 8

Colors test gives her more insight to develop effective programs for patients. She recalls a patient who needed to stretch but had not been following through with her home-based program. After the patient completed Brue’s test, Adams discovered that the young woman was much more people-oriented and needed a social environment to jazz her up. So, Adams advised the patient to find a location where she could be around others when she did her exercises, but not necessarily in a class. The young woman joined the local YMCA, made a plan to go the same time every day so she could see the same people. She has been successful with her stretching program ever since, Adams says. ■

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