

Discovering Your Secondary Temperaments

As you read about the four basic temperaments, you will likely discover that while one of the types most accurately describes your personality, a few characteristics might not apply; instead, a significant number of the characteristics of another temperament apply. These characteristics typically come from our secondary temperament. Most people, in fact, are not purely of one temperament but a combination of two, a primary one and a secondary one.

This is generally a good thing. Conrad Hock asserts in *The Four Temperaments* that in general "a person is happier if his temperament is not a pure one." Temperament combinations help balance the strengths and weaknesses of our personalities. And in times of stress, the characteristics of our secondary temperament can be useful in handling situations where we've deemed (consciously or subconsciously) our primary temperament inadequate.

Impossible combinations? Some authors have proposed that an individual may have three or four temperaments, or that the temperaments can be combined so that two diametrically opposed temperaments are combined in one individual (such as the choleric-phlegmatic combination or the melancholic-sanguine combination)." We maintain that this is not accurate. Although we believe that two temperaments can be (and most often are) combined, there is a limit to the combinations possible.

Remember that, classified according to patterns of reaction, the temperaments are distinguished according to whether the reaction to stimuli is quick or delayed, intense or dull, sustained over time or not sustained. We have all encountered individuals who react quickly and intensely for the most part, but on some occasions may have a delayed, although intense, reaction.

And we all know someone who, although for the most part a very laid-back, easy-going individual, can have an intense, although short-lived outburst in certain situations. And, as mentioned in an earlier chapter, the very saintly individual may have so conquered his passions and natural inclinations (especially those that are less desirable) that his natural temperament is not easily discernable to others. But it becomes difficult, if not impossible, to imagine a mentally healthy individual whose natural reactions, throughout his life, are quick, intense, and sustained, yet at the same time slow, dull, and unsustained.

Can an individual be naturally both introverted and extraverted? Can his reactions be both intense and dull? Therefore, the two combinations that are, by nature, untenable in a healthy individual are, we believe, the choleric-phlegmatic and the sanguine-melancholic combinations. Such individuals

would have to be at once introverted and extraverted; slow, yet quick, to respond; intense, yet dull in their responses; and their responses would last a long time and yet a short time. In every way and in every aspect of themselves, they would be internally conflicted.

At first glance, you might assume that a phlegmatic who otherwise exhibits strong leadership skills is highly competitive, or is very driven in terms of his chosen field, is a choleric-phlegmatic. However, we have never met anyone with an in-depth knowledge of the temperaments who claims to be this combination. Such a person would be both driven and laid-back, argumentative and yet non-confrontational. He would relish conflict and lean into controversy at the same time as being a gentle peacemaker, avoiding conflict! We have, however, met phlegmatics who are remarkable leaders who accomplish many things. We know some very competitive phlegmatics. But they do not attribute their success to a hefty dose of choler. Rather, these individuals have taken the strength of will of their phlegmatic temperament and used it to develop their own leadership capacity-usually at the service of Christ! An example is gold-medalist swimmer Ian Crocker. A friend of his once commented, "If you were any more laid-back, you'd be dead." But no one becomes an Olympic gold medalist and a world-record holder without intense (although perhaps hidden) drive.

We have met a few people who, when they first hear of the temperaments, believe they are sanguine-melancholic (or melancholic-sanguine). choleric-sanguine). They tend to be extraverted worriers who have fabulous people skills, but lack decisiveness. They are warm and friendly and able to relate to other people quickly, yet they lack follow-through and can be severely disorganized procrastinators. They rightly identify themselves as partly sanguine, because they have the people skills, the creativity, the warmth, and the optimism of the sanguine. Yet they believe they must also be melancholic because they tend to worry-a lot. They worry about conversations they recently had, how they ought to have responded, what is the correct action to take in a particular situation, and whether other people are judging them harshly. They can be extremely indecisive, and this results in procrastination and disorganization. They may have a longing for the ideal that leads them to believe they have perfectionist tendencies.

However, a sanguine-melancholic combination would be someone one who is not only extraverted, optimistic, quick to respond, scattered, and forgiving, but also introverted, pessimistic, slow to respond, meticulous, and unforgiving. Such conflict in a mentally healthy individual is impossible to conceive. These happy, extraverted, but somewhat unfocused sanguines have come to believe (through peer influence, faith conversion, study, or a mentor) that their natural temperament is lacking in depth; they believe they

ought to be deep, introspective thinkers, orderly and perfect in all their undertakings. Their natural confident optimism has become clouded by self-doubt and hesitation. Self-doubt and self-chastisement lead them to conclude that they are melancholic. In fact, they are still impulsive and somewhat disorganized-sanguine-but now self-consciously and unhappily so. Their lack of self-knowledge reveals the sanguine temperament's tendency to superficiality, while their sensitivity and desire to please others makes them want to be "perfect" for their spouse, friends, or a teacher. When these sanguine types make a cursory study of the temperaments, they observe in themselves a certain indecisiveness, and they mistakenly attribute this to melancholic "introspection." Yet the melancholic's indecisiveness comes not so much from self-doubt as from an overabundance of reflection. When the sanguine exhibits indecisiveness, on the other hand, it is not the result of much reflection and introspection. It is typically the opposite. The sanguine will not take the time to reflect deeply on the issue and has instead frittered away his time consulting others (in his extraverted fashion). The indecisiveness of the sanguine stems typically from a lack of self-discipline, then, rather than the melancholic's over-reflection and irresoluteness. In the sanguine's indecisiveness you will sense a fundamental optimism; a sanguine will often relate a funny anecdote about his own indecisiveness. The melancholic, on the other hand, might exhibit what appears to be indecisiveness, but is rather an inability to act, for fear of the consequences or else due to his overly analytical nature. (Hamlet let was a classic melancholic.)

If you are unsure whether you are sanguine or melancholic, ask yourself whether you are primarily extraverted or introverted, whether you are quick to respond or slow to respond, and whether you are fundamentally optimistic or pessimistic. Apart from these, all other temperament combinations are possible, and are seen to one degree or another in most people.

Let's look at them now.

SANGUINE-CHOLERIC AND CHOLERIC-SANGUINE

The sanguine-choleric is the most extraverted of all the temperament combinations. The good news is that, with this combination, the optimistic, impulsive, fun-loving sanguine becomes more capable of follow-through, taking significant leadership roles, and juggling many projects without unduly sacrificing productivity.

This temperament tends to be a happy combination of decisiveness and charm, analytical skills and creativity, friendliness with reliability. Your ability to connect with people should tone down some of the "bulldozer" characteristics of the pure choleric. You are insightful and enthusiastic, with good people

skills. You are also capable of constancy, dedication, and serious undertakings, although at times you may be underestimated, due to your often humorous and light-hearted manner. You not only are capable of creative inspirations, but also you will find within yourself the persistence and drive needed to carry out your inspirations.

St. Peter may have been a sanguine-choleric. He was impulsive, enthusiastic, protective, talkative, frequently wrong-yet a heroic and passionate leader of the flock. The bad news is that, if intellectual, human, or spiritual formation is seriously lacking, this temperament blend can exhibit the worst of the two temperaments: overly talkative, brassy, opinionated, loud, rash, swift to jump to conclusions, and forgetful. If intellectual depth is lacking, this temperament mixture can become come brash, bossy, and intolerant. The high-spirited humor of the sanguine can become biting and hurtful when combined with the unforgiving, vengeful nature of the poorly formed choleric.

If pleasure-seeking and impulsivity are not contained, the sanguine-choleric choleric may wind up with a lax conscience that justifies his weaknesses, nesses, ultimately resulting in habitual sin. On the other hand, the natural generosity flowing from the sanguine temperament will commit him to many good works. If you are a sanguine-choleric, because you are easily inspired at the outset, you may find that you are very actively involved in many projects. But take care that you do not let the sanguine side take over to the extent that you are "all talk and no action." Many sanguine-choleric have to watch out for a tendency to come up with great ideas, put everyone to work, and then drop the ball when the project gets tiresome. The choleric-sanguine will be somewhat less extraverted than the sanguine-choleric, because the choleric's extraversion often takes a backseat to his goal-oriented behavior.

Thus, this temperament mix will result in a highly driven leader (choleric) whose social skills and interest in other people (sanguine) make him less dictatorial. He will be more compassionate in dealing with people, less controlling than the pure choleric, more flexible, and more willing to take time out to relax and enjoy himself (and other people). If you are a choleric-sanguine, you will find that you have a great amount of energy and inspiration for initiating projects and can be highly focused on task completion as well.

Although you tend to be very objective, pragmatic, and logical-and may sometimes find yourself stepping on toes in the process of accomplishing the task at hand-you will also have the interpersonal skills needed to resolve conflict and to help people work together and get along with one another. The creativity and sensitivity of your sanguine nature will enable you to be flexible when the situation calls for it, and less demanding and harsh than a pure choleric would tend to be.

Without strong formation and a deep spiritual life, however, your temperament's weaknesses will be intensified. Without attention to self-formation you may find yourself quickly aroused to anger, yet also unforgiving. You can be impatient with others and speak frankly or impulsively without regard for others' feelings. You may become a workaholic or driven by your passions. You may insist on having your own way, and become angered, blame others, or make excuses when corrected. But, once you become aware of the weaknesses of your nature, and make a commitment to self-improvement, you will be able to be equally determined in pursuing self-formation.

St. Teresa of Avila, mystic and Doctor of the Church, may have been of choleric-sanguine temperament. As a child, St. Teresa was impulsive and headstrong. After reading about the Crusades, she packed her bags and ran away from home-dragging her brother Rodrigo with her-in the hope that together they would die a martyr's death at the hands of the Moors! She loved to read the sixteenth-century equivalent of romance novels; she would hide the frivolous volumes under her bed. She was a bit vain and, as a young teen, loved to fix her hair, dress in the latest fashion, wear perfume and cosmetics, and gossip with her friends. Yet her sanguine loquaciousness was tempered by choleric intelligence and drive; once she became committed to following Christ, she ran away from home (for the second time!) and joined the Carmelites. Yet she did not settle for a half-hearted convent life-one that, she felt, had departed from the original spirit of the founder-but resolved to found her own convent, which became the reformed, discalced Carmelites. "Teresa had beauty, charm, literary genius ... an administrative ability second to none; humor and tenderness and common sense; the resourcefulness of a great soldier...." Doesn't this sound like the best qualities of the choleric and sanguine temperaments?

CHOLERIC-MELANCHOLIC AND MELANCHOLIC-CHOLERIC

The choleric-melancholic mixture combines two passionate and persevering temperaments to create a strong leader with the ability to envision a great plan of action-someone who is both meticulous and strategic. The tendency of the choleric to make hasty, often sweeping judgments will be tempered by the melancholic's careful analysis and reflection. The tendency of the melancholic to be moody, hypercritical, and slow to act will be counterbalanced by the optimism and practicality of the choleric. Thus, the choleric-melancholic will be capable of decisive-yet thoughtful-action and will be thoroughly productive.

If you are a choleric-melancholic, you have a quick, analytical mind, possibly with great attention to detail, with a strong sense of order and discipline. You will be more extraverted than a pure melancholic or a melancholic-choleric, and you will be able to take on more projects and accomplish more things than a pure melancholic would be capable of. We know several choleric-melancholics melancholics (and melancholic-cholerics) who are CFOs; their leadership ability, combined with their meticulous attention to financial detail, makes them valued in this sphere. (In addition to their analytical skills and attention to detail, they tend also to be highly ethical, honest employees.) You will most likely have a strong analytical mind, holding other people and institutions to high standards.

Both of these temperaments tend to unforgiveness, so this will be an area in which spiritual growth will be a challenge. Self-sacrificing, yet driven, the choleric-melancholic can accomplish great things. Without human and spiritual formation, however, this combination can result in an individual who is proud and obstinate, with deep anger and resentment. He can be opinionated, critical, and judgmental. A quick intelligence, the tendency to think he is always right, and his pursuit of the ideal might make someone with this temperament combination autocratic, moody, arrogant, and antisocial.

We imagine that St. Paul was choleric-melancholic; he was intense, tense, focused, and driven. He was not one to value relationships above rules. He disagreed with St. Peter on several occasions (as he wrote to the Galatians: "And when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face because he clearly was wrong" [Gal. 2:11]) and even parted ways from his fellow missionary Barnabas, because Barnabas wanted to bring along John Mark, whom Paul said had deserted them at Pamphylia (Acts 15:37-39).

The melancholic-choleric is also a leader with the potential to accomplish great works. However, whereas the choleric-melancholic choleric is driven by the challenge and the opportunity, the melancholic-choleric choleric is inspired more by the nobility of the task. The melancholic side of both temperament combinations results in the project's being organized and significant, while the choleric aspect is the driving and demanding force. If you are melancholic-choleric, you are somewhat less pragmatic (or utilitarian) than a pure choleric, just as persevering and determined, and with a greater emphasis on high and noble ideals. Likely to be motivated by the most noble and demanding of causes, you are capable of founding a humanitarian society, composing a symphony, founding a school, or discovering a cure. You are organized, perfectionist, introspective, driven, and moody (although though less so than a pure melancholic). You will be less active than a choleric-melancholic and less extraverted, more internally focused. But your weaknesses include a tendency to excessive self-criticism and criticism of

others, being dismissive or overly judgmental, exhibiting self-absorption and a lack of trust, and possessing a controlling trolling nature. You tend to be inflexible, can bear grudges for a long time, and may be prone to discouragement.

A melancholic-choleric choleric who is not attentive to his spiritual life and does not keep his eye assiduously on the truly important things of life can become come a cross to those around him, through his nit-picking, perfectionism, disdain, resentment, spitefulness when crossed, and even haughtiness.

PHLEGMATIC-MELANCHOLIC AND MELANCHOLIC-PHLEGMATIC

The phlegmatic-melancholic is definitively introverted; thus, anxieties or deep emotions may not be clearly expressed. Those with this combination will react most slowly of all the temperaments. They may appear-or believe themselves-at times to be lazy. As a result of his delayed and sometimes dull response, a phlegmatic-melancholic will be slower to speak out, tempted to procrastinate, and reticent. At times when the melancholic aspect dominates, he will have plenty of time to mull over in his mind what his response should have been. He may become easily offended fended or discouraged.

The phlegmatic attentiveness to relationships, and to getting along and keeping the peace, will take the edge off some of the melancholic tendency to perfectionism and critical judgments of others. On the other hand, because he may be more easily offended, he might want to express criticism of others yet hesitant to confront directly. The dominance of the phlegmatic temperament may also drive the melancholic proclivity to order and neatness out of the picture.

If you are a phlegmatic-melancholic, you will show a cooperative spirit and a desire to please, and will value harmonious relationships. You are particularly gifted in teaching, mediating among groups, and counseling individuals. And although yours isn't the most dynamic temperament, your lack of defensiveness, your calmness under pressure, and your gift for mediation in critical situations can make you a very effective servant-leader, one who is willing to roll up his sleeves and work along with those he leads by example.

This temperament combination can face at times a greater challenge to your confidence than other temperaments (especially the choleric or sanguine). For this reason, when you are facing a major challenge or have been given a multifaceted and demanding project, it will be absolutely critical for you to maintain your level of energy and motivation-not to mention your prayer life-to complete the project. You will want to anticipate the way your

moods can get you off track and take concrete steps to maintain accountability in order to remain focused and energized throughout out the task.

Motivational tapes, exercise, a healthy diet, spiritual guidance, and a strong sacramental life will be critical. You will also need to maintain your focus on the big picture at all times and not be distracted by the "urgent" demands of the moment, or by what other people may ask of you. To this end, it is always wise to seek regular professional, personal, and spiritual guidance from qualified individuals. In order for the phlegmatic temperament to achieve success and reach his goals, he should always work with a motivational program that provides structure, inspires confidence, and ensures accountability.

The melancholic-phlegmatic is tidier and more procedural than the phlegmatic-melancholic. He may be slower to take on new projects, as the melancholic fear of new situations and the tendency to perfectionism take over. The double-dose of introversion, along with the melancholic tendency to negativity, makes it difficult for him to give compliments and make upbeat small talk. It also causes him instinctively to say no when he first hears a request. Others may perceive this as snobbishness.

Unless the melancholic-phlegmatic is very comfortable, and is surrounded by understanding, long-time friends, he may find himself somewhat isolated and alone, unable to warm up in a social gathering. One melancholic-phlegmatic we know is highly organized, critical, slow, and dogmatically unforgiving, yet reveals her phlegmatic aspect in her intense discomfort with confrontation (unless she is very at ease among the warring members) and in her strong relationships with her friends. You wouldn't guess that she is so devoted to her friends, however, because, true to her melancholic nature, she rarely initiates contact with them; they always have to call her first.

If you are phlegmatic-melancholic, it's likely that you are a bit more upbeat than the melancholic-phlegmatic, a little less introverted, more trusting, slightly less moody, more generous with your time, and a more gracious host. You will rarely find yourself angry (although your feelings may be easily hurt), forgive more readily, and do not hold on to hurts in the same way that a more dominantly melancholic temperament would.

You are compassionate, sensitive, caring, and tend to gravitate toward the helping professions. You are a patient and caring teacher. You are not as perfectionist as a pure melancholic, and you generally struggle with organization. You find it difficult to set limits or turn someone down who asks a favor of you; you may be especially drawn to volunteer or missionary work, the apostolate, or other works of mercy. Although very generous, you may find

it difficult to set priorities or limits. Your phlegmatic side makes it hard to say no. Sometimes your generosity can result in not enough time to get organized, to be prepared, or to relax. Burn-out and feeling overwhelmed may result. Relaxation is something you really do enjoy and need, though. You need time to unwind, to be alone, and to recuperate from the stress of hard work or demanding interactions.

You may have a tendency to procrastinate, which results in becoming swamped and overwhelmed, requiring days to recuperate from the stress, leading to procrastination ... and the cycle begins again. Although your weak link may be organizational and procedural planning, and you can sometimes be a bit too thin-skinned, you are a key member of any team. You are very adaptable and flexible, are able to succeed in start-ups and unstructured settings, and are able to work with a wide range of temperaments and personalities, due to your strong relationship and mediatory skills. With supportive supervision and disciplined accountability, you will be able to reach ambitious long-term goals.

SANGUINE-PHLEGMATIC AND PHLEGMATIC-SANGUINE

The sanguine-phlegmatic is an extraverted, optimistic, warm individual who readily connects with others and is well liked by all. His sanguine side makes him creative, enthusiastic, friendly, and inspiring. His phlegmatic side makes him somewhat cautious at times, and also highly sensitive to other people's moods, emotions, likes, and dislikes. He keenly desires harmony in relationships. He tends to overextend himself to meet others' needs and to personalize any negative criticism. (If the boss says, "We are not meeting our quotas," the sanguine-phlegmatic thinks, "Is he angry at me?") After all, the sanguine-phlegmatic has a double-dose of feeling; twice blessed by the tendency to prioritize relationships and harmony.

If you are a sanguine-phlegmatic, most everyone likes you! You are easy-going, creative, fun-loving, enthusiastic, imaginative, caring, generous, flexible, and spontaneous. You may be considered "emotional" because of your easily aroused feelings, your attentiveness to relationships, and your tender heart. Your weaknesses are superficiality, indecisiveness, disorganization, and procrastination.

Often you find it difficult to know exactly how to state what you mean, or how to express yourself logically; this contributes to a tendency to talk more than is needed or to provide more detail than is necessary. You can be easily influenced (which is exacerbated by your tendency to ask others for advice-without thinking it through) and to do what seems kind before considering whether it is objectively right.

Many sanguine-phlegmatics are drawn to teaching (and parenting), the helping professions, and volunteer works for the Church or for the welfare of society. You place a high priority on your personal search for meaning and self-identity. The strong need to discover your "true self" will be met by a rich prayer life and a personal relationship with Christ.

Your weaknesses probably tend to bother you more than anyone else. For example, you may find yourself blurting out something without thinking, or spending too much time seeking advice, only to find yourself more confused than when you started, or oversleeping every day this week-despite all the best intentions. You may find yourself becoming overcommitted because you simply can't say no and have a strong need to be liked and to please people. A typical sanguine-phlegmatic trick is to spend too much money shopping or (better yet) dining out with friends, and then to put off balancing the checkbook (too much work, too many other distractions) until it is hopelessly behind. Now you are overwhelmed with everything that has piled up! You may complain half-heartedly, blame circumstances, or go shopping, but you may not really make a concerted effort to change.

If you are a phlegmatic-sanguine, however, your phlegmatic side will dominate. This will result in a greater tendency to introversion (although still less than a melancholic's or pure phlegmatic's). You are peace-loving, conservative, well-balanced, easy-going, with a dry wit and a talent for bringing people together. As an employee, you are compliant, dutiful, orderly, and subdued (and probably were as a child, too). Others may not realize that you have a sanguine side-at first. It may take a little longer for you to make close friends, but once you do, your sanguine nature can assert itself. It will also show up when, for example, you have been so dutiful and compliant about work or school that finally you need to relax and unwind-and now the sanguine, fun-loving side comes out. Or, when you are hanging out with your closest friends.

You are very thoughtful of others, with a knack for empathically putting yourself in other people's shoes, and you value peace and harmony at all times. You also have a great sense of humor and an easy-going manner that makes you a valued friend. You are discouraged by criticism and negativity and need acceptance, support, and cooperation in your personal life. You can be deeply wounded by sarcasm, harsh criticism, and anger when it is directed at you. You will not, however, directly fight back, but prefer to turn the other cheek or redouble your efforts to please.

Phlegmatic-sanguines tend to prefer movies, concerts, or other forms of relaxation that are a bit more spectator-oriented. When they attend parties, they tend to prefer smaller groups, rather than the large social gatherings a

pure sanguine enjoys. Like sanguine-phlegmatics, they are very attentive to relationships, to harmony among people. They have deep feelings, hate negative criticism, and become discouraged by negativity in those around them.

They are strongly tempted to repress their own wishes in order to preserve peace in a relationship. A stressful situation (especially one that is interpersonally demanding) may cause the peaceful phlegmatic-sanguine to withdraw into solitary television watching, playing computer games, eating, or sleeping, instead of directly expressing his negative feelings. A danger for the phlegmatic-sanguine is to be satisfied with achieving less than what he is capable of-whether because he tends not to plan for the future or because the more challenging goals seem to be too much trouble. A phlegmatic-sanguine will be strongly tempted to quit if he doesn't think the end product is worth the effort or if he fears he won't succeed.

As a friend, the phlegmatic-sanguine is true-blue. He is likely to be a great listener and can help others solve their problems. He is a calm and objective mediator-so long as he is not himself personally entwined in the conflict. Attention to self-formation through goal-setting, thinking about the future, and seeking expert advice will help the phlegmatic-sanguine become productive, successful, and a great leader.

Perhaps the most besetting difficulties for this temperament combination are the natural inclination to peace and quiet (tempting you to laziness), a preference to live within the moment (superficiality), and a tendency to make decisions based first on the desire to please someone else or to restore harmony. You are a supportive friend and a cooperative employee; but at times, this can cause you to say yes to the demands of friends or colleagues without first analyzing whether this choice is actually the best one to make.

At times, wanting to either please your good friends or to avoid conflict at home or at work, you may go with the flow when in fact a strong stance is necessary. Or, you may avoid a more demanding task or career move in order to maintain harmony and stability. If you find yourself stuck in a rut or avoiding making the extra effort required to make an important change, take time out to analyze your goals for the future, realign your priorities to reflect your values, and, if necessary, seek spiritual direction to ensure that your values are aligned with God's will for you. Outside support and a definitive plan with clear accountability can help the phlegmatic-sanguine to stay on track and motivated and can build his confidence to succeed.

We have discussed the various temperament combinations found in most individuals. Remember that no individual is completely locked into a specific form of behavior or action. Temperament does not reveal the whole person. A person is always more than his temperament or combination of

temperaments. Through our free will, our character built over time through our moral choices, our attention to formation, and God's grace, we are each completely unique. Each of us is painting a picture or writing the book of our lives, and our temperament plays a small, although significant, part. Through learning about our temperament, we become more realistic about our own nature, more accepting of ourselves and others, and more capable of making prudent changes that will further us along