

Lockdown Lounge #3 – Personality, Preference and Me!

The 3rd June 2020 saw the third convening of the Lockdown Loungers curated by the [Guildhall Coaching and Mentoring Faculty](#).

The pattern was already established. Anyone involved in the creative world could drop in for an hour and a half and reframe the trials and triumphs of lockdown with the help of models and concepts from coaching.

Not to teach coaching, nor to coach, but to relax, re-assess and, hopefully, re-energise.

Come in, have a seat...

Today [Jane](#), [Jo](#), [Chris](#) and [Carlos](#) were waiting to welcome the Loungers, keeping the atmosphere warm and the conversation flowing.

Jo explained the order of the day and asked everyone to turn off distractions. Time to bring your whole self to the session.

Jane had the aperitif ready to hand. She started with a few questions for the Loungers.

Do you like large gatherings or intimate soirées?

Busy environment or quiet spaces?

Do you plan or are you spontaneous?

Early or last minute?

Every day we make choices based on our **preferences**, and these are an expression of our personalities.

Have you noticed how two people brought up in similar ways can have differing ways of seeing the world?

Why are some people so very like us and some are just... well... not?

Pick up a pen and sign your name. Now try signing your name with the pen in the other hand – how does that feel?

The Loungers were quick to respond:

"awkward"

"unnatural"

"it looks childish"

"strangely liberating"

"more loopy"

Simply put, signing with your dominant hand feels natural, the other does not. That's not to say you couldn't learn, or improve, but one will always feel more comfortable than the other. That comfort isn't something you've learned or trained yourself to feel.

Preferences are just a natural part of you.

Which way do you lean?

We were heading casually to the reason that Lockdown Lounge exists, the part that the Loungers always mention as their favourite part of the gathering – the chance to chat and reflect.

Jane sent us off to our conversational booths with a few simple questions to provoke discussion.

As ever, there were no rules and no expectation that this throng of thoughtful creatives would stick to those questions; that isn't how the Lounge works. Push the topic down a hill and let it roll where it will.

<i>what's it like?</i>	when you're working in a busy environment with lots of activity and stimulation around you?
	<i>- or -</i>
	when you are working in a quiet space with plenty of time for reflection?
<i>what's it like?</i>	if you have an after-work activity with lots of interaction?
	<i>- or -</i>
	when you have lots of time to relax on your own after work?
<i>What's different about those things for you now in Lockdown?</i>	

The conversations, as ever, remain confidential but certainly in my room there was a strong feeling that having time on your own was 'golden time'. We also talked about our varied responses to the social pressures of conversation and how we often show different personalities to the world, depending on the circumstances.

There were fascinating insights from those who feel uncomfortable in large groups of people, but who get a lot of contentment from being in large musical groups, such as orchestras or choirs.

Why is being in a large group different when you're making music?

There's a different type of communication that goes on in an orchestra or choir – there's a sociability, but without the demands of having to project your own personality into the group, and in a situation where conversational interchanges are by necessity constrained and brief.

Porous boundaries

In those almost forgotten times before lockdown (*can you strain your memories to imagine such a time?*) work and home were, for many people, separated by a commute. A journey, short or long, that allowed transition between mindsets. A chance – not always taken – to realign our pace and attitudes to the needs of the home.

Now most people in the creative world have commutes that are no further than from one room to another.

Choices, choices

Jane was ready to shake up the ingredients for the main appetizer of the afternoon.

One thing we all have in common is that we're all individuals. We have our own preferred ways of recharging our batteries and ways of getting through the day.

These preferences show up in the choices we make for ourselves, or sometimes by irritation, conflict or discomfort if we can't behave in our preferred way.

By learning more about our preferences and the preferences of others we can raise our own awareness and that can lead to new ways of working.

Understanding our preferences can offer insights into our (and others') blind spots.

Katherine Briggs and Isabel Briggs Myers (her daughter) developed a '[type indicator](#)', based on their own research and on the *Theory of Psychological Type* by [Carl Jung](#), first published in 1921. They identified four preference pairs:

Preference Pairs		
Introversion	or	Extraversion
<i>Where we get our energy from</i>		
Sensing	or	Intuition
<i>How we take in information</i>		
Thinking	or	Feeling
<i>How we make decisions</i>		
Judging	or	Perceiving
<i>How we interact with the world</i>		

It's widely acknowledged that as we use those words today, these are not the most helpful labels. Introversion is not to do with being shy, and Extraverts are not always extroverts.

Each of us has a preference for one side or other in these pairs, and this can be used to define a four letter code for our personality type.

It's also important to recognise that in the 16 different combinations available, there are no 'good' or 'bad' types. They just recognise the differences that exist between people.

When we understand more about ourselves, we can unlock more possibilities within ourselves.

In our current situation, our normal routine has been shuffled and we've had to reconstruct our daily lives.

Right now, are you operating in a way that's congruent with your preferences?

Jane's first delicious delivery was based around the first pair of preferences – Extraversion or Introversion. In her second recipe, she was inviting us to taste a little of our Judging and Perceiving preferences.

Do you mean whether we're judgemental or perceptive?

Not at all! It's simply about how we prefer to operate in the world. Do you prefer to come to a decision as soon as it's reasonable to do so, or to leave things open as long as feasible?

<i>What's your preferred way to deal with deadlines?</i>	
<i>what's it like...</i>	when you're asked to plan an activity or piece of work well ahead of time, and follow this step-by-step? - or - when plans change and you're asked to work up to the last minute on a deadline?
<i>are you someone who...</i>	feels the need to get your work done before you play? - or - are you someone who can play anytime and catch up on your work out of hours?
<i>what happens if...</i>	someone invites you to do something for fun when you're in the middle of a task?
<i>How is all this impacting what's going on for you in Lockdown?</i>	

And then the Loungers were off with the heady taste of debate, anecdote and lived experience to drive the conversation.

Let's talk about plans

The room that I was in had one great insight. For those of us who are both Introverted preference (getting our energy from the inner world of thoughts and ideas) and Perceiving preference (those who like to leave their options open as long as reasonably possible), lockdown was often turning out to be an unexpected bonus.

We discussed holiday plans – which of us love to get to our holiday destination knowing what we’re going to do, and which of us like to be spontaneous? One spoke of the challenge of having a partner who appeared to be of a different J/P preference to herself, and how frustrating that can be.

The conversation continued to march into unplanned territory.

*What **is** this discomfort we’re all feeling?*

*How did we feel about the **pressure** of planning?*

*Which of us were loving the space and opportunity of lockdown, knowing that we don’t **have** to do anything with this time.*

*And for those of us who get great pleasure and personal value from serving others – **what can we do to readjust?***

Last orders

All too soon, once again the bell was ringing for the last round. Jane poured us a last libation to send us out into the warm June evening with a thoughtful glow.

<i>what's happening right now that's congruent with who you are?</i>
<i>what might you tweak, adapt or change to better suit your preferred style?</i>
<i>what would be useful for you to be doing?</i>
<i>what can you leave for now?</i>
<i>what do those most important to you need from you right now?</i>
<i>how do you ask for what you need?</i>
<i>how do you offer what others need?</i>

As a final farewell, the Loungers were invited to write a brief bit of feedback in the chat box. The answers were revealing...

"a relief to articulate things I didn't even know I was thinking about"

"it's the beginning of something really interesting"

"hearing my context spoken out loud [...] I said something today that I haven't said to other people before"

"thank you for creating this space"

And we were off to test our preferences in the outside world.

Lockdown Lounge is run fortnightly by the Guildhall Coaching Faculty. To book a place at the fourth **Lockdown Lounge** meet up on Zoom on June 17th (16:00 to 17:30 UK time), send an email to: coachingandmentoring@gsmd.ac.uk headed 'Lockdown Lounge'.

Please note that numbers will be limited.