



Georgia Shaffer



Understanding Our Differences During Difficult Times

"I refuse to sit around feeling sorry for myself. I need to be strong, and get on with my life," Sam said after losing a considerable amount of money.

After Allison's best friend was killed, she said, "I wanted to be left alone - to sort things out. But, my friends and family kept calling or stopping by unexpectedly."

"It's been five months since my husband died." Whitney sighed. "I feel so alone, and I think people have forgotten about me. If only someone would call or invite me out."

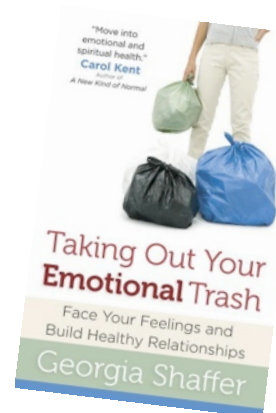
Despite a recent job loss, Jack stated, "Sure it's tough. But these things have a way of working out. Lately, I spend most of my time fishing."

Although each one of these four people encountered difficult and stress filled situations, their responses to their troubles were quite distinct. When we reach out to others during tragic times, it's important to recognize *different personalities have different needs*. Let's look at four distinctions to help understand personality difference: *Sanguine*, *Melancholy*, *Choleric*, and *Phlegmatic*.

People with the *Popular Sanguine* personality are outgoing, fun-loving, and full of energy. Their basic desire in life is to have fun. They like attention, affection, and approval, which can be supplied by lots of visitors, flowers, cards, and calls. A simple note such as, "I'm looking forward to taking you to the new Italian restaurant" could brighten their day.

The opposite of the *Popular Sanguine* is the *Perfect Melancholy*. This is my personality, and I tend to be neat, meticulous, sensitive, and organized. While the extroverted *Sanguine* is recharged around people, the introverted *Melancholy*, like me, is energized by solitude. We enjoy silence and space to be alone with our thoughts and emotions. We desire a feeling of warmth and sensitivity in our relationships and are happiest with good doses of well-spaced company rather than a steady stream of guests. Something you could write on a card for your *Melancholy* friend might be, "You're in our prayers. May God's comfort and love surround you during this difficult time."

Powerful Cholerics are strong, dynamic, natural-born leaders. Their basic desire is for control, and they crave a sense of achievement, as well as appreciation for the challenges they're



facing. During troubling times, if they are able, they will work hard at gaining an upper hand on the problem. If that approach isn't successful, they will pour themselves into their jobs, start a new project, or exercise harder. When life gets stressful *Cholerics* like to be provided with choices that help them to regain a sense of control. A handwritten note for them might say, "We're cheering for you! If anyone can deal with this challenge it's you and the Lord."

The *Peaceful Phlegmatics* are the easy-going, likeable, balanced people. Emotionally, they prefer peace and quiet, and like the *Melancholy*, they are recharged by silence and space. Respect and a feeling of worth for who they are, rather than what they have done, is important to them. During stressful times, it is not unusual to find the *Phlegmatic* spacing out in front of the TV, taking a nap, reading, or fishing. Their personalized message could read, "Take care, get lots of rest and know we miss you."

So, the next time you're confused about how to show concern for someone, don't be afraid to ask. Try to identify their unique personality and use that understanding as a guide. For instance, would they prefer moments of light-hearted distraction in the midst of all their troubles. Or, do they need quiet moments to be alone and sort things through? Do they want a chance to work more or exercise longer? Or, would they prefer the opportunity to withdraw from life and rest? Caring enough to respond to *their* individual needs can be the difference between hurting and helping.

Note: This article was adapted from:
Taking Out Your Emotional Trash



Georgia Shaffer is a licensed psychologist, life coach, and the author of *How Not to Date a Loser: A Guide to Making Smart Choices*. She writes and speaks frequently on the subjects of relationships, dating, grief, and rebuilding after loss. Georgia has over 15 years experience helping people identify: "What needs to grow? What needs to go?" For more information, visit: www.GeorgiaShaffer.com

