

# Failure-tolerant leaders use the experience as a positive tool that invigorates employees

Being willing and able to fail is a leadership skill.

After all, responding to failure well is how we encourage more of an experimentation mindset, which is essential for innovation.

Let's look at a couple characteristics of leaders who fail well, then dive into helping others reframe how they view their hurdles.

Richard Farson and Ralph Keys in their book *The Failure-Tolerant Leader* share, "During his years leading Monsanto, Robert Shapiro was struck by how terrified his employees were of failing. They had been trained to see an unsuccessful product or project as a personal rebuke."

Shapiro tried hard to change that perception. He explained every product and project was an experiment and that its backers failed only if

their work was a halfhearted, careless effort with poor results.

Shapiro and other failure-tolerant leaders employ a number of strategies. Here are two.

**Distinguish between excusable and inexcusable failure.** Employees must know that failure is okay, but sloppy work will not be tolerated. A failure-tolerant leader is vigilant in examining what happened and why, and can tell the difference between a cavalier attempt that failed and a sincerely executed attempt that missed the mark.

**Engage the person, not the project.** Failure-tolerant leaders show a genuine interest in employees' growth and not just the status of the project. They send the message that learning

and development are just as important as project success.

When engaging people, the failure-tolerant leader shows interest and expresses support by asking pertinent questions. Opening questions may include: What kinds of challenges are you facing? What might be the next steps we are looking at as a company? The conversations that develop focus on the learning taking place.

Sometimes, however, the answers we get may indicate a colleague or employee has

negative thoughts. Here is where a good leader steps in to reframe the situation.

## Reframing

Reframing is a questioning tool used in conflict resolution to re-word or re-state what someone has said more constructively.

Reframing validates the speaker's experience, then move from his or her perspective to a potentially more constructive one.

*Original statement:* Don't you know any better than to submit a proposal that will never fly?

*Reframed statement:* You may have a point there. How would you improve the proposal to make it fly?

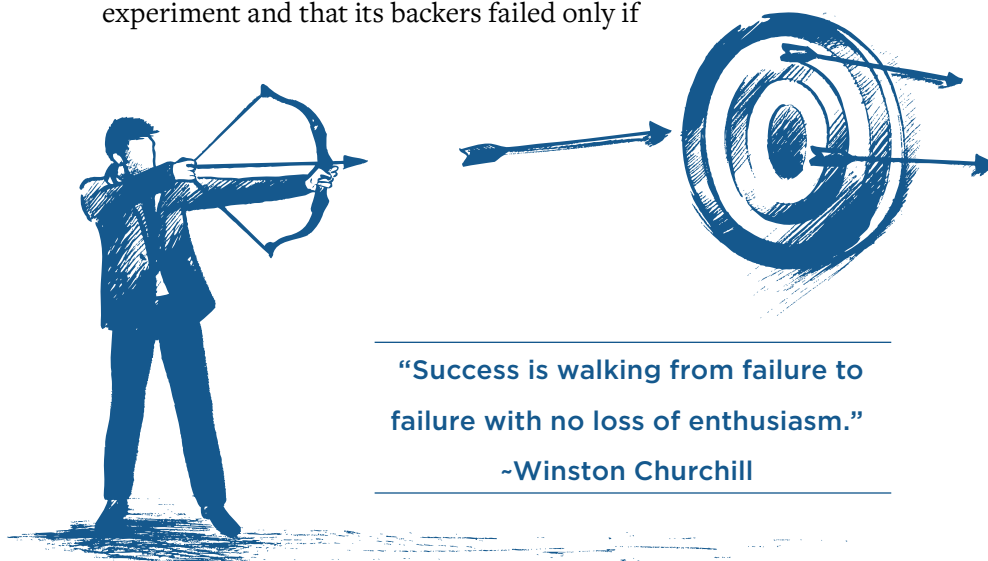
Techniques of reframing can be used to cultivate creative and critical thinking skills.

*Original statement:* I've never been good at public presentations.

*Reframed statement:* If you imagine yourself as successful at a public presentation, how would you be speaking that would make it successful?"

To succeed and to thrive, we have to be willing and able to step from failure to failure and not give up. We have to be willing and able to hear the tough feedback and duly note how we've messed up, what we overlooked, what failed, and make the necessary adjustments and keep moving forward.

**Mary Martin** is a University of Wyoming Extension community development educator serving western Wyoming. She can be reached at (307) 733-3087 or at [mmmartin@uwyo.edu](mailto:mmmartin@uwyo.edu).



"Success is walking from failure to failure with no loss of enthusiasm."

-Winston Churchill

## Flexing your style

### Exploring personality differences with the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator assessment

The coronavirus situation forced us to spend time with people at home and online in new ways – and differences in personality wear thin when we are trying to cope with everyday life, let alone pandemic-level struggles.

But, interpersonal differences can be explained and quantified, and they give us insights into how to work with others. One excellent tool is the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI). The assessment uses word pairs and phrases to identify ways people prefer to interact with each other and the world around them. MBTI shows our preferences, or patterns of behavior, across four either/or scales that cover much of our daily behavior.

#### Extraversion or Introversion

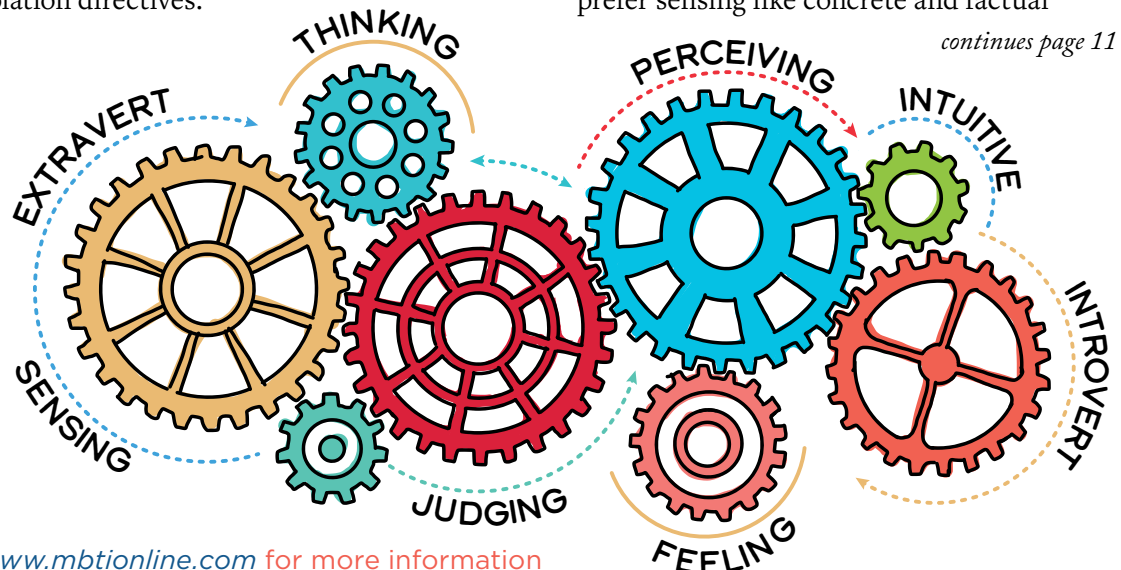
Perhaps the most familiar of all Myers-Briggs dichotomies, the Extraversion-Introversion pairing is about where you prefer to focus your attention. Extraverts tend to focus on the

outer world of people and activity. Interacting with others and talking aloud typically gives extraverts energy. Introverts typically get energy from self-reflection and appreciate time alone to recharge – they probably enjoyed the recent self-isolation directives.

#### Sensing or Intuitive

The next dichotomy revolves around information gathering. Sensing and Intuitive types have different preferences for the kind of information they like and trust. People who prefer sensing like concrete and factual

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Visit [www.mbtionline.com](http://www.mbtionline.com) for more information about the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator.

# Volunteers who provide sense of belonging to youth invaluable

## Volunteers are key to the success of the Wyoming 4-H program

The Wyoming 4-H program serves over 6,900 youth and their families because of strong and motivated volunteers.

If you are a volunteer in a youth organization like 4-H, look at your involvement; are you helping or hindering belonging?

A sense of belonging is one of the most important elements volunteers can provide young people. All youth want to belong and be members of groups. Groups may be formal, like classrooms and school sports teams, or informal, like 4-H clubs. Belonging includes having a positive relationship with a caring adult, being in a safe emotional and physical environment, and being part of an inclusive environment.

### That Belonging Feeling

If you think back to your own personal experiences with groups, you were more likely to get involved, stay involved, and have good experiences if you felt a sense of belonging within the group. As an adult working with youth, you may be wondering what you can do to help create a sense of belonging in an organization.

A positive relationship with a caring adult is the most important belonging element to a positive youth development experience. Caring adults in 4-H act as adviser, guide, and mentor. This happens when adults can serve as the supporter, friend, and advocate for the 4-H member while helping set boundaries and expectations.

In a 4-H setting, or in any youth organization, there are simple ways to make this happen. Something as simple as volunteers calling youth by their first names. Getting to know the interests of members can happen by asking questions that show you care while also being an active listener to what youth have to say. Pay attention to the activities of youth outside of the organization. Look to structure group activities so youth and adults have time to learn about one another.

### Feeling physically, emotionally safe

Youth need to feel physically and emotionally safe in their environments. Volunteers need to create an environment of support and encouragement.



Learn how you can be involved and help develop the next generation by visiting the Wyoming State 4-H Program website [www.uwyo.edu/4-h](http://www.uwyo.edu/4-h).



**4-H'er Keira Woffinden in a 4-H Horse Camp session last year with volunteer instructor Connie McGinley of Buffalo.**

We cannot tolerate or participate in bullying, cliques, or put-downs. Be sure the young people in a group are helping plan, implement, and evaluate what the group is doing.

Finally, we need to encourage a program that brings together youth and adults from different backgrounds, experiences, and comfort levels. An organization needs to be a place where individual members and leaders feel supported and encouraged. This can happen by looking for ways to recognize all members, not just those who excel in competition. Meetings and events can start with ice breakers and fun games that get everyone involved.

Please contact me for more information on how to create an environment of belonging in 4-H or other youth organizations.

**Sarah Torbert** is the 4-H volunteer development specialist with the University of Wyoming Extension. She can be contacted at (307) 766-5027 or [storberty@uwyo.edu](mailto:storberty@uwyo.edu).

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information; they trust experience. Sensing types observe and remember specifics they use to build carefully and sequentially toward a conclusion. People who prefer intuition are more comfortable looking at the big picture. They look for patterns and connections between facts; they relate patterns back to the larger meaning. It is not uncommon for Intuitive types to have a hunch about some future possibility that they cannot fully explain but just know to be right.

### Thinking or Feeling

The Thinking-Feeling dichotomy explains how we make decisions and the types of criteria we use. Those who prefer thinking tend to solve problems with logic; they generally like to use objective standards to analyze and weigh decisions. When making decisions, people who prefer feeling generally rely on personal and/or group values. Considering how a decision will impact others is a crucial piece of a feeler's process. It is very important to note both types use rational decision-making processes; whether we use subjective or objective criteria, it is critical

we recognize each different, yet equally valid, approach.

### Judging or Perceiving

The final dichotomy, Judging-Perceiving, is about how we implement decisions. People who prefer judging typically have scheduled, organized approaches to assignments/tasks. Judgers like having things decided so they can avoid the stress of doing things last-minute. People who prefer perceiving typically like to be spontaneous and flexible; they prefer things to be open-ended so they can change them at will. Perceivers feel energized by last-minute pressures and will often say that is when their brains "turn on."

### Putting It all together

You have an individual's personality type when you consider an individual's preferences on all four of the MBTI scales. The assessment shows what we prefer to do and what comes naturally, not what we can or cannot do. Each type has something to offer teams, organizations, and our communities.

### COMMUNICATION TIPS

- Give introverts time to process.
- Let extraverts "think out loud."
- Know that sensors prefer a linear conversation format; intuitives prefer a circular format.
- Feeling types appreciate warmth and tactfulness; thinking types prefer directness and logic.

Members of UW Extension's community development education team are available to help you learn more about personality types and how to use them to improve group dynamics.

**Kimberly Chapman** and **Juliet Daniels** are University of Wyoming Extension community development educators. Chapman serves southwest Wyoming and can be reached at (307) 783-0570 or [kchapma3@uwyo.edu](mailto:kchapma3@uwyo.edu). Daniels serves southeast Wyoming and can be reached at (307) 633-4383 or at [juliet.daniels@uwyo.edu](mailto:juliet.daniels@uwyo.edu).