

Why the concern about “ethics”? What’s the problem? by Karen Keefer, MA

Personality type is powerful! It can generate exploratory journeys of increasing self-understanding. It can lead to the appreciation of individual differences and their contributions within a variety of human endeavors and across ethnic and cultural divisions.

But personality type can also be misused. When type concepts are oversimplified, when anecdotes and speculation are treated the same as verified data, when people are unaware of their biases, when type assessments are used to “test ‘em and tell ‘em,” and when type information is used for inappropriate purposes, real harm is done:

- Unfounded speculation about links between type and behavior can become “common knowledge,” leading to widespread misunderstandings and misperceptions.
- The “common understanding” of type becomes based on stereotypes, and biased so that some types seem to be better than others.
- People can be denied opportunities that their knowledge, skills, interests, experience and other attributes might suit them for because they are assumed to be “the wrong type for this job” or “the wrong type for me to date,” etc.
- Many people fail to find their Best-Fit Type (or even know that there is a Best-Fit Type to find). This leads either to people trying to behave as the type which an assessment or an expert has told them they are, or to people discounting type because it “didn’t work” for them.
- Public figures dismiss psychological type as unscientific, trivial, worthless, harmful, even dangerous.

All these problems have existed for decades, but the internet and social media - having made access to information about type easier than ever - have also made access to false or misleading information easier than ever.

Whether your interest is for your own personal use or whether type is a part of your professional work, the Association for Psychological Type International (APTi) is your guide for using type ethically.

About Karen Keefer, MA

Karen obtained her MBTI® qualification in 1987, and has used type in a variety of settings over the last 35 years. She was a trainer for APTi’s MBTI Qualifying Program for 13 years and served as Director of that program. She is an expert in the technique of type-based guided imagery originated by William Yabroff, and with him co-authored *Four Gifts of the Mind*, a workbook and CD set for using this technique to promote type development. In addition to her work as a trainer and consultant, Karen has given numerous presentations at APTi conferences and at chapters. She is a member and a Past President of Bay Area APT (BAAPT). Her Best-Fit Type is INTJ.