



MARRIAGE INSIGHTS

Understanding Strengths and Blending Differences

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Understanding Strengths and Blending Differences
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"Wisdom is in the presence of the one who has understanding..."
-Proverbs 17:24

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Introduction

Welcome! You have just taken a significant step in the process of understanding the unique strengths that God has designed in you. This report will provide insight into your natural strengths and how those strengths are operating in your life. As you learn more about yourself and God's plan for the uniqueness of strengths, you will also begin recognizing and valuing the strengths in others.

There are several sections in this report and each contributes to the knowledge and understanding that will produce the greatest transformation in your relationships. Therefore, please commit yourself to read and explore this report completely.

In I Corinthians 12:12-18 we read that although the body is one, it is made up of many parts. Each part has a vital function and is no less a part of the body because it is different. As you study the passage, it is apparent that God not only intentionally created differences, but He designed them very specifically. God's desire in our relationships is for our differences to unite us not divide us. These Biblical principles establish a foundation for understanding ourselves, our spouse and God's plan for our differences. As we start to see that our differences are strengths when allowed to function as God designed it will be truly transformational.

The mission of Ministry Insights is to transform relationships worldwide. We believe this transformation takes place as you discover God's plan for your unique strengths and the unique strengths of others. As you learn more about yourself and others it is our prayer that your eyes will be opened to clearly see God's divine design for differences.

Additional supporting resources are available at www.ministryinsights.com.



The Scales

Interpreting Your Natural Strengths Chart

Let's begin with a look at your natural strengths. Your Natural Strengths Chart presents a visual picture of the predictable ways that you naturally approach or respond to problems, information, change and risk. In each of these four scales, there are two different strengths that you may possess; therefore, there are eight strength possibilities.

There is a vertical line in the center of the chart that is referred to as the energy line. Proceeding in each direction from that line is a 10 point scale. The number on the scale indicates the intensity of the strength. There may be situations in which you utilize a strength different from you natural strength, but it will require energy for you to do so. (This will be discussed further in later sections)

If your score on any scale is within 1 points of the energy line, it is indicated as neutral. This means you can move towards either of the strengths outlined in the scales based on the current situation. As opposed to someone that exhibits a clearly observable strength in an area, it will not require as much energy for you to move from one strength to the other in that area. You will tend to take a neutral position until you understand clearly what strength is required.

These strengths are a part of who you are and will remain relatively consistent over time. Typically only very small changes in your natural strengths are observed throughout your life. It is not often that we see major shifts in someone's natural strengths, but it is possible. Such a shift is normally due to a major life changing event.



The Scales

The Problem Solving Scale

Your score on this scale indicates whether your natural strength is more reflective or aggressive in the way in which you approach problems. If you plot on the reflective side of the scale, we can predict that you will take a more reflective or calculating approach to solving a problem or challenge. If you plot on the aggressive side of the scale, it is predictable that when a problem or challenge arises you will take a more aggressive or assertive approach to solving that problem. Depending on the problem or issue, each side of the scale can highlight an important strength.

The Processing Information Scale

Your score on this scale indicates whether your natural strength is to be more optimistic or realistic in the way in which you process information. If you plot on the optimistic side of the scale, it is predictable that when processing new information you will be more trusting and accepting. If you plot on the realistic side of the scale, you will be more skeptical and want to validate information before trusting. Again, each side of the scale represents a strength in processing information.

The Managing Change Scale

Your score on this scale indicates whether your natural strength is to be more dynamic or predictable in the way you manage change. If you are on the dynamic side of this scale, you will tend to be fast-paced. You are comfortable managing many projects simultaneously, and you allow change to drive your plan. If you plot on the predictable side of the scale, you will lean toward a slower pace. You prefer to focus on one project at a time, and you tend to want to plan for change. Managing change effectively requires a combination of these strengths.



The Scales

The Facing Risk Scale

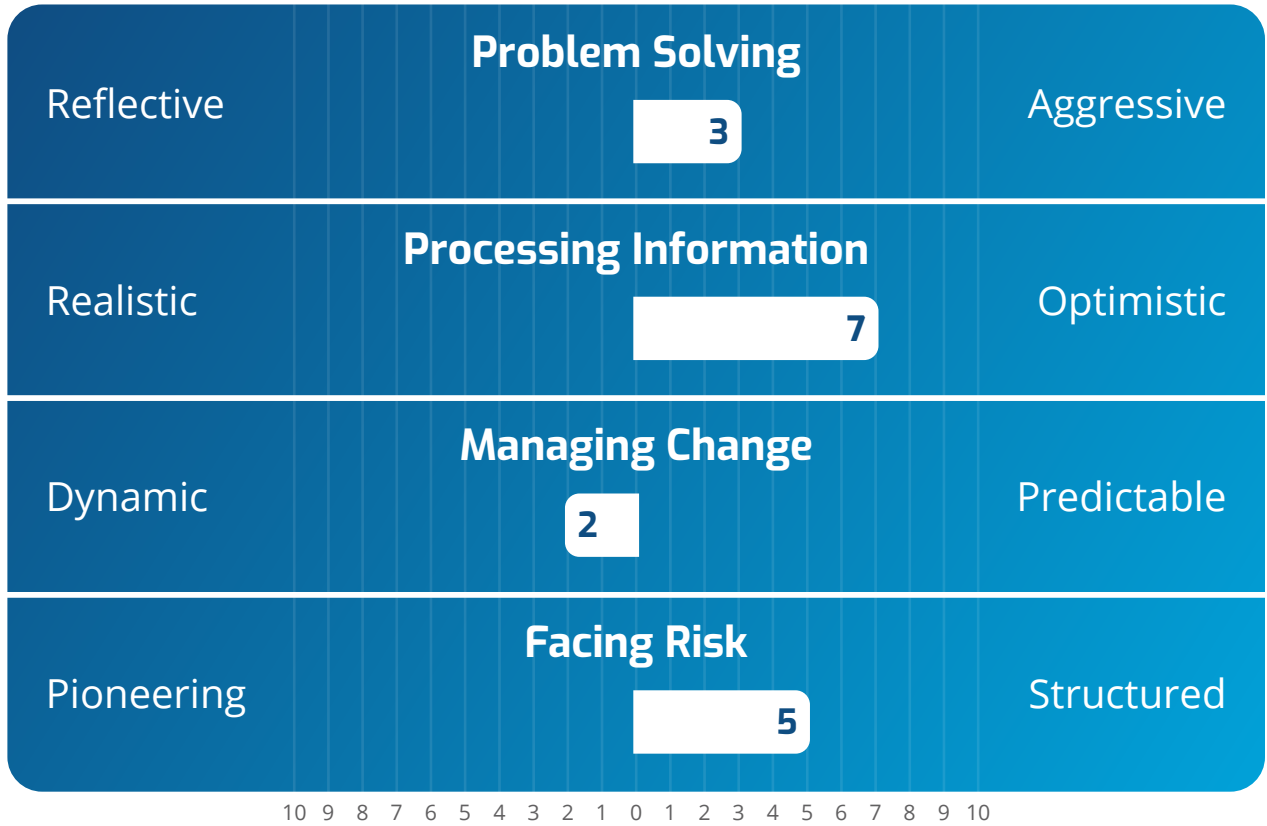
Your score on this scale indicates whether your natural strength is to be more structured or pioneering in the way you face risk. If you are on the structured side of the scale, you will tend to follow the established procedures and rules and see them as a source of protection. Therefore you will tend to be a lower risk taker. If you are on the pioneering side of this scale, you will tend to view rules and established procedures as broad guidelines and tend to push the envelope of risk. You may even view them as obstacles standing in the way of your progress. Each of these strengths is important and needed for balancing the risk scale.

In your relationship you'll find that understanding your natural strengths and those of others in these predictable measures is crucial to building trust, closeness, commitment and caring. In fact, by understanding where your spouse differs in these areas, you may even discover a "great secret" – that the differences of your spouse are actually designed to complement your strengths, enabling you to function in your relationship more fully.

Here are some last thoughts before you examine and share your strengths chart. The order in which the information on the chart is presented is not an indication that one scale is more important than another. Also, you are a combination of strengths, so while each scale is important individually, they are not independent. Your unique combination of strengths will give you a better understanding of who you are. Therefore, the pages of text that follow your Natural Strengths Chart are essential to help you interpret your mix of strengths into a word picture that will give you a comprehensive understanding of your strengths. They will also serve as an objective platform to facilitate discussion with others.



Your Natural Strengths Chart





General Characteristics

Based on your responses, the report has selected general statements to provide you with a broad understanding of your strengths and behavioral style. The statements identify the natural or core strengths and behavior you bring to your marriage. As you read the information, use this section to identify areas of your core strengths and style of relating with your spouse.

You may act on impulse. If someone or something catches your eye, you may act without first checking things out. You have a strong sense of humor. You usually know when to lighten a difficult situation, amuse and entertain people. The "life of the party" might characterize you when at parties or entertaining friends. You generally become involved with whatever social activities are taking place. You have a strong feeling of optimism, considered favorably by your spouse and most people around you. Your perception is that the glass is half-full rather than half-empty.

You are a creative problem solver. Once you have defined the problem you will use all available resources to solve the problem. You tend to be emotional in the decision-making process; you become involved in making each decision. Your spouse needs to understand that this is a part of your style, and it may add energy and excitement to activities. When working on plans for activities, you must feel that you are "in on things." You will generally offer creative ideas or suggest activities. You can be intense when confronted with a tough problem. The intensity may not always fit the problem; that is, sometimes you can get intense over a problem that looks tough, but in actuality is not.

You tend to be fluent and verbal. You like to verbalize and to participate with many people. Although talking is one of your great strengths, listening may be one of your weaknesses. Rather than listening when your spouse is talking, you may be thinking of what you're going to say next. You can generate enthusiasm in yourself and in your spouse. Your enthusiasm, often contagious, also can involve many people in a social activity who might not ordinarily become involved. You are a natural communicator. You love to talk, offer jokes and make sure that everyone is having a good time. This trait is especially evident at functions and outings.



Keys to Motivating

Understanding what motivates a person is often found by understanding what it is he wants or values. This section of the report can help understand Sam's wants and desires. Those statements that ring true, but aren't a current part of his marriage, can become goals to reach.

You may want:

- ▶ Activities involving contact with many people.
- ▶ Excitement and variety of activities.
- ▶ To be measured by the results obtained, not by the manner in which those results were accomplished.
- ▶ Popularity.
- ▶ Recognition by spouse of skills and ability.
- ▶ A spouse who practices listening and participation.
- ▶ A support system to help you get things done.
- ▶ Freedom from many controls and limitations of creativity.
- ▶ Freedom from many rules and regulations and the ability to write your own rules.
- ▶ An audience to perform to and entertain.
- ▶ An outlet to vent your emotions frequently.



Relationship Strengths

This section identifies specific talents and strengths that you bring to your marriage and relationships. Socially, we need people who have different strengths to offer. Use this information to share your thoughts, ideas and feelings about your relationship strengths.

- ▶ Set standards for others to live up to.
- ▶ Very optimistic; make others feel good about themselves.
- ▶ An excellent "win-win" type of negotiator.
- ▶ Being a good citizen.
- ▶ Excellent sense of humor; see humor in events spontaneously.
- ▶ Influential.
- ▶ Socially poised and people-oriented.
- ▶ Never a dull moment.
- ▶ Maintain high standards for yourself and others.
- ▶ Enthusiastic about activities and involvement.



Keys to Communication

This section of the report describes how you like your spouse and others to communicate with you. As with the entire report, most of these items listed will be extremely accurate for you. Identify 3 or 4 key items and encourage your spouse to use these items in everyday communication with you.

- ▶ Support principles.
- ▶ Prepare your "case" in advance--do your homework.
- ▶ Use a thoughtful approach.
- ▶ Be stimulating, fun-loving, and fast-moving.
- ▶ Take your time and proceed slowly.
- ▶ Plan interactions which support dreams and goals.
- ▶ Be prepared to listen to many stories.
- ▶ Approach in an honest, sincere manner.
- ▶ Offer immediate rewards for accomplishments.
- ▶ Talk about expectations.
- ▶ Share specific ideas to carry out an action.



Barriers to Communication

This section of the report describes what NOT to do when relating with you. As with the entire report, most of these items listed will be extremely accurate for you. Identify 3 or 4 key items and encourage your spouse or future spouse to ELIMINATE using them in everyday communication with you. And, if your spouse or future spouse has a report, you are encouraged to share this page of information with each other, as well as sharing information from the entire report.

- Don't plan on covering many facts.
- Don't leave things to chance.
- Don't be vague about what's expected.
- Don't threaten, cajole, coax or whine.
- Don't fail to follow through with the commitment.
- Don't plan on a brief encounter, or a dull one.
- Don't leave decisions about events hanging in the air.
- Don't talk down.
- Don't hide your emotions or feelings.
- Don't be cool, aloof or tight-lipped.
- Don't be dogmatic.
- Don't be disorganized.



Hindering Factors

The list below is an analysis of possible hindering factors with regard to your marriage relationship. Not all of the limitations may apply, so cross out those limitations. Circle or highlight 1 to 3 limitations that may be hindering marriage or social interaction, and develop an action plan to reduce the effects of those limitations.

- ▶ You overuse gestures and facial expressions in communications.
- ▶ You do temporary repair work on situational problems, rather than permanent solutions.
- ▶ You overestimate your ability to motivate people.
- ▶ You may wait until the last minute to complete projects, or may not complete them at all.
- ▶ You are a situational listener if not given an opportunity to share ideas.
- ▶ You make emotional rather than logical decisions.



Perceptions

A person's actions and feelings may be quickly telegraphed to others. This section provides additional information on your self-perception and how, under certain conditions, others may perceive your actions. Understanding this section will enable you to balance your emotions to be successful in different situations.

SELF-PERCEPTION

You usually see yourself as being:

Enthusiastic	Outgoing
Charming	Inspiring
Persuasive	Optimistic

OTHERS' PERCEPTION

Under moderate pressure, tension, stress or fatigue, others may see you as being:

Self-Promoting	Glib
Overly Optimistic	Unrealistic

And, under extreme pressure, stress or fatigue, others may see you as being:

Overly Confident	Talkative
Poor Listener	Self-Promoter



Action Plan

To relate more effectively with _____, I need to:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

To relate more effectively with _____, I need to:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

To relate more effectively with _____, I need to:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

The Communication skills I need to develop are:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

I agree to practice the listed communication techniques and develop communication skills in the areas indicated.

Signed: _____ Date: _____



Strengths Movement

During your response to the online questionnaire we were able to identify more than just your natural strengths. We also identified your strengths movement. Strengths movement is a measure of how the current environment impacts your natural strengths. Some environmental issues impact your strengths in a positive way and some negative. The Strengths Movement Chart illustrates this impact on your natural strengths.

As stated earlier, your natural strengths will typically remain stable over time. However, it is common for you to adapt to your current environment based on your perception of whether your strengths are being valued or discounted, or whether they are different than what may be required by your current role.

The Strengths Movement Chart provides a picture of how much you feel you need to "change" or "adapt" your natural strengths to match the needs or requirements of your current environment. You will see the same strength indicators from your natural strengths chart, but an additional indicator is overlaid that displays a measurement of your strengths movement. That movement can be positive or negative, or there may be areas where there is no movement.

Areas without any movement could indicate that your natural strengths are in alignment with your environment. Areas that have positive movement could indicate that the environment may require you to use more of that strength. In both of these scenarios, you will typically feel valued and comfortable.

If there is negative movement in a scale, you may feel that your environment requires you to be something other than what you naturally are. You may want to explore these areas further. As you do, keep in mind that some adaptation is good and also necessary. However, long term adaptation consumes energy and can lead to stress and frustration. The greater the degree of movement away from your natural strength, the greater the degree of energy you are expending to adapt.



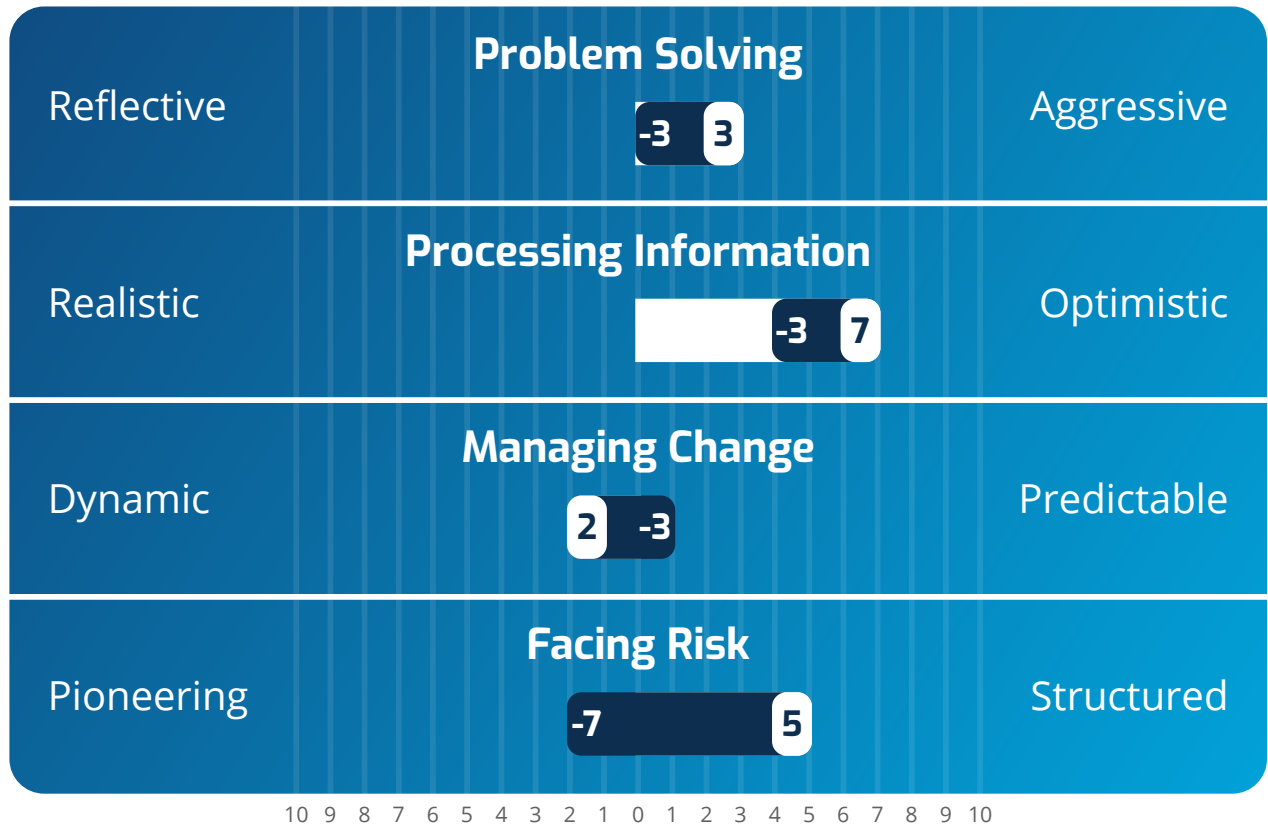
Strengths Movement



Changes in your current environment can dramatically impact the movement in your strengths. Therefore, it is our recommendation that you retake this assessment on an annual basis, or sooner, if there are significant changes in your current environment. This will provide an objective point of reference and help you to focus your natural strengths.

Following the Strengths Movement Chart are pages that interpret your strength movement mix into a word picture to help you explore this movement in your strengths. These subsequent text pages and the strengths movement chart can serve as an objective platform to facilitate discussion with others in your current environment.



Your Strengths Movement Chart



 Natural Strengths
 Strengths Movement



How Are You Having to "Adapt?"

This list of descriptions can give you a picture of the way you feel you may need to respond to the current environment to be accepted. If these statements DO NOT sound related, explore the reasons why as a key to understanding your current situation and need to "adapt" to be accepted.

- ▶ Motivating your spouse to take action by using persuasive skills.
- ▶ Using creativity in communicating with your spouse.
- ▶ Making tactful decisions.
- ▶ Optimistic, future-oriented outlook.
- ▶ Being independent and innovative.
- ▶ Firm commitment to accomplishments.
- ▶ Being creative and unconventional in making a point.
- ▶ Willing to take risks when your spouse may be more hesitant.
- ▶ Being more flexible.
- ▶ Using a creative approach in decision making.
- ▶ Exhibiting independence.
- ▶ Motivating your spouse to accomplish desired goals.



Core and Adapted Style

Sam's Core Style of dealing with problems (L), people (O), pace of events (G) and procedures (B) may not always fit what the home environment needs. This section may provide valuable information related to the pressures Sam may feel when he Adapts his style to the home environment.

PROBLEMS - CHALLENGES

Core Style

Sam is ambitious in his approach to problem solving, displaying a strong will and a need to remove all obstacles. Sam has a tendency to make individual and family decisions with little or no hesitation.

Adapted Style

Sam sees the need to be somewhat conservative in his approach to solving problems. He wants to accept challenges but will be calculated in his response.

PEOPLE - CONTACTS

Core Style

Sam's Core Style is to use persuasion and emotion to the extreme. He is positive and seeks to influence his spouse and family by the virtues of his personality and verbal skills. He will convince you that what he is saying is not only right, but is exactly what is needed. He displays enthusiasm for almost any project.

Adapted Style

Sam projects a positive and enthusiastic attitude toward influencing others. He sees the need to be trusting and wants to be trusted.



Core and Adapted Style

PACE - CONSISTENCY

Core Style

Sam likes mobility and the absence of routine does not traumatize him. He feels comfortable juggling different home and work projects and is able to move from one project to another fairly easily.

Adapted Style

Sam sees a need to be deliberate and steady. He will change if the new direction is meaningful and consistent with the past, attempting to resist change for change's sake.

PROCEDURES - CONSTRAINTS

Core Style

Sam naturally is cautious and concerned for quality. He likes to be on a team that takes responsibility for the final results. He enjoys knowing the rules and can become upset when others fail to comply with the rules or clear family expectations.

Adapted Style

Sam is striving to be independent and somewhat self-willed. He is most comfortable when the constraints can be "loosened" for certain situations.



The Strengths Wheel

The Strengths Wheel is a powerful visual tool to help you see the natural strengths of your relationship or family. It can also help you understand how the relationship or family is moving their strengths collectively to meet the demands of the current environment.

To take advantage of the Strengths Wheel create a master Strengths Wheel that contains each person's "Natural Strengths" and "Strengths Movement". This allows for quick identification of potential issues and alignment.

One color represents your natural strengths. The other represents your strengths movement. The Strengths Wheel is divided down and across the middle. By looking at the top of the Strengths Wheel you will see that these scales have something in common. They both represent task orientation. At the bottom of the wheel you will see that these scales represent people orientation.

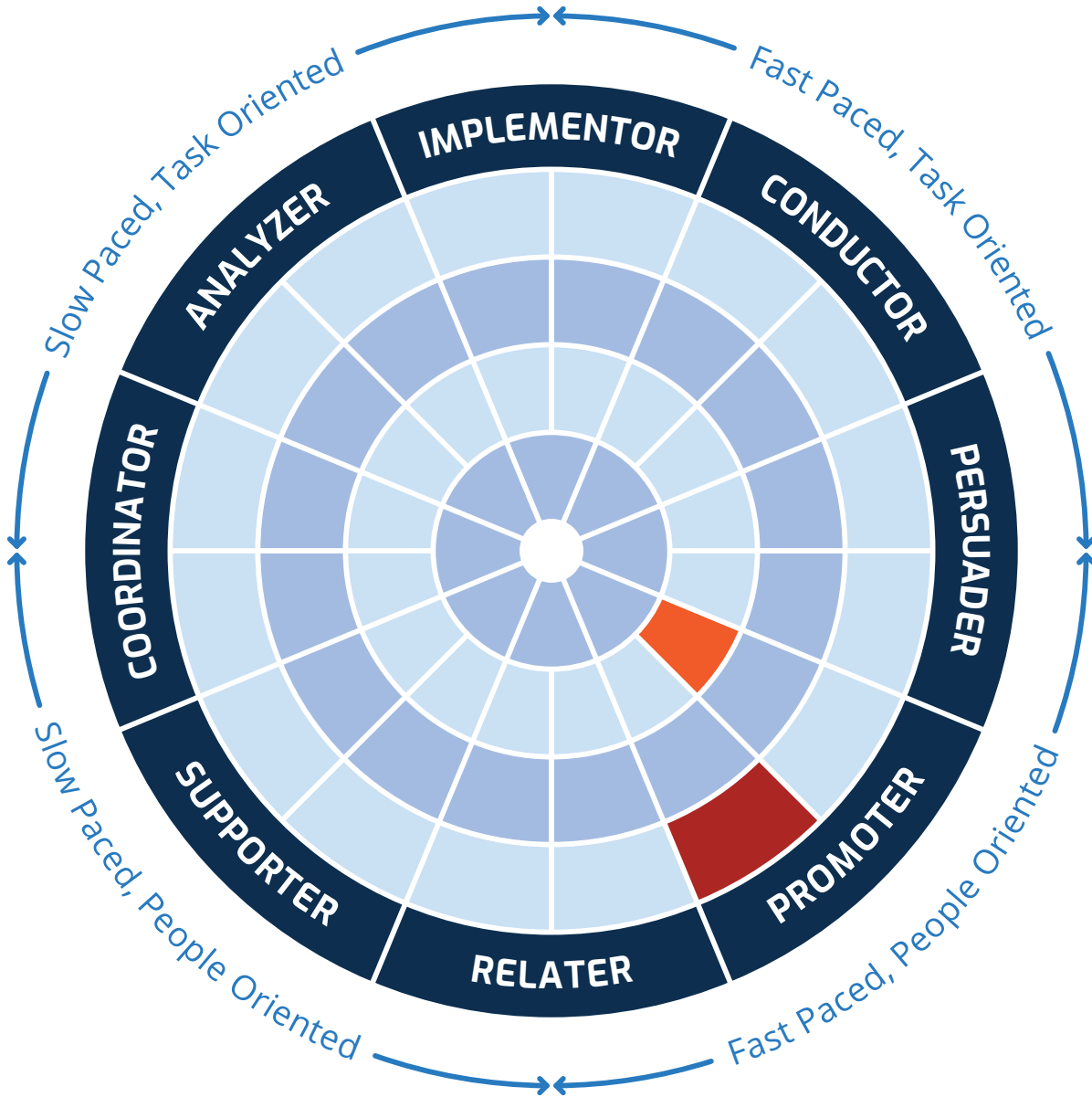
Taking another look at the wheel and you will see on the left side scales have something in common as well. They are slower paced. The opposite side of the wheel you will see that these scales are faster paced.

Putting all the pieces together can give us a powerful picture of your relationship or family. It can drive objective discussion about what the natural strengths are and how each person feels they need to move, as a whole, to succeed in the current environment.

Remember this is not designed to be absolute but to drive discussion.



The Strengths Wheel



NATURAL STYLE Persuading Promoter (across)

ADAPTED STYLE Relating Promoter