

# Flash Evaluation

## FOR GRETCHEN RUBIN'S *THE FOUR TENDENCIES*

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### From Gretchen Rubin:

Many readers have requested a quick, informal method to figure out someone's Tendency.

I've heard from managers who need to make hiring decisions, teachers who want to understand their students, health professionals who want to tailor their approach to suit individual patients, people going on first dates who want to assess a potential partner—and people who just want to use the Four Tendencies as a cocktail-party ice-breaker.

A few questions can provide a strong sense of a person's Tendency. It's important not to listen for a specific "answer," but to pay attention to people's reasoning, the kind of language they use. People's answers are less important than the way they think about the question.

Because the Tendencies overlap with each other, two Tendencies might answer a particular question in the same way.

Note that Questioner and Obliger are by far the biggest Tendencies, so you're more likely to be dealing with a Questioner or Obliger.

Of course, depending on the situation, people may not be truthful, for fear that an honest answer would reflect poorly on them.

**Ask: "How do you feel about New Year's resolutions?"**

#### What to listen for:

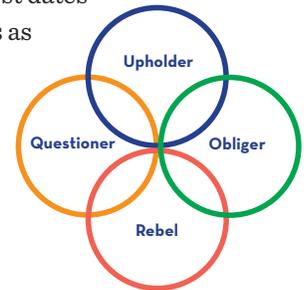
- In general, Upholders enjoy New Year's resolutions, and will also make resolutions at other times.
- Questioners will make and keep resolutions, but they often object that January 1 is an arbitrary date, or that it's inefficient to wait to start a resolution.
- Obligers often say that they no longer make New Year's resolutions because they've failed so often in the past. Or if they do make them, they often don't keep them.
- Generally, Rebels won't bind themselves with resolutions. Occasionally, Rebels find it fun to do so, and they emphasize that they wanted to do it, they enjoyed it, they liked the challenge.

**"Imagine there was a sign on the wall here that said 'No cell phones,' and I pulled out my cell phone and started using it. How would you feel about that?"**

- Upholders will say they'd feel very uncomfortable.
- Questioners will analyze the possible justifications for the rule and decide whether it is warranted. If they think the rule is senseless, they won't be bothered by seeing someone break it.
- Obligers will say that they'd feel uncomfortable, which they might explain by saying that cell phone use in public places can inconvenience or annoy others, or you might get reprimanded for using a phone.
- Rebels will say that they don't care. They might even get a kick out of the rule-breaking.

**"Would you ever sign up to take a course for fun? And if you did, let's say someone close to you says, 'It's kind of inconvenient for me for you to take that class.' How might you react?"**

- Most people will probably say something like, "Well, it would depend on why it's inconvenient, how serious the inconvenience is, how important it is to me to take the course, etc." Assure them that the course would mean a very minor inconvenience for the other person.



- Upholders will tend to say they'd go. They want to go; they signed up for it; they're sorry that someone else is slightly inconvenienced, but they can live with that. They will emphasize the value of sticking to plans, following through on their expectations for themselves.
- Questioners, ditto. But Questioners might also focus on the reasons and justifications for their decision to take the course in the first place.
- Obligers will waver when they think that someone else might be inconvenienced. That outer expectation will be painful.
- Rebels will say that they wouldn't go if they didn't feel like it. They might observe that they'd never sign up for a course—how could they know what they'd feel like doing that day? If they did sign up, they wouldn't go if they didn't feel like it.

### “Looking back, can you remember a time when you succeeded in changing an important habit?”

An answer such as, “For years, I walked every morning with a neighbor—but she moved away, and I don't do it anymore” suggests Obliger, while, “I read a lot of the new research about the value of strength-training, and after interviewing a few trainers, I now strength-train regularly” suggests Questioner, and “I run when I feel like it” suggests Rebel. Upholders will have many examples.

### Even quicker questions to ask:

#### “Do people ever call you rigid?”

“Yes” suggests Upholder.

#### “Have people ever told you that you ask too many questions?”

“Yes” suggests Questioner.

#### “Do you agree: Promises we make to others shouldn't be broken, but promises we make to ourselves can be broken?”

“Yes” suggests Obliger.

#### “Do you think that something's more fun if it's against the rules?”

“Yes” suggests Rebel.

### For each Tendency, one question matters most:

- Upholders ask: “Should I do this?”
- Questioners ask: “Does this make sense?”
- Obligers ask: “Does this matter to anyone else?”
- Rebels ask: “Is this the person I want to be?”

### Also, the use of certain words or phrases can suggest a Tendency:

- Upholders often use words like “discipline,” “schedule,” “follow-through.”
- Questioners often use words like “arbitrary,” “inefficient,” “ineffective,” “reasons,” “why,” or “no authority.”
- Obligers often talk about “self-care,” “make time for myself,” “boundaries,” “given my family/work obligations, I can't . . .,” or “I know I should.”
- Rebels often use words like “spontaneous,” “choose,” “feel like it,” “you can't tell me what to do.”

Learn more at [GretchenRubin.com](http://GretchenRubin.com)

To discover your Tendency, take the quiz at [happiercast.com/quiz](http://happiercast.com/quiz)

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