

## *What Tomatoes Taught Me About Introverts' Communication*

Standing in front of the refrigerator with the door open I asked, a future possibility question, *Are we going to have a salad with dinner this evening?* The answer came immediately from my wife who was at the cutting board preparing the main course, *Just leave it there I will get it later.*

I was on a wonderful, extended sabbatical. We had moved to Germany a few months prior, and were living in a home with a typical European size refrigerator, approximately 36" H x 28" W x 24" D. I had just returned from the grocery store.

The answer my wife gave did not help my dilemma. So, I asked a second question, a detail question, *Can I put the lettuce on the counter?* The response was and terse, *I Said! Just leave it in the refrigerator; I'll get it later!* Since this answer also fell short of being helpful, I risked one more attempt, this time from a logical/systematic perspective, *Don't we always have salad with what you are preparing?* The answer was immediate and insistent, *I SAID, JUST LEAVE IT THERE I WILL GET IT LATER!*

I paused, reflected on the situation, and suddenly realized I was not asking the question for which I wanted an answer.

The Situation:

I had just come from the store where I personally had chosen that broccoli, I picked out that zucchini and laid it in the crook of my elbow next to my body, I nestled some carrots in there too, and I had fondled those tomatoes and selected just the right ones. I then had gone to the adoption center, ah, I mean, the check out counter and paid ransom for them. I was now standing in front of the refrigerator holding my vegetables with whom I now had a personal relationship, wanting them to be safe and healthy in the nice cool refrigerator. This was not possible due to the space taken up by this big honking head of lettuce.

My dominant function is Feeling (F) and I hold it introversively. In conversations I tend to extrovert the other three functions in descending order. Therefore I generally lead with my auxiliary function of Intuition that asks possibility questions. As an answer is received I do a two-step process in my head that says, *If this the possibility (N<sub>E</sub>) then this is who will be affected and how* —Feeling Function (F<sub>I</sub>). When the answer does not bring clarity, instead of asking a question associated with my dominant function, the answer I truly desire, I, rather unconsciously, proceed with questions generated in the tertiary and weakest functions (for me the Sensing (S<sub>E</sub>) and the Thinking (T<sub>E</sub>). This often confuses the one I am addressing and leads the attempted conversation further afield.

Finally, realizing my failure to execute clear and honest communication, I rather sheepishly said, *Well, I have these vegetables and I would like to...* My wife interrupted me with, *Just put the lettuce on the counter and make some room in the refrigerator.*

Those of us who are introverts are wise to understand that there is nothing holy nor sacred about the questions associated with our dominant function, for which we want answers but fail to ask. Engaging others in our circuitous dance around the pattern of our preferences causes undue stress and anxiety diminishing our relationships and weakening our leadership. When others are not giving you the answers for what you think you want to know it just may be you that is the dolt.