

# **How Different Roles Influence Your Personality**

by Barbara Stennes, CSP

You play myriad roles in your relationships with others. Professionally, you may simultaneously be one person's manager, someone else's employee, and a third person's mentor. In your personal life, you may find yourself juggling different roles as a parent, son or daughter, husband or wife, sibling, and friend. Each of these roles entails different responsibilities, and you condition your behavior accordingly.

The roles you undertake form part of your image of yourself, and role-identity varies according to the situation. While some people may successfully meet the criterion, others may find it difficult to mold themselves completely to fit the specific role.

Similarly, different situations involve different expectations regarding personality style. Social gatherings demand that you be outgoing and effervescent, so you need to polish your enthusiastic spirit to be a perfect social fit. Furthermore, your interpersonal style determines the relation and intimacy level that you share in personal relationships. Work style refers to the sincerity and diligence with which you carry out your allotted tasks, while emotional style is concerned with the way you interact with others and handle stress. Intellectual style refers to the way you react to complexity and change.

Personality has a genetic component, but it is also strongly influenced by the sum total of your life experiences, which have a strong impact on an individual. Factors such as family environment, alcoholism, and abuse can lead to personality changes, and it can be challenging to overcome these issues and matching them to the different roles that a person plays. The popularity of personal transformation seminars, therapy, and self-help books is testament to the effectiveness of these techniques in overcoming personal obstacles.

Other difficulties occur when different roles place conflicting demands on an individual. For example, working long hours to become a professional success will likely have repercussions on your personal and social roles. A rigid approach may make it difficult to balance different roles, and it's important to understand that each role places unique claims and obligations upon you. Understanding yourself and your priorities will enable you to strike a balance between your different roles and become a happier, healthier person.