

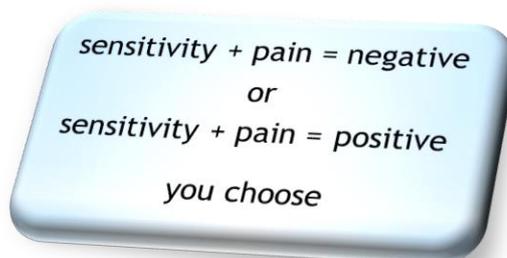
Making the change: Melancholic

Melancholic

We will ask the same questions of the Melancholic that we did of the Phlegmatic in order to understand why they respond to pain as they do.

At the heart of the Melancholic is a great sensitivity. The key to understanding him is to know what happens to that sensitivity when it is exposed to pain. What are the factors that make it easier for sensitivity plus pain to turn into a negative? What needs to happen for sensitivity plus pain to equal a positive?

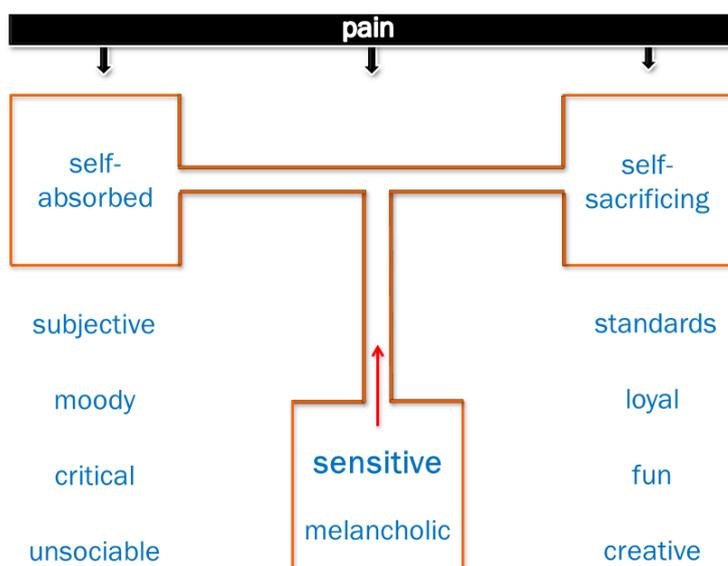
Before we explore the factors involved in deciding which way to turn, we will look more closely at the consequences of that choice.



Negative

It is vital that a Melancholic learns how to handle pain. Aided by his self-sacrificing nature, his instinct is to turn it against himself. Once this pattern is established the pain that is taken into his emotional system can do enormous damage. Whereas the Phlegmatic will go into self-protection mode, the Melancholic will absorb the pain and 'feed on it.' He can become preoccupied with his own negative emotions, using his active imagination to create scenarios in which those emotions are played out. Instead of giving himself away, he is using his wonderful sensitivity for his own emotional gratification. This quickly leads to adopting a position in which he interprets everything negatively against himself. Because he is feeding on pain, compliments never register and constructive criticism is taken as a put-down.

This negative self-absorption leads to moodiness. His world circulates around himself so he cannot fix on a stabilising external object. He is at the mercy of his own feelings and circumstances. Just as a Phlegmatic turns pain into guilt, so a Melancholic turns pain into low self-worth. A Phlegmatic will say in effect, 'because it hurts, I must have done something bad' whereas a Melancholic will say, 'because it hurts, I must be bad.' This will lead a Melancholic to be very critical towards himself in the first instant but can spread to others as well.



As the Melancholic is so down on himself, it feels much easier not to mix. When you are on your own you can think your own thoughts and don't have to take other people into account. He 'knows' he is



going to get it wrong – do and say silly things – so why put yourself into social situations in which all that will happen? Play safe and keep your own company.

When this way of living becomes established, patterns of thinking and behaviour develop that make it very difficult for the Melancholic to enjoy good relationships. He can become emotionally withdrawn, and in that vacuum, fears become disproportionate to the point of paranoia. His

intense dislike of himself is projected onto others, and he is convinced that they feel the same about him that he does about himself. He reads people's responses to him as 'having it in for him' and adopts a 'hard done by' attitude, for which he expects to receive the commiserations of others. Life, circumstances, and even God himself all conspire to make life as difficult as possible for him! He can reach a point where he wants to make others pay for the good things they have and that he hasn't got.

Positive

If the sensitivity takes a right turn and is put to good use then it becomes a wonderful asset that enables him to enjoy meaningful relationships and to bring about real change for the benefit of others. The sensitivity is the 'magnet' to which all the other Melancholic ingredients attach themselves. If this is going in the right direction then all the qualities come into play. Instead of morbid self-absorption, we will see the wonderful self-giving that puts all the qualities of the Melancholic into the arena of life and makes them available for the enrichment of others.



His good standards create quality, order and organisation, his loyalty enables deep relationships to be formed and his fun and creativity make a positive contribution to everyone who crosses his path.

Making the Change

What factors does the Melancholic need to be aware of as he comes up to that 'T' junction? What will influence the Melancholic to turn to the right or the left? It is important to remember that we will make a choice – we are simply looking at the factors that influence that choice. We are not forced or obliged to do anything – we choose. Being on automatic is not an option.

a. A point to note



With both introverts, it is important to remember that the introverts themselves have to make the decision as to which way they turn. The extrovert cannot do it for them. The Sanguine or Choleric can say totally positive things to the introvert but if the introvert chooses not to believe them then nothing changes.

b. Biggest single factor

For both the Phlegmatic and Melancholic the biggest single influence in making the decision about which way to turn is how we feel about ourselves – but this is especially so for the Melancholic. He

starts from a position of feeling he is at the bottom of the ladder. If that instinctive stance is reinforced by the Melancholic being neglected or positively damaged then he has major self-worth issues. Poor choices simply serve to reinforce what he feels about himself.

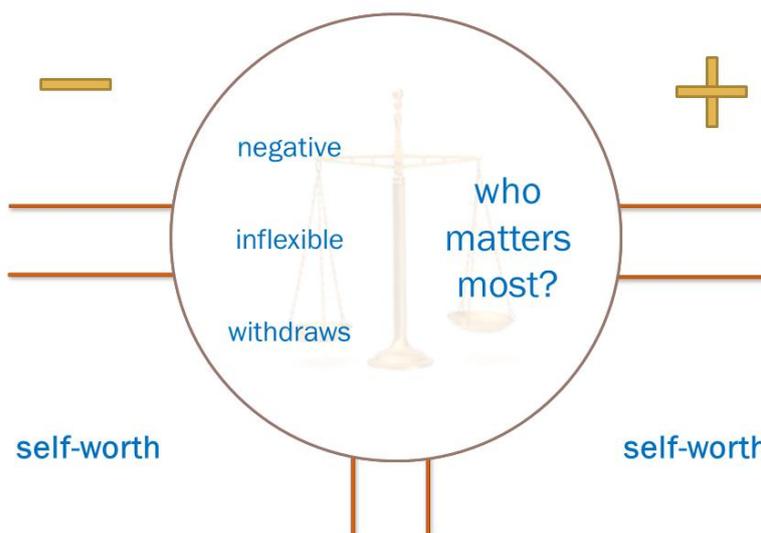
c. Negative

The Melancholic is naturally negative so this automatically draws him in the wrong direction. He needs to be aware that his perspectives will be biased towards a negative view of himself, others and life in general. He will have to consciously overcome that bias in order to head in the right direction.

d. Inflexible

Life, by definition, is always moving on. People grow and develop – and so can relationships if we are not inflexible. The Melancholic finds security in the familiar and is naturally reluctant to change. That reluctance can lead to a retreat into himself.

Moment of decision – for Melancholic



e. Withdraws

A Phlegmatic can distance himself from his emotions in order to protect himself but when the Melancholic retreats he takes his emotions with him. He cannot get away from them, which is why he indulges them. It is easier to pick up your ball and go home.

f. Who matters most?

Sensitivity is a valuable asset. The Melancholic has to constantly choose to give it away in the service of others. The extrovert might be giving himself away but if the Melancholic sits underneath and has turned back on himself then that valuable asset is hidden. It is too easy for the Melancholic to think that others are better off without him. That is simply negative self-indulgence. If he cares about others, and if they matter most, he will give himself away.