

The Alphabet: A Major Factor in Determining Long-lasting Relationships

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Among my more respected theories about life is the one in which the Alphabet plays a major role in guaranteeing a long-lasting relationship.

Everybody has a different Level of Patience or LP, and it comes from where the first letter of their surname falls in the alphabet. Those of you in the beginning of the alphabet are trained from early childhood that you don't have to wait for anything, from getting report cards to diplomas. If your name falls later in the alphabet, you learn more patience because you always had to wait, even for your telephone bill. This isn't true at the end of the alphabet, however, with folks who had to wait too long.

I divide the alphabet into thirds, based on the song and where we take breaths. Hence, we have A-B-C-D-E-F-G, breath, H-I-J-K-L-M-N-O-P, long breath, Q-R-S-T-U-V, little pause, W-X-Y-Z, sigh of relief. The composer of this song surely had no intention of molding anyone's patience level, and yet it occurred across all levels of society with an astonishing regularity, thanks to teachers never making the remark, "Let's pass out the report cards beginning with letter R today."

Let's begin, just like the teachers, with the first third of the alphabet. A-B-C-D-E-F-G. If your surname starts with one of these letters, you are Most Impatient (MI). Your friends, teachers, and co-workers have noted this trait in you, especially if any of them falls into another category. Your family wouldn't notice because they're just like you.

Within these seven letters, the C-D-Es have the least patience of the MIs. They know they don't have to wait and have no intention of doing so. A-B are also MI, but they don't have enough time to think about that since they always received their report cards before their hands could sweat. We call them Almost Most Impatient (AMI). The same goes for F-G. They're not quite first but they know they haven't long to wait (AMI).

In the middle of the alphabet are the Most Patient (MP) people. Hope is there. They are used to waiting...a little...and they know they're not last. They won't cut into traffic ahead of you; they're probably waving at you to pull in ahead of them.

Letters H-I-J-K are almost there. But L-M-N are the Most Most Patient (MMP). Anytime you schedule the meeting is fine with them; just let them know when you're available. The O-Ps are okay, too, but their degree of patience is slightly less than the MMPs, as they've had to wait a little longer, so we call them Sort of Patient (SP).

The final group, Q-R-S-T-U-V-W-X-Y-Z, is not patient. These people waited so long to write on the chalkboard or try the computer game, they grew weary of waiting and became Impatient.

It's a different kind of impatience than at the beginning of the alphabet, this one filled with bitterness, especially at the very end, W-X-Y-Z. Life cheated them by making them wait so long for

everything. They're never first, never will be, and have yet to find the boss who mails the bonus checks beginning with Q. They shove things out of their way when they get tired of waiting. We call the Q-R-S-T-U-V folks Sort of Patient (SP) and W-X-Y-Z Not Patient (NP).

Now that you understand the theory, take a good, hard look at the first letter of the last name you bore during your formative years. Do you sail your way through the door or let people go in front of you? Do you wave at a speaker to wrap it up or sit with your hands folded, waiting for them to finish? Do you dive through the closing elevator door or are you happy just to get there so you can make the button light up?

Here are a few observations about the Long-lasting Relationship (LR) and how this theory works.

If you pair two MIs, they'll spend their lives complaining about how long everything takes. They will drive each other insane trying to be first, but they do agree the world is against them.

If you pair up an MI with an MMP, you have found soul mates. Your MMP will spend years accommodating his or her MI because the MMP will eventually get his or her turn.

You could try pairing the MI with an MP, but even the MP can eventually become irritated with the annoying habits of an MI. A relationship between an MP and an AMI has a better prognosis for longevity.

You can also pair up an MI with an SP, but the relationship may not last as long as an MI with MP, or an AMI with an MP, or an MI with an MMP. SP falls into two places in the alphabet, remember, one of which carries grudges.

Disaster is on the way, however, if you pair an MP or an MMP with an NP. NPs are incompatible with all other categories for any length of time, but especially the MPs and MMPs. It's one thing to watch someone enthusiastically awaiting their turn (MI or AMI) when the NP knows his or her own turn will not be forthcoming any time soon, but it's worse for NPs to sit idly by and deal with MPs and MMPs who are unconcerned with the seven commercials before the game on TV resumes.

If you pair two MPs, two MMPs, or an MP with an MMP, you're okay. They'll sit and watch the grass grow, pleased with its greenness (baseball fans). An LR for sure, unless one of them starves to death waiting for the other to take the first slice of roast beef. You, first. No, you. I insist.

Others may advise there are many factors in planning for an LR that are important, but look around your office, church, PTA and neighborhood, also back through the years and remember those last names.

It's your best hope.