

Days of future passed

The NTs and NFs—where are they now?



Meredith Fuller

Workspaces part 9

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I commenced my vocational series 'Workspaces' in July 2003, and concluded the eight intuitive case studies in 2006.

Having now completed the Ns half of my series, I thought it would be interesting to overview what has become of them—as well as commenting on broader careers-counselling considerations for Ns as they move into their 40s, 50s, and beyond.

Once more with feeling: The NFs

INFPs

Now in his late 30s, **Jeremy Fitzpatrick**, the martial arts teacher, has completed his primary teaching degree, moved house—and lost his python, Sabby, several times for months at a time.

Now reclaimed, Sabby is ensconced at Healesville Sanctuary, to be used with visiting school children. Tara Moss (who, coincidentally, until recently lived in a penthouse across the road from another of the INFPs profiled here, Samaan) was keen to take Jeremy's snake to add to her collection, but the children won out.

Jeremy has decided to move to Tasmania for a lifestyle where he can care for the planet, the ecology and nature. He hopes to enjoy teaching and becoming involved in causes he believes in.

Tony, the dancing business trainer, continues on his journey. Like several of the other Ps in this article, he has checked to see if I still want our second interview, but has not got back to me in time—hence certain sketchy updates from the Ps.

Samaan, the artist, is in his second year at the Victorian College of Arts studying sculpture, drawing, music and ideas. He is flourishing:

I keep a journal for myself only—it grounds me when I'm engaged in the open-ended process of making art.

I need to often withdraw to temporary but profound solitude. When I write, I surrender myself to the absence of time.

Karl, the jackaroo inventor, got married. The wedding planning, ceremony and first year as married couple have been his most important focus.

Our wedding in August was a very happy affair, which we followed with the trip of a lifetime to the Kimberley. We were fortunate in knowing an anthropologist who lives in Kununurra and who was our guide together with a couple of traditional land owners, which gave us absolute licence to visit some spectacular and remote sacred sites that few others had ever seen.

Getting back into a regular routine has been hard after so much sacred beauty.

Karl is ready now to activate his career desires.

ENFJs

Now in her 50s, **Jenny** works for a union which also employs her partner. She took up an acting senior managerial position for 9 months and had some *aha!* moments. She felt some trepidation at the magnitude of the role, but was keen to give the opportunity a go, despite this meaning she would be her partner's boss during this period.

A seesaw of thrills and traumas, it hasn't been easy—strife with the workers not wishing to embrace the change she needed to implement; many sleepless nights over administrative and people problems; and juggling of family commitments contributed to a tough and lonely time. It was painful to feel disliked, misunderstood and ostracised.

Jenny's son now goes to school, and she is hoping for an extended break before returning, thankfully, to her former role.

Sally, the professional psychic, continues to wind down from her frenetic pace and pay more attention to her health, a cause of concern.

Geraldine is feeling good about herself. She has held a number of exhibitions where all of her paintings were sold:

More than ever I'm driven by my passion for colour. My background is craft-making, but I moved to coloured pencils nearly a decade ago. After a couple of years I was hungry for making my own colours; subsequently I have been painting ever since.

'It's a journey that amazes me', she says:

When I look back at the classes I've done in abstraction and realism, only to discover I belong in neither group.

Still on a self-discovery path, I know I'm an arty type who is slowly integrating into parts of the visual arts world. I am studying studio art at the Latrobe School of Art and Design whilst I complete my advanced diploma in Gestalt therapy. I love inspiring people.

INFJs

At 55, **Brian**, the psychologist, continues his private practice and consultancy, but has created a day a week for film making.

A recently-completed collaboration was working as director of photography for a group short film project, *Black Button*, produced and directed by Lucas Crandles. Actor Robert Grubb and his son Hayden played the two characters.

In my film making I'm interested in people telling their stories, capturing meaning and significance. The screenplay I'm currently working on, *The Struggle to Surrender*, explores the confluence between a person's outer behaviour and their internal conflicts.

'Life keeps getting better', says Brian. 'I am exercising my previously submerged creativity. I'm rediscovering fun. I'm happier and more fully present.'

Brian 'Doddo' Dodson continues his work in rural financial counselling, but in addition has become the executive officer, a conduit between Canberra and his board. There have been massive changes in the field as the services merge.

Doddo mounted a competition for farmers' photography depicting their (barren) landscapes, which was judged and exhibited at Parliament House, Canberra. The *One in a Hundred* photographic exhibition was a huge success, and he is in the process of pursuing the concept of a photographic competition for aboriginal children.

Issues that bother him focus on water and agriculture. He continues to advise the media and politicians. 'I'd love to actually work for a Federal politician around these issues', he says.

With a new \$10 000 bike, Doddo is preparing for another Iron Man—the '08 Race held in Germany. At 58, he realises that he feels the best within himself, and the most comfortable about who he is.

I felt so misunderstood for most of my life, but now I am able to accept myself and spend time on my interests and needs.

Nearing her mid-50s, **Anna**, the former teacher, and her husband Max have retired to spend lovely days painting, reading, and taking a slower pace. They recently travelled to Japan and Scotland, and recognise that overseas trips are no longer critical components of their lives.

Anna's focus is looking after everyone's health—her mother's, Gus the schnauzer's (who has chronic stomach and skin complaints), Max's, and her own. She is the most fit and healthy she has ever been.



A conduit to Canberra:

Brian Dodson, INFJ

I feel that I am coming to a better understanding of what introversion really means, and putting processes in place that affirm that being such a severe introvert that it is all right to have the needs I do.

'That being with people drains energy', says Anna, 'and that not wanting to be with people does not mean that I am antisocial or that I don't like people or that there is something wrong with me':

It just means I need a lot of space with my internal world for me to recharge enough to face the outer world again. What that means for me is

- i. setting time limits on how long I will be with people—how many hours—and conveying that ahead of time
- ii. making sure that if I have a busy schedule that week, I keep a day between without any people contact so I can recover
- iii. I will only schedule one activity per day; I cannot manage two
- iv. If I do something that involves a lot of people, for example, working front of house at our local theatre group, I will take that day off to rest before I go in
- v. I need to sit very still
- vi. if I don't have enough time with my internal world, I then have anxiety attacks and depression. If I start to feel edgy, I know I need to go and do something creative and then I don't break down

In order of priority, Anna enjoys being alone at home ('doing whatever I want to do when alone'), and then having time with Max and Gus.

When I'm alone I read, draw, watch movies, sew, bake a cake, or engage with story; find a creative outlet. This is what I need most. The surprise about retirement is that the day is never long enough. There's so much to be involved with.

In any social situation I have felt like a misfit. Now I am becoming more aware of external cues, and realising that I am a better fit than

I had previously assumed. This is a big task for me at the moment. I could ruminate for pages and pages, so I'll stop here.

For **Trevor**, 'things are picking up momentum'. 'Project manager that I am', he says, 'I'll give you a list':

- I'm pushing through some barriers at work, which is restoring my confidence to levels that I have had in the past. I think this is due to the combined benefit of the progress I am making in other areas of my life.
- I'm getting some real value and satisfaction from the Gestalt group that I attend.
- My artistic output is increasing with a Wednesday drawing class that I'm attending and a conscious increase in my efforts to connect with practicing artists.
- I've finally started playing competitive tennis again and I'm loving it.
- I'm investigating some important subjects: my problematic relationship with money/security, my underdeveloped connection with my creative side, and the relationship I create between the present and my idealised concept of the future (looking to create a better link between them).
- My life has taken a turn for the richer by a conscious effort to turn my energy from the pursuit of material things to the pursuit of more and richer friendships. Giving more of myself is working so well.

ENFPs

In her 60s, **Liz**, aka **Lizzie Bootscoots**, has settled in her new, downsized home alongside 38 years of loved possessions and collectables.

I adore my new life—no sentiment—just 'gung ho' into moving on and enjoying my children and grandchildren, line dancing, writing, jewellery making and whatever else seems a good idea at the time!

A week after her move, her son shouted a life-altering trip to London and Prague, where she managed to visit every palace.



'I adore my **new life**':

Lizzie Bootscoots,
ENFP

Second thoughts: The NTs

ENTJs

Jill, the massage therapist, playwright, and Bed and Breakfast owner, suddenly sold up her coastal business after 10 years and moved to the city in order to be an active grandmother, between seeing her massage clients. 'Despite everything I was involved in', she says, 'I found it too lonely living in an isolated place, and did not want to miss out on seeing my grandchildren grow':

I have always seen myself more as a director than a writer. These days I'm directing (subcontracting) a massive house renovation—surrounded by family, friends and local community—and fortified by movies, eating out, theatre, etc.

In her late 70s **Isabel**, the artist, continues to hold feted exhibitions across Australia.

Reminiscing, she sensed from an early age that she had the ability to do well, but it was in an era where girls were supposed to marry—schooling was not seen to be important. As a child she'd lie in bed and design/improve environments around her. By age 12 Isabel spent most of her time in her bedroom, drawing.

Her habit of collecting stones and plants to improve gardens continues to this day. 'I would have been a terrific architect', she says. For many years she and Gerald bought houses to renovate. She started art at RMIT in her mid 30s, the only female mature-age student.

First time in my life I could do exactly what I wanted. I never fitted in—the art world liked my work but I didn't present like the typical artist!

Back then women struggled, ignored and unaided. John Brack reassured her, 'If you have one person who believes in you, it's enough to keep you going.'

The feminist art movement had a profound influence; finally there were other women, and they developed the women artists register and other groups to foster support

for women. Throughout her life she has never had a mentor, but she has become a mentor to many.

The only girl in her school to obtain 100% for science as well as art, Isabel had no role models. At 17 she enrolled in art school for a drawing teacher's certificate, then taught art at Presbyterian Ladies College. The art school pleaded with her parents to keep Isabel there for further studies, given her outstanding ability; but her parents preferred that she marry, have children, sew and garden. 'One day I'll prove I have more ability than they expected', she told herself.

She desperately wanted to achieve what she was capable of, so she persevered. Happily married to a man who loved her intellect and cared deeply for her, Isabel spent her parenting years on committees for school and church.

I decided to work in my studio every day, which meant sacrificing my social life. Loved the challenge of getting my ideas working well. Oh, that moment of success when you've created a good work! You spend 95 percent of your time doing hard slog for that moment of achievement.

When you get going, the work takes you over—I'm always improving it. It's your experience that lets you know when you have done your best. I always feel that my next exhibition will be even better, but this is the best I can do at this moment.'

Isabel aims for a balanced life, while continuing her art work. As she grows older she realises that people are more important than work. But she remains interested in ideas and wants to share them with an audience. It's personal—her work speaks to the world in a unique way.

In my Lake Mungo series one piece might be most important, but each work has a fragment of knowledge, so you appreciate the whole. When you lose some of your works (to a 'sold' sticker) it is like losing your children, because it's no longer complete. It feels as though they have been kidnapped—galleries don't like telling you who bought your work.



The director and the dancer:

**Jill O'Callaghan, ENTJ
& Tony Norquay, INFP**

'There has been a huge change in the art scene and art education', says Isabel. 'Nowadays the academics define good art':

You are required to talk about your work in an academic way so it can be written about to fit their paradigms. Since they decided who they'll write about, not fitting makes it harder to gain a reputation.

You need determination and a protective shell, to deal with poor reviews. While I think that reviews should say what the artist is doing and how they do it, reviewers prefer to simply knock the artist down, without offering anything constructive.

As a J artist, her house and studio is clean and tidy. As an E, her radio is on all the time 'so I know what's going on in the world. My hobby is talking; usually about what we could do to make the world better.'

Isabel recognises that her hard work can border on compulsiveness:

When the idea comes I become engrossed and switch off my sociability. I want to do it immediately—the result is the exciting part. I like having control over things that affect me.

Isabel finds it difficult being so visually aware: 'I am pain-in-the-neck fussy, and most people aren't.' Her aesthetic imperatives impact on every aspect of her life—even the way she arranges biscuits on a plate.

2007 finds that **David** the headhunter has spent the past few years taking time out to wind up his deceased father's estate and business. He has moved his operations to picturesque Williamstown, where extensive renovations are beginning on his house/office.

INTPs

Selby, the academic, has continued to work at a university part time and pursues his interests in calligraphy, old cameras, and art.

Judith, the welfare worker, passed away.

Robert, the GP, now works part time, freeing up space for writing and software development.

ENTPs

Sonya Clancy, the HR executive, continues to flourish. She is Head of People Capital in the Personal Division (with 10 business units and 15 000 staff) at the ANZ Bank.

Sonya is unusual for an ENTP, in that she both envisages and successfully delivers by mastering dichotomies and opposites. She remains true to herself while orchestrating significant change and development. She glides along the high wires, balancing the engagement of her opposites in perfect tension—a quality, glamorous act on the trapeze.

A relentless J in my work week, I am P on my totally unstructured weekends. We sleep in, have lazy breakfasts, and time is unstructured.

Possibly this is an essential ingredient of her unique capacity for both high output and creative, novel ideas.

A recent project has been working with the business and the union on a substantially different working arrangement, naming it 'constructive engagement', as well as working with people capital on gaining human resource synergies across the 15 000 people.

As chairman of *The Big Issue*, Sonya orchestrated a successful dinner that raised a lot of money. *The Big Issue* won the bid for the Homeless World Cup 2008, with Sonya on their advisory group and board as well.

Sonya's legendary skills in organising stellar events hinge on her ability to locate excellence and loyalty. Her respectful and thoughtful treatment of support people generates goodwill. Building emotional bank accounts, rather than making withdrawals e.g., by rarely asking for special favours: if she ever needs to ask, she feels she has earned the right (e.g., requesting to be fitted in for a haircut).



Gliding along the high wires:

Sonya Clancy, ENTP

Relationships are critical for Sonya, and she works hard at them. ‘Synergy is fundamental’, she says. ‘I delight in building people up. With problem-solving I focus on ‘How do we get there?’, not on ‘What’s preventing us?’

Highly organised people work best for me. Whether it’s my doctor or beautician, they need to be ‘on-time’ people. By locating and building strong relationships with the right people I’m rarely let down. I’m very disciplined and assertive about my expectations.

In her private life, Sonya has overseen three house renovations: home, holiday and rental property.

We also needed to rabbit-proof our beach house so all the family can go. Now the dogs and Ruby (who is rapidly clocking up Ruby Miles) accompany us in my husband’s new Mercedes for the weekend trips.

By ensuring that people are on time, Sonya reduces a lot of unnecessary stress:

There’s little spare room in my life, so all needs to run like clockwork. However, I do still have more headroom ready for even more complexity, and my fantastic coach ensures I continually step up to my full potential. Having a husband I adore forces me to balance everything in order to protect my relationship.

I love my life, my job, and being able to contribute in significant ways. Key delights are spooning with my husband, and seeing my dogs roll on their backs for tummy rubs.

In his 60s, **Denis**, the business/marketing consultant, has had some ups and downs in work and health, emerging with aplomb: ‘I challenge people to solve conundrums.’

Denis now focuses his business on game simulations, as well as taking up an interest in digital photography. He has recently completed a series of short graphic books about the business game, with titles including *Mr Naughty* and *Mr Twisty*.

Amanda, the lawyer, remains with the firm, cooking beautiful dinners for friends,

and enjoying those Italian male rowing teams on her international rowing competitions.

In his 50s, **Nick**, the picture framer and drummer, joined a new country band that unexpectedly shot to fame recently. The band is booked out for most of the year and Nick has been pursuing a hectic pace, travelling around Australia.

Running his own framing shop has been too isolating for Nick, despite his dashing off for coffee breaks with the other shop owners. Somehow his business still exists despite his extended absences, which just goes to show what wizards ENTPs can be.

INTJs

Some fascinating vocational transformations are occurring with the INTJs—I can’t do them justice without devoting a whole paper to them. Meanwhile, here are the snapshots.

David, the computer whiz, is still taking on consultancies, with similar misgivings.

Kay, the academic consultant, has established a thriving business, sits on boards, and has an array of unusual coaching roles.

Paul, the conservator, has written another book, and is working on his third.

Marilyn is building her dream home, and preparing to leave her accounting institute to retire to an arts and crafts world.

Vocational observations for careers counselling

Many texts stress the introvert advantage at midlife and beyond, noting that for the first half of their life the extravert has an easier time of being in the world, but may find the second-half transit to the inner world disruptive or difficult. While it is usually far more arduous for the introvert to live their first half, it is far easier and more pleasurable to live their second half.



Emerging with aplomb:

Denis Hitchens, ENTJ

Anna, the INFJ, raises the delight of self-acceptance and the strength of her second half of life:

For the introvert, life is so busy focusing on coming out of themselves and managing the outside world, they don't pick up on cues that others may like them. Such an effort just to turn up, you don't have extra energy to spare! In contrast, an extravert is getting loads of immediate positive feedback that others are enjoying them as they converse.

For most of my life, talking to people exhausted me because I have to come so far out of my interior world, and I can't read the cues that tell me I am acceptable in this social context. This makes conversation even harder.

'Teaching takes so much out of an introvert', says Anna, with its 'constant cast of people all day': students, staff, parents.

Now that I have retired, I can pace myself and consequently, I can read cues. I am heartened by my awareness that I am liked and loved for who I am.

The implications for careers and career changes are obvious. It may assist us to appreciate how the second half of life flows more easily for the introvert. On the other hand, it may also assist us to understand the struggles of the extravert, who may mourn the lack of constant excitement or buzz from new people and situations that they had so enjoyed in their adolescence and early working years.

Says **Jenny** the ENFJ:

Life was one big party—every day an adventure and I adored my busy social scene. With friends and workmates, I laughed most of my days. These days I am tired and cranky trying to get through the day's chores, and I'm too stuffed to even phone my friends, let alone go out and socialise!

During his workshop at AusAPT's conference last year, I was particularly struck by John Baldock's comments in relation to **Brian's** integration of psychotherapy and film making. Film making was a passionate hobby in his early 20s.

John mentioned that 'the power of inner image has been lost':

Words are pale imitations of inner image, which is a holistic concept embedded in our bodies. The world of film (movies we watch) reveals the greatest source of knowledge. Images on screen are seeing the inner world. Psychology and cinema were both birthed around the same time.

Increasingly, careers counsellors are recommending pertinent DVDs and books to clients.

Supposedly, people can orient themselves in time and space by categorising and interpreting experiences in a meaningful and functional way. Ss are likely to do this in a more detailed and clear manner than Ns. Usually an S can more easily chart their career progress, recognise what they may need to do to keep on track, or construct a progression that anticipates general life/career stages.

In the careers counselling process, practitioners may employ mind maps, whiteboards, painting, narrative, and sequels. Ns are prone to forming mental maps, constructs and schemas, craving the search for patterns or interesting repetitions. While NTs usually work at mapping their reality to accommodate changes, the NFs usually have an inner representation (paradigm) they work from.

So, the way we coax and play with visual material probably needs to be different for Ss and Ns, NTs and NFs—whether linear or non-linear, abstract or concrete, pattern repetition or non-patterning, etc.

For the Ns the world is abstract and, with their tendency to far more inattentive blindness, they may see only what they are expecting to see. However, the maps that NTs and NFs form may be a bit 'off', because they may have been formed in environments that were 'off' (such as a damaging first job, dysfunctional family of origin, unsatisfying relationships, abusive authority figures, ambivalent relatives, school bullying, poverty or physical accidents). These may hinder; but then again, they may unexpectedly help in some indirect way.



Brian Walsh, INFJ (r)

with director **Lucas Crandles**
and actor **Hayden Grubb**

For example, when Isabel the artist was eight years old she overheard her mother say, 'She's plain'. This remark reverberated when she struck unconscionable behaviour from gallery owners, reviewers and art purchasers.

The first 'mature-age, short, dumpy housewife' on the art scene in Victoria, Isabel had easy success obtaining exhibition space, critic reviews and fan clubs when her art work preceded her. However, if she arrived in person first it was difficult to get anyone to even look at her work, let alone show any interest. Apparently, only young, willowy, tall women were associated with serious art.

In Isabel's case, her logical T appraisal of her ability fuelled her determination and perseverance. She pushed through the barriers—a pioneering Sherman tank who paved the way for all manner of women artists.

You can be given opportunities, or you can be ignored. It can be easy or hard. My art work wouldn't allow me to stop, despite my wondering if I could be bothered with all that. I kept going, with a thick enough skin to form a protective shell. I dislike injustice and I like enthusiasm.

The tendency to accept their distorted maps as *faits accomplis* may help us to appreciate why the manner of questioning within Narrative Therapy may be useful for the N careers clients who are stuck or miserable.

People also appreciate that unexpected events, such as illness or retrenchment or relationship events, can be the catalyst to begin our process of what needs to be changed.

How may we live from the inside out, instead of the outside in? This question is particularly meaningful for those who have entered their mid-life career passage. We can work out what our lives mean (regardless of our MBTI types, pathologies, or circumstances!) and ask ourselves, 'What do I need to become who I am?'

I'm always interested in the passages (as in 'rites of passage') that the client has taken and is yet to undertake. What might they

have overdone, or underdone? The disturbances? The degradations? The delights? How might theirs parallel, or be different from, yours, and what might that mean in careers counselling work with various ages and types, alike and opposites? ❖

References

The individuals featured in this article were previously profiled in parts 1 to 8 of Meredith Fuller's Workspaces series in the *Australian Psychological Type Review*.

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An open-ended process:
Samaan Michaelis,
INFP



'A very happy affair': **Karl Bates,**
INFP with **Peta Sherwood**