

Learn to  
Nurture Your  
Nature

The  
Cactus and  
Snowflake  
at Work

How the Logical and Sensitive  
Can Thrive Side by Side

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## PRELUDE

# My Book Is Your Book

Hi. Welcome to my book. Make yourself at home.

What made you crease this spine? Are you plagued by a sense of otherness? Out of sync? Do you relentlessly process encounters until they are ground to dust in your mind? Harbor an uneasy suspicion you're hindered by a highly sensitive nature?

Or perhaps you live or work with someone who takes everything personally. An innocent comment turns into a tailspin. Drives you nuts.

I hear you. Either way, I'm here to help.

Some folks seemingly barrel through life. Don't look back, take it in stride. Ostensibly well equipped to navigate this world. *Roll-with-the-Punches* their middle, albeit lengthy, name.

Then there are the rest of us, exuding emotions, the smallest infraction permeating a not-protective-enough exterior shell. *What's wrong with me?* a familiar refrain. Second guessing = second nature. At times succumbing to the notion that those with a tough exterior are favored in the roulette of life. Not true. This misnomer belongs in the middle of a bologna sandwich.

## DISPELLING MYTHS

A dozen years ago we were busily banishing false notions about introverts and extroverts. Believe it or not, back then some confused humans actually thought extroverts were somehow better equipped for networking.\* We nipped that in the bud! Yet no resting on our laurels.

Our work is not finished. Now we're dishing about feelers and thinkers. Which will evolve into Snowflakes and Cacti.

Don't panic. I'll walk beside you every step of the way.

Perhaps you're new to the concept of personality styles. Is this uncharted territory for you? Here's a supersonic overview:

We each come equipped with particular proclivities, influencing our behavior, mental processing, and subjective experiences. Learning about predispositions yields insights into what makes each of us tick, heightens tolerance levels, and builds a platform to expand our comfort zones.

You've come to the right place for a slew of creative and actionable tools, tips, and applications. The best place to start is expanding your own self-awareness and fanning out from there to the world around you.

Own your temperament. It's as elegant—and often as elusive—as that.

\* Zack, Devora. *Networking for People Who Hate Networking*, 2nd edition. Berrett-Koehler, 2019.

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## INTRODUCTION

# Laying the Groundwork

*Life is short. Avoid causing yawns.*

—ELINOR GLYN

## JUMP ABOARD

Prepare to squash stereotypes, validate values, and dissipate erroneous judgments. Transform previously perceived liabilities into your finest strengths. In these pages you'll discover how to understand, accept, and leverage the true you. We'll address misconceptions and rewrite the playbook.

This is not about changing anyone else. Why bang your head against the wall? Expend your energy wisely; focus on refining you. Done well, that will take all your spare time.

From now on, we each get to define ourselves.

## DEBITS AND CREDITS

My first semester as an MBA student featured a class in accounting. I had no idea what the heck was going on. Fortunately, I quickly befriended a certified public accountant (CPA). They were easy to spot, roaming the hallways with complex calculators handy. I arrived at my first tutorial with a single question: “Are credits good and debits bad . . . or are debits good and credits bad?” I was certain his reply would solve everything. He refused to commit to one side or the other. He said they are each good in different ways. Desperate, I started repeating my query louder, as a stream of tears began obscuring my vision.

It’s payback time. Fast-forward twenty-five years, and ever since I’ve been busily circumnavigating the globe teaching about personality differences. Again and again, I am asked whether thinkers or feelers are better positioned to lead, thrive, navigate. Opinions abound. Rather than offering up a pithy reply, I’ve been encouraged to write this book.

Meanwhile, I eagerly await an invitation to scribe my first accounting textbook. Must be lost in the mail.

## THE LONG AND SHORT OF IT

Here’s what I know. There are  $\infty$  personality styles. Or at least one per person, whichever comes first. A few may have a few, although that’s an entirely different book.

Feelers value empathy, thinkers value logic, and the planet is filled with factions. *The Cactus & Snowflake at Work* demonstrates, amid a flurry of examples, why both sides are invaluable. Not to mention that we need each other desperately, despite ourselves.

## Break It Down Now

If humans aren't complex, well then who is? (I know, I know, dolphins.) While keeping in mind that a heap of factors combine to make us who we are, this slender volume delves primarily into a singularly fascinating slice of personality. Yes, we are multifarious. Yes, personalities are intricate. And yes, by exploring even a single element we can forever change our understanding of ourselves and each other.

No need to bite off more than we can chew. Let's start here:

***Thinkers lead with their heads and  
Feelers lead with their hearts.***

This statement encapsulates a basic underpinning of how individuals experience, make sense of, and engage in the world.\*

The following distinctions offer up some highlights of our inner mechanisms.

THINKERS—LEAD WITH HEAD	FEELERS—LEAD WITH HEART
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Logical</li> <li>▪ Analytical</li> <li>▪ Direct</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Sensitive</li> <li>▪ Empathetic</li> <li>▪ Diplomatic</li> </ul>

Thinkers are logical, value analysis, and default to directness in conversation. Feelers are sensitive, value empathy, and diplomacy reigns supreme.

Everyone has bits and pieces of both styles. The size and scope of these fragments depends upon each person's own inimitable inclinations. Fortunately, the exclusive *Cacflake Instrument*, a self-assessment nestled within chapter 1, has

\* Based on teachings of Carl Jung (1875–1961), creator of numerous psychological concepts such as the four functions of consciousness, including Thinker-Feeler.

been designed to reveal your place in the world. Or at least along the spectrum of head and heart.

To kick things off, remember these truisms:

- Thinkers and feelers process life in fundamentally different ways.
- Sensitivity isn't equated with weakness. It's a superpower.
- Feelers think and thinkers feel. Everyone's three-dimensional.

Bonus point! Nobody needs to be fixed.

## What to Expect

My style is casual; there's no hoity-toity pontificating. Yet don't be thrown by the chummy lingo—this volume is chockful of practical apps. All accessible without downloading to your over-tapped smartphone.

In my experience, engaging readers yields high retention. Therefore, you'll find an array of sections such as *Cheat Sheets*, *Dialogue Samples*, *Hazard Alerts*, *Pop Quizzes*, *Toolshed Moments*, *Worksheets*, and sundry surprises that I can't yet reveal. Or perhaps they don't exist (cue *Twilight Zone* theme song).

This book is replete with real-life scenarios to augment key points. Particularly robust scenarios are dubbed *The Rubber Hits the Road*.

**All provided scenarios are based on *actual situations*.**

Names and minor details may have been altered, yet the experiences and encounters described are rooted in true events. Keep this in mind, as I venture it will be hard to believe in certain cases. Truth is stranger than fiction.



A note about gender references. If you are reading this book in English or another language with limited gender distinctions, generic references to individuals are indicated by she/her, he/his, they/them, and related variations. Apologies in advance if unintended errors or oversights are made regarding gender identification and terminology.



## **BREAKING NEWS!**

One more thing! From this page forward we hereby deem previously aforementioned feelers as Snowflakes. Thinkers are now dubbed Cacti. Done.

### **IS “SNOWFLAKE” (OR “CACTUS”) AN INSULT?**

Hi, Devora’s editor here. (Actually it’s still me; I’m only pretending to be my editor, since this aside was his idea.)

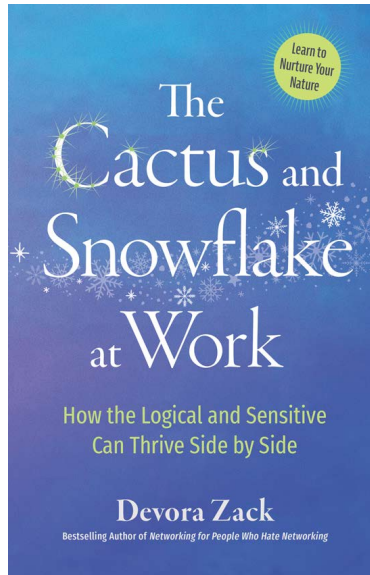
Some folks have a visceral reaction to the term “snowflake,” as it has been associated off and on with negative connotations such as entitlement, intolerance, and inflated self-worth.

Likewise, while less charged, “cactus” has at times been associated with being harsh, abrasive, or judgmental.

As you’ll discover, I use both terms as positive metaphors for contrasting predilections. This is not a book about culture or politics, but about personality and getting along together.

As an admirer of the inimitable beauty of both Snowflakes and Cacti, I reject turning either term into something categorically unkind or negative. So let’s shake off any preformed connotations as we embark together into the light of these pages.

**We hope that you enjoyed this excerpt  
from *The Cactus and Snowflake at Work*  
by Devora Zack.**



**Available 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2021. Order now!**

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