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What does your handwriting reveal about your personality?

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A1 By Margaret Patricia Eaton

It turns out my handwriting is really a "print-script," a combination of cursive writing and printing. This blending of logic with intuition is the classic sign of a writer, which is a good thing, since I am a writer. But even though this has been a life-long dream, it's one that I began to act upon only in the last two years of my 32-year career in education.



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Annette Poizner

What took me so long to get started was probably an excessive amount of yin energy, also revealed in my writing. Yin, according to Chinese philosophy, is female energy. As a nurturing, cookie-baking mother and empathic school counsellor, I thought this was a good thing. But it can be a negative, as too much yin exerts too much control and inhibition, manifesting in fear of failing.

If I ever thought graphology was just a party game, a phone conversation with Annette Poizner, a Toronto-based Registered Social Worker and psychotherapist, has convinced me otherwise.

Based on a sample of my handwriting, my signature, drawing of a tree, and some of my earliest childhood memories, she's given me a great deal of insight into both my character and behaviour. What's a real surprise is that she knows so much about me and we've never met in person.

Poizner bases her work on solid credentials. She has degrees in psychology and social work from York University (Toronto) and Columbia University (New York) and while completing her Doctorate of Education in Counselling Psychology at the University of Toronto presented a dissertation on the use of graphology as a

psychotherapeutic tool. She's now affiliated with the Milton H. Erickson Institute of Toronto and has derived her model and techniques from the founder who was a psychiatrist.

Poizner maintains that combining graphology with analysis of a few early memories in projective personality assessment is beneficial because it bypasses troublesome symptoms, and goes straight to the hidden root causes of certain difficult-to-treat mental health issues. Some, such as obsessive-compulsive disorder, are particularly resistant to conventional talk and/or drug therapy in which a client may spend years. Once identified, a brief therapy model can move forward and address the issues, allowing the client to return to a productive life. In addition, less time in therapy means less expense to the health care system. It's a win-win situation, all around.

"In Europe and Israel, graphology is widely used by trained professionals," she says, "but North American clinicians have had little exposure to graphology and 'pop psychology' books do an injustice to the technique."

Hoping to change this perception, she's completed two manuscripts: *Clinical Graphology: an Interpretive Manual for Mental Health Professionals* and *Reading the Soul: Handwriting Analysis and the Tree of Life* and is now searching for a publisher.

She also has a website: www.annettepoizner.com where you can learn more about how graphology works.

So how could my reasonably legible "print-script" in which Poizner identified a little "smile" in the curve of the lower part of my capital letters "T" and "F", combined with my selected memories of tripping on the top step of our family home on moving-in day at age two and a half, and my fascination with a large china mixing bowl shortly thereafter, reflect character traits and future behaviour?

The answer can be found in the theory of Alfred Adler, which suggested that core, innate patterns of self-hood, established at an early age, are expressed in our movements and gestures, including the pattern of our handwriting. Or as Sigmund Freud wrote, "...no mortal can keep a secret. If his lips are silent, he chatters with his fingertips."

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