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AFJAGS Podcast: Episode 22

Emotional Intelligence & Personality Profiles with (Ret.) Lt Col Megan Allison & Lt Col Brandie Jeffries - Part 1



Lieutenant Colonel Megan Allison, USAF (Ret.)



Lieutenant Colonel Brandie Jeffries, USAF

HOST: MAJOR RICK HANRAHAN, USAF

GUEST: LIEUTENANT COLONEL MEGAN ALLISON, USAF (RET.) AND LIEUTENANT COLONEL BRANDIE JEFFRIES, USAF

This episode is part 1 of a two-part interview with two guest experts, (Ret.) Lt Col Megan Allison and Lt Col Brandie Jeffries. In this episode, we discuss the importance of emotional intelligence (EI) and personality profiles.

MAJOR RICK HANRAHAN:

In today's interview, we discuss emotional intelligence and personality profiles, a topic sure to increase your emotional intelligence, intra- and inter- personal communication skills, and ultimate leadership ability. This episode is part one of a two-part interview with two guest experts, Lieutenant Colonel Megan Allison, US Air Force, retired, and Lieutenant Colonel Brandie Jeffries, U.S. Air Force. Here are a few clips from part one of the interview.

[upbeat intro music]

SHOW EXCERPT, (RET.) LIEUTENANT COLONEL MEGAN ALLISON:

Emotional intelligence is about one skill that can be developed over your lifetime, and you can do that through mentoring and coaching, taking an assessment, and then making positive impacts along the way.

SHOW EXCERPT, LIEUTENANT COLONEL

BRANDIE JEFFRIES:

The extrovert and introvert dichotomy, I think the biggest myth about that particular dichotomy, is that introverts are shy, and that's really not it at all.

ANNOUNCER:

Welcome to The Air Force Judge Advocate General's Reporter Podcast, where we interview leaders, innovators, and influencers on the law, leadership, and best practices of the day, and now to your host from The Air Force Judge Advocate General's School.

MAJ HANRAHAN:

Welcome to another episode from [The Air Force Judge Advocate General's School](#). I'm your host, Major Rick Hanrahan. Well, I'm definitely looking forward to our show today where we're gonna discuss how to develop and improve your emotional intelligence, including how you can do this through a personality profile assessment. This is something that many of you have probably either done or heard about.

We're gonna take a deeper dive into this topic with two guest experts on the call today, including Lieutenant Colonel Megan Allison, United States Air Force, retired, who is the current Deputy Director of the Air University Leadership Institute at Air Command and Staff College, and Lieutenant Colonel Brandie Jeffries, United States Air Force, who currently acts as the Reserve Advisor to the Profession of Arms Center of Excellence and is an instructor in the Department of Leadership at Air University's Air Command and Staff College. Ladies, thank you for coming on the show today.

LT COL BRANDIE JEFFRIES:

Thank you for having us.

(RET.) LT COL MEGAN ALLISON:

Yes, thanks so much. Happy to be here.

INTRODUCTIONS

MAJ HANRAHAN:

Lieutenant Colonel Megan Allison, United States Air Force, retired, serves as the Deputy Director of the Air University Leadership Institute with the Air Command Staff College at Maxwell Air Force Base. A command pilot with more than 3,000 hours, she served in various squadron, group, and wing positions flying the C-21A, C-17, MQ-1, MQ-9, and C-146. She commanded the 27th Special Operations Support Squadron at Cannon Air Force Base, and served on the Strategic Command Staff. She is a 1998 graduate of the Reserve Officer Training Corps at the University of Virginia and holds two master's degrees in Business Administration and National Security and Strategic Studies, and is a graduate of the U.S. Navy's College of Naval Command and Staff.

And our second guest expert today is Lieutenant Colonel Brandie Jeffries, who is the Reserve Advisor to the Profession of Arms Center for Excellence, or PACE, and an instructor in the Department of Leadership at Air University's Air Command and Staff College. Lieutenant Colonel Jeffries is a core manpower and personnel officer with extensive background in strategic planning and programming. She holds master's degrees from Grand Canyon University in Industrial and Organizational Psychology, Chapman University in Human Resource Management, Air University in Military Operation Art and Design, and a graduate certification from Chapman University in Organizational Leadership. She is certified in the MBTI level one and two, which we're gonna talk about a little bit today, and a graduate of Stanford's Design School. Lieutenant Colonel Jeffries has served in various capacities over her last 20 years of service, including assignments within Air Mobility Command, Air Force Materiel Command, the Air Force Special Operations Command, Joint Special Operations Command, Air Force Reserve Command, Air Education and Training Command, and here at Air University.

So ladies, with that backdrop, could you provide perhaps a little more background on your current positions and what you do?

(RET.) LT COL MEGAN ALLISON:

Sure, as you mentioned, I'm the Deputy Director of Leadership Development. We have actually moved over to Air University's Ira C. [Eaker Center](#) for Leadership Development, and the division is charged with leading Air University's Quality Enhancement Plan, which is really focused on leadership and ethics across the continuum of learning, as well as creating a cohesive, coherent, and a deliberate approach to leadership development across Air University. I'm also certified in MBTI, level one and two, Emotional Intelligence, level one and two.

MAJ HANRAHAN:

And that was Lieutenant Colonel Allison. Thank you, ma'am.

LT COL BRANDIE JEFFRIES:

And hi, this is Lieutenant Colonel Brandie Jeffries, so, much like Megan, I am also currently assigned over at the Eaker Center. I am nested under the [Profession of Arms Center of Excellence](#) that recently relocated from Randolph Air Force Base to Maxwell Air Force Base back over the summer. The capacity that I'm sitting in now, I'm actually a full-time reservist in AGR that's sort of covering two fronts. So I'm writing and helping deliver leader development curriculum to the total force through PACE, as well as providing a direct linkage back to the Professional Development Center back at the Headquarters, Air Force Reserve Command.

[PODCAST INTERVIEW](#)

MAJ HANRAHAN:

Well, thank you ladies for both of those introductions. Today's episode is on emotional intelligence and personality profiles. These are two different topics, but closely related and important to understand how they work together. Emotional intelligence, or EI, has become somewhat of a buzzword in the public. Many of our listeners have likely heard about emotional

intelligence, and employers now often place a great deal of importance on their employees' EI, often even equal to, or greater than, their employees' IQ at times.

For example, in a recent LinkedIn survey of 2,000 business leaders, the majority of them said the first skill they look for in an employee is their, quote, unquote, "soft skills". Additionally, other studies show that as technology and artificial intelligence continue to grow, emotional intelligence will become even more an important factor for the job applicant and career advancement. With that backdrop, what is emotional intelligence?

(RET.) LT COL MEGAN ALLISON:

Okay, in simplest terms, **emotional intelligence** is your ability to recognize and understand emotions, and then your skill at using this awareness to manage yourself in your relationships with others in a positive way. So it really consists of four areas: **self-awareness**, so you're aware of what you're feeling; **self-management**, I'm aware that I'm mad but I'm not going to react in a negative way; **social awareness**, or I'm aware that you're also mad; and then **relationship management**, since I realize we're both mad, then I'm going to do something different to manage this relationship, and that's really what it boils down to.

[EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE](#)

MAJ HANRAHAN:

And if I could ask, how did emotional intelligence come into being?

(RET.) LT COL MEGAN ALLISON:

Sure, so emotional intelligence is really not anything new. It's been thoroughly researched over the last 60 years and empirically demonstrated. It began with Gary Low and Darwin Nelson, but it really became part of modern culture when [Daniel Goleman](#) published his book, *Emotional Intelligence*, back in 1995, and that book sold over five million copies. And it's important because the piece, it's that piece of the puzzle that was missing. There was a find, a study that was done, where people with average IQs were outperforming those with

the highest IQs 70% of the time. And this anomaly was really throwing this wrench into what many people had always thought was the sole source of success, your IQ, and so EQ [emotional quotient] was the answer to that. Decades of research really point to emotional intelligence as the factor that sets star performers apart from the rest of the pack.

MAJ HANRAHAN:

And ma'am, when you mentioned how people were outperforming, in what respect were they outperforming, just in the job performance?

(RET.) LT COL MEGAN ALLISON:

Yes, it was job performance. They did a study on successful CEOs and they used different metrics in terms of business productivity, etc., etc., to determine who was, what performing meant.

MAJ HANRAHAN:

Are people born with certain levels of emotional intelligence?

(RET.) LT COL MEGAN ALLISON:

So yes, people have a, some people have a naturally higher or lower emotional intelligence, but it's actually the one skill that can be worked on. So, unlike your IQ, which is the same at age five or the same at age 55, and your personality, which really is matured and kind of determined in your teens and 20s, emotional intelligence is about one skill that can be developed over your lifetime, and you can do that through mentoring and coaching, taking an assessment, and then making positive impacts along the way.

MAJ HANRAHAN:

Yeah, and you mentioned kind of four factors that equal emotional intelligence. Kind of with that in mind, what are indicators that somebody has high emotional intelligence?

(RET.) LT COL MEGAN ALLISON:

Okay, so like I mentioned earlier, EI really consists of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. So those that have high EI are self-aware, they know their strengths and their weaknesses, they tend to pause, they control their thinking, they learn from when they have an emotional hijacking, and we've all had one, it's when you're driving down the road and someone cuts in front of you and you do some things that maybe you wouldn't normally do, but those with high EI, they're honest, they're authentic, they show empathy, they apologize, they forgive, and they recognize how important emotions are. So many times we try to say, hey, let's box that up and put that elsewhere, it doesn't belong in the workplace, but those with high EI realize that emotions are just that. They're emotions, they happen, good or bad.

MAJ HANRAHAN:

And I'm getting ahead of myself a little bit here because we're gonna eventually get into stuff where we're gonna talk about introverts and extroverts, but do you see a difference with emotional intelligence between introverts and extroverts?

(RET.) LT COL MEGAN ALLISON:

That's an interesting question. It's not one that I have seen, and no, very introverted people can be extremely emotionally intelligent and vice versa. So I don't think it's necessarily that dichotomy playing out in emotional intelligence.

MAJ HANRAHAN:

And ma'am, you also mentioned some of those effective ways that someone, that people can work to enhance or improve their emotional intelligence. Have you found any of these to be better than others, or it just depends on how you approach those different, those means to improve your emotional intelligence?

(RET.) LT COL MEGAN ALLISON:

So there are several assessments that can be taken to indicate your current emotional intelligence. They usually cost a fee, but then once you know, you can then work on certain strategies to increase areas that you may be weak at, and having an accountability partner or a mentor or someone to check in on how you're doing is a really important step in improving your emotional intelligence, because just because I have a strategy with self-management, let's say, and I'm gonna count to 10, if my husband comes in and sets his hand on my shoulder when I'm about to blow up, that then I go, oh, okay, that's one way to do it.

LT COL BRANDIE JEFFRIES:

And this is Brandie. This may be jumping ahead a bit too, but I think this is really the connection between some of the other assessments that you can take, like the personality assessments that just give you a good baseline of the way that you approach the world in general, and then surrounding yourself with people who might take different approaches, so that you can kind of see the balance between the two.

PERSONALITY PROFILE

MAJ HANRAHAN:

Great point there. Thank you, thank you for that. Obviously, there's different ways you can, one can work to improve or enhance their emotional intelligence, and one of those may be, like you said, ma'am, is to get that foundation, that foundational baseline, such as taking a personality profile test. I'm sure many of our listeners have heard about personality profile test and many have taken them, maybe even through the military, but even for our non-military listeners, I think this is a very common practice, throughout the corporate world as well. So if I could ask this, what exactly is a **personality profile** and why is it important?

LT COL BRANDIE JEFFRIES:

Yeah, sure, so this is Lieutenant Colonel Jeffries again, hopping in, so, personality assessments, I like to say that they're both fun and educational. Some of them are,

capture personality traits and they're things that are very measurable, and some of them are more descriptive in nature, but from a leader development perspective, which is kind of where the two of us sit right now, they basically help us sort to the core of who we are so that we have a better understanding of ourselves, and again, this is how it ties in to that first skill of emotional intelligence of self-awareness.

MAJ HANRAHAN:

And are there any tests that you have found to be more effective than others, or I'm assuming there's pros and cons to all these different tests.

LT COL BRANDIE JEFFRIES:

Yeah, so there's really two different camps when it comes to assessing personality. You kind of have your **quantitative assessment field**, and those are things that are typically measured on a bell curve, and they show where different personality traits for an individual fall against normative behavior. If you've ever heard of anyone talking about the Big Five, or trait theory of personality, or the five-factor model, these are all trait-based assessments that are numeric in nature and they measure how much of a trait someone has. They're beneficial in some cases, even when you're looking at things like accessions, or who to hire for the right kind of a job.

The other camp is really the **qualitative or descriptive type assessments**, and these are the ones that for the purposes of, I think the conversations we have with leaders and just out and about when we're doing some coaching and consulting type of work, I think these actually have a lot, a greater benefit, if you will. These actually allow you to enter into a group discussion where people can practice introspection, they can practice a little bit of self-awareness. They can look at themselves to figure out sort of what makes them tick from a wiring perspective, and really, the gold standard in industry is the **Myers-Briggs Type Indicator**. That's really sort of the gold standard on the qualitative side of the house.

MAJ HANRAHAN:

And ma'am, before we jump into the Myers-Briggs, you mentioned something about how we hire folks, whether that's in the military or the corporate world, that's kind of interesting. I never thought of it that way. Is that being done anywhere, where folks are taking personality profile assessments or something else where they're trying to determine an individual's emotional intelligence in the hiring process?

LT COL BRANDIE JEFFRIES:

Absolutely. There's several of the big Fortune, even 100 companies, I believe, are using qualitative type assessments just to kind of find the right fit for the right person, but I will say that the [Army](#) has been using this on the enlisted soldier accession side for a while, using an assessment called TAPAS [Tailored Adaptive Personality Assessment System], to basically give them a greater factor of where to place a new recruit into the Army, and they're looking at it from a very strategic perspective in terms of retention. If you can place a person where they are gonna have the greatest chance of, not only success but job satisfaction, then why not use it to hire? So they actually run the [ASVAB](#) [Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery] and this TAPAS to make that determination.

MAJ HANRAHAN:

That's fascinating, ma'am. I'm not very familiar with TAPAS. Could you provide a little bit more background on that?

LT COL BRANDIE JEFFRIES:

So I'm not a TAPAS expert, but I will tell you that it is based on the five-factor model, so it's a trait-based assessment. It's grounded in the Big Five factors, so it's, happy to provide the listeners with links and things like that that you can post out with it. Yeah, it's something that they have dabbled around with, and I will say too, even in some pockets of the Air Force, like on the Battlefield Airmen accession side of the house, they've played with numbers as well to make certain predictions about Airmen entering, for example, the PJ pipeline.

MAJ HANRAHAN:

What are they seeing through these assessments? I mean, if they had some time to kind of evaluate how well those assessments have worked out post-hiring.

LT COL BRANDIE JEFFRIES:

Well, not to my knowledge, but I will say that this is something that has to be looked at over a long period of time. I mean, if you're talking about retention numbers, you really have to kind of watch the numbers for 10 years or so to really know if it's making an impact. Happy to do some additional research on that for you. I am really not a trait specialist. I think both Megan and I fall closer on the side of the MBTI and the typology piece of it.

MAJ HANRAHAN:

Yes ma'am, so, we'll move back into that. Just was curious on that piece. So one of the tests that many military members have taken, or folks have taken, is [16Personalities](#), and obviously non-federal endorsement here, but could you offer a little bit of a background on this particular test?

LT COL BRANDIE JEFFRIES:

Sure, so this 16Personalities assessment is actually available for free online, which makes it accessible to our students and to a lot of the populations we go out and work these types of assessments with. We tell people that it's an MBTI-like assessment, in that it provides you a typology-based result. If you've taken it, you'll know that it provides you a five-letter indicator. The first four of those letters are very closely tied to Jungian's theory of personality, and they are the four dichotomies that the MBTI also assesses against. The reason that I believe we like this one is because there are no bad personality types when you look at this type of assessment.

So, there's 16 total and all of them have strengths. They all have inherent weaknesses, and if you are talking about group dynamics or team dynamics, it really just gives you sort of a better understanding of everyone's, where they're coming from, how they make decisions, how they process information, why they may or may

not be providing you work in what you would consider a timely fashion, things like that, so it just kind of helps better understand how people approach life in general.

MAJ HANRAHAN:

And if you know, ma'am, how did they come up with 16 personalities? It seems to be somewhat arbitrary. Was this just based on lots and lots of research and kind of conducting studies over the years?

LT COL BRANDIE JEFFRIES:

So the 16 personalities are derived from the four pairs of opposites. So there's four different measures with **typology**. There's the extrovert versus introvert, sensing versus intuition, thinking, judging, I'm sorry, thinking and feeling, and then judging and perceiving. And so when you take those four combinations and you arrange them, you can, you come up with 16 possible arrangements of letters, if you will. So that's where the 16 comes from. Megan, you want to add anything to that?

(RET.) LT COL MEGAN ALLISON:

No, I think you covered it. I think we're gonna go through the pairs here, but she's exactly right, yes. Four dichotomies arranged in four different ways, so 16. So that's where 16 personalities comes from.

MAJ HANRAHAN:

Could one of you walk our listeners through kind of what those four pairs of opposites are? Probably a little bit of detail on the differences between them.

INTROVERT (I) VS. EXTRAVERT (E)

LT COL BRANDIE JEFFRIES:

Sure, and I think the best way and potentially the most entertaining way for the listeners is for Megan and I to bounce this back and forth because when she and I take this assessment, with the exception of one dichotomy, we are complete opposites, which is an awesome pairing for individuals who work together, as long as you understand one another, which is why this is so important.

The **extrovert and introvert dichotomy**, I think the biggest myth about that particular dichotomy, is that introverts are shy and that's really not it at all. This dichotomy really has to do with how individuals receive energy, and I know that seems kind of cosmic, but if you think about walking into a room full of people and having to present maybe, your extroverted folks, or your people who prefer the extroversion over introversion, they're actually gonna be energized by that, by the opportunity to do that. They're gonna feed off of the crowd, if you will. They're gonna get their energy from mingling and talking to many people. Your introverts, on the other side, they're more of your reflective type, and while they will still have a great time socializing and they'll still rock the house giving a briefing, it can be draining for them. So they like to step back from the situation and have some time to reflect, and then they go right back to engaging. It's really this energy-based approach, and again, really has nothing to do with the level of shyness or not being shy someone has. Both Megan and I are extroverts, by the way [chuckles].

(RET.) LT COL MEGAN ALLISON:

I think my favorite comparison with extroverts and introverts is extroverts talk, think, talk, where introverted preferences, think, talk, think. Your extroverted preferences are your interrupters who are excited and yeah, when Brandie and I talk, we're interrupting each other the whole time as we get our ideas out, whereas my husband who's an introverted preference, will take a pause, and I'll start talking and he'll go, "I'm not done yet." I was like, "Oh, I'm sorry, you paused. I thought you were done." [Maj Hanrahan: chuckles]. So, just one example there.

INTUITIVE (N) VS. OBSERVANT (S)

MAJ HANRAHAN:

It's fascinating insights, thank you. So moving on to the second pair, I think.

(RET.) LT COL MEGAN ALLISON:

So the S and the N preference, even though intuition starts with I, N is the letter they use, and that's really

how you take in information and it's how you trust the information that you get. I am an S, and so I like facts, I like things to be concrete, I like details, data, and I like it in a step-by-step fashion, whereas Brandie, if you wanna talk about being an N.

LT COL BRANDIE JEFFRIES:

That's right, I tend to be more of a big picture kind of a person, so because of that, my preference is to always look for patterns behind things, to try to make associations to where maybe something looks similar in a different domain that can be pulled to a different domain, and as to where Megan kind of likes the one, two, three, step-by-step, if left to my own devices, I look like sort of a bouncy ball that you throw into an empty room. I can ping sort of all over the place, trying to develop the best idea, and it's always forward-looking. I like to tell people that Megan is my, she's gonna keep me out of trouble, with, if I have a question, she knows what instruction to point me towards, so she's my AFI girl. If you need someone that can think long range and do strategic planning and ask for the waivers to the AFI, that's really more of your intuitive types.

(RET.) LT COL MEGAN ALLISON:

Yes, very much so, and I guess we should point out that isn't, that the breakout is like 70/30, so--it is.

LT COL BRANDIE JEFFRIES:

Most of the population is sensing, an S, whereas 30% of the population is that N preference. And an example I use for that is it's a harder dichotomy to kind of get your head around, and I noticed it the most when teaching the leadership core curriculum in Air Command and Staff College. We get the books. I want to do the readings. I want the, each reading that is assigned, and then I want to pull the main points out from there. Well, I had a student who was an N preference and she goes, "I love this overarching theme" and "how you have this thread that goes through all of them," and I was like, "Huh, I don't think that way." On a personal level, my husband

wants to talk about where we're heading in 10 years and I'm like, what's for dinner tonight? So a very, just a very different approach on taking in info.

(RET.) LT COL MEGAN ALLISON:

Absolutely, my husband's an S too and I'm an N, and I'll have ideas, and when I talk to him about my ideas, it's very much so vision-oriented, like this thing is gonna be wonderful because it's gonna create X, Y, and Z, and he's looking at me almost like pulling a balloon down from the air going, "Okay, but tell me, what you're gonna do first to get there?" What's the first step, and that's hard for me to do sometimes. I like to cast ideas and have no idea how I'm gonna necessarily get there.

MAJ HANRAHAN:

That concludes part one of our interview on emotional intelligence and personality profiles with our two guest experts, Lieutenant Colonel Megan Allison, U.S. Air Force, retired, and Lieutenant Colonel Brandie Jeffries, U.S. Air Force. Be sure to tune in to part two for the continuation of this interview, where we further explore the four pairs of opposites within the 16Personalities profile assessment and additional tips from our guest experts on how you can better understand your personality profile and ultimately increase your emotional intelligence. If you like this episode, please let us know with a review on Apple Podcasts. We'll see you on the next episode.

[upbeat music]

ANNOUNCER:

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GLOSSARY

- **AFI:** Air Force Instruction
- **ASVAB:** Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery
- **CEO:** chief executive officer
- **EI:** emotional intelligence
- **EQ:** emotional quotient
- **IQ:** intelligence quotient
- **MBTI:** Myers–Briggs Type Indicator
- **PACE:** Profession of Arms Center for Excellence
- **PJ:** Pararescue
- **TAPAS:** Tailored Adaptive Personality Assessment System