

The Tim Smal Show - 14 May 2020 transcript

Frank James talks about his comedy sketches based on The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator.

Tim Smal (host): Hi folks and welcome to the show. My name is Tim Smal and my guest today is Frank James. Frank has a YouTube channel where he does personality comedy sketches, so we'll be chatting to him today about those videos. Frank, welcome to the show.

Frank James (guest): Tim, thank you so much for having me. I am really looking forward to having a conversation with you.

Tim: Awesome. Now Frank, you're very into "personality typology." Could you tell the listeners about what that is, and why you're interested in it.

Frank: Yeah. So typology is a way of, basically, grouping people based on... different typology systems have different ways that they do this, so I focused mostly on Myers-Briggs. And the way that that categorises people is, not so much based on traits or behaviour, but is based on inclinations of how people see the world, how they perceive things and then how they make decisions. So that's Myers-Briggs. There's also other typology systems that we can get into - they have different different methods of typing people, but yeah, that's my bread and butter, Myers Briggs.

Tim: Yeah, so Myers-Briggs has 16 different personality types and you base a lot of your comedy sketches on Myers-Briggs. Can you tell us more about these comedy sketches?

Frank: Yeah. So I mean, it's just taking any kind of situation that people could maybe relate to, or maybe a parody of something. And I look for concepts for videos where it's like, you can see a wide breadth of reactions to one thing or one situation. And it all started back with "the types at a job interview": basically, the 16 different ways that you could ruin a job interview – the 16 ways that you would not want to do a job interview, blowing these personality types a little bit out of proportion.

Tim: Yeah, you've done a couple of really good sketches. So "16 personalities at a job interview", "on a coffee date", "calling customer service", "playing Monopoly", "at the doctor's office" - even some more recent variations like "social distancing", "as moms in quarantine" and even "16 personalities react to 16 personalities"... you gotta love that one, hey?

Frank: Yeah, I was really proud of that one... the layers going into it. I think it's a general kind of genre on YouTube to make videos like "types of... blah blah blah." So then, just bringing that to Myers-Briggs, you got 16 personalities built in – so in some ways, it does part of the work for you.

Tim: Now according to Myers-Briggs, I identify with the type "ENFP", so whenever I watch your videos, I always have to laugh when the ENFP comes up. So for example, in the 16 personalities at a job interview sketch, if I can remember correctly, the ENFP gets questioned about all the gaps on his resume. I always have to laugh at the ENFP because I can really relate to that. I think there was another video... I can't remember which one now, but I always love the way ENFP dresses - it's always a very, kind of a, casual, carefree kind of, dress sense, if you will. So would you be able to, kind of, type me, in a way, just to give an example to the listeners of what an ENFP would be like as an

individual?

Frank: Yeah. In the most broad senses, an ENFP is gonna be someone who is generally gonna get bored easily. They always want new things – and not new things like in the physical world, but they always want to be like, latching onto, kind of, newer... new abstract things. Like you with your podcast: you have a bunch of different guests that you bring on from all walks of life, because you just want to keep gathering these different ideas really.

And the second part of your personality, is that, it's all about, what do you like - it's very subjective. Like, “what do you think is good, what do you like?” So the ENFP is very fun. They're generally fun people to be around, because they're always going from one thing to the next and they're always all about “having a good time for themselves”, “creating a good vibe within themselves” that then can spread to other people. So I know that's like, a very general start to it.

But the other side of the ENFP, like the weakness is that, they are really not good at organising. When it comes to things in the actual physical world, you probably will struggle with just getting it all in order. No one really likes doing chores, a lot of people struggle with it. But for an ENFP, that's like their weak spot – is just getting the cabinets organised or making the bed. So yeah, that's my sketch of an ENFP.

Tim: Yeah and I find all those chores so boring – that's the main reason why I don't want to do them, because I just find them so boring. And I guess that's part of my personality, because I am somebody that loves fun. And I guess that's why I'm also just attracted to your channel because you're taking something like “personality” and you're turning it into something fun and relatable. So for the folks that have never really looked into this, they can go and watch your videos and start to learn about, what some might consider a fairly serious topic – but have a lot of fun with it right?

Frank: Yeah and I think that is the way to go about it when it comes to something like this. Because before I did “personality types”, or before I had done the comedy sketches, I had been on YouTube for a while, doing more like “educational kind of videos”– which I still do now, but I was doing basically that before. And you have to get someone who already wants to learn to click on a video where I am in a bit more of a “teaching mode.”

But when it's a comedy sketch – yeah, they're just able to laugh at it. But then they could pick up on – I mean, they're just stereotypes, basically – but they can pick up on that to begin with and then be like “Oh, that type reminds me of my brother or my husband or whatever.” And then from there, they can be like “Well, let me read a little bit more about this. Let me learn what makes this type like this, what makes it different than other types.”

So yeah, you're right there, that it's a good way of bringing people in. And maybe they just watch it for a laugh, but maybe it can actually – in a roundabout way – teach them a thing or two, or at least lead them to wanting to learn more.

Tim: Yeah, your work is certainly very entertaining and I always look forward to watching the latest sketch that comes out. So for example, today you released “16 personalities up all night” which was pretty funny, because I actually didn't sleep very well last night. So I was watching it and I think the ENFP kicked off the show. And he was talking about going to sleep and then he remembered that he had to feed his cat. And I was just laughing because I have a cat and I was like “Yeah, ENFP starting off the show today.”

Frank: Yeah, the ENFP is always a good one to start with because we usually... so me and Holly, my writing partner, will usually give ENFP the wildest, goofiest joke or scenario. So yeah, it's funny that you haven't been sleeping well – I've haven't been sleeping well either, so that's, sort of, where it came from, the idea.

Tim: Well, let's chat a little bit about the scriptwriting process. When you started doing these sketches, I imagine you were writing the scripts on your own and then somewhere along the way, you got Holly to start helping you writing the scripts. Tell us more about what that process has been like for you.

Frank: Yeah, so Holly has been a viewer of the channel for a while and then we became friends. When she started watching I had, I don't know, maybe 15 thousand subscribers – which sounds like a lot, but in practice on YouTube that's still a very small channel. So we got to know each other and yeah, I did start writing the sketches just all on my own. And one day she sent me a script, without me having ever, you know, said “Hey, write a script.” And she's like “Hey, why don't you see if you like this, if you want it – go ahead and do it.”

And that was the “16 personalities as substitute teachers” because she's a teacher, so she was like “I'll just write what I know.” And it went really well – people loved it. I liked having someone to work with. So I said to her “Hey, why don't we keep doing this.” And so now every week we have a schedule of talking about what we're gonna do next week. She goes away, writes a draft, comes back, we go over it. I edit it and then record it and we do it all over again. So it's been a great partnership so far... I don't know why I said “so far”, but I'm sure it'll be great for a long time.

Tim: And have you enjoyed having the opportunity to, essentially, have yourself freed up to focus a little bit more on the acting side of things?

Frank: Yeah. See, that is the great thing about it, is just the extra time to work on other things. And I also do one to two other videos on my channel a week, which may or may not be comedy – sometimes I do, you know, like I said before, more “educational videos.” So yeah, being able to delegate the script out to someone else has been a great time saver.

Plus I find, I don't know what it is, but I find that I work better when I have a starting point. When someone else gives me a script, it's just easier for me to come up with more jokes too. Because by the end of it, a script can be... it changes, but sometimes it's 30 - 50% stuff that I came up with and it's just easier for me to have a starting point that someone else started. Something about my personality type – I wonder what that is, I don't know...

Tim: Well yeah, speaking about your personality type, what exactly do you identify as, Mr Frank James?

Frank: Well, as far as I can tell, “INFJ” is my personality type. I feel embarrassed talking about it and I don't bring it up in real life. Because even though INFJ is quote-unquote “the rarest type” it's, sort of, like the type almost everyone gets on the tests – you know, with some exceptions. So it makes me feel like... I don't want to sound like I'm just... I don't know... A lot of people get attracted to “the INFJ's are special, INFJ's are rare thing” and I have moved past that, so I don't really talk about it. I've never talked about the rarity or “special thing.” And so I guess, that also leads me to just not bring it up much.

But I think when you can actually look at each type for what they are, and forget about the whole “rarity thing” and like, why each type is so “awesome and special” and actually look

at what the types mean... While it can like rub away some of the magic of it, it actually makes it a lot more useful. So the short answer is INFJ to your question.

Tim: Well, I guess that's where it gets really interesting and what makes MBTI (Myers-Briggs Type Indicator) really interesting, is that their whole concept is that there are eight different cognitive functions. And each person, essentially, has four cognitive functions operating in their brain, I guess. So the theory behind MBTI is that, each of us has a 'dominant function' and an 'auxiliary function'. So those I guess, are the two strongest ones. And then a 'tertiary' and an 'inferior function' – which I guess, are on the lower side. And all four of those work together to, essentially, create a framework for your personality.

And that's why I really like MBTI, because if I think of myself as an ENFP, I'm leading with a dominant function of **extroverted intuition**, so that's something that I can really relate to. And I guess with you as an INFJ – you'll just have to remind me of the dominant function, but perhaps you can speak a little bit about your experience with the cognitive functions of the INFJ.

Frank: Yeah and this all goes back to Carl Jung who first came up with these functions in his book “Psychological Types.” So he laid out the 8 different types and then Myers and Briggs, in the early 1900's – it was the 20's, 30's, 40's, something like that – they took his theory, which honestly, was not very fleshed out. That work “Psychological Types” is very general and difficult to use, like to type people or whatever. So Myers and Briggs took that and made it into a system with the 16 types and made it a bit more structured.

So you mentioned we all have four... you explained it very well – we all have four cognitive functions. We all have “thinking”, “feeling”, “intuition” and “sensing” and we use all four.

And so **thinking** and **feeling** are the ways you make decisions. **Thinking** being “what works, what makes sense” and **feeling** being “what is good, what do I like, what do others like.” And emotion is part of **feeling**, but it's not really the same thing.

Then **sensing** and **intuition** are how we perceive the world. And **sensing** being the actual concrete world – **intuition** being the abstract world of meanings, patterns and concepts.

So you and I being “lead intuitive”... so the INFJ's dominant function is **introverted intuition**. Yours, the ENFP, is **extroverted intuition**. So our main way of perceiving the world for both of us is abstract. But mine is “introverted”, meaning: I'm trying to like, limit the number of meanings I see – I'm trying to draw everything down into like, one abstract pattern or concept, that is kind of, subjective. So it's something that I'm just coming up with for myself.

Whereas, you being extraverted with the intuition, you're trying to find as many different patterns and abstract connections and meanings as possible – it's not personal to you, so you're just going from thing to thing to thing, trying to see how everything is connected. But you're trying to find as many connections as possible. So like, I brought up the example before just like with the radio show: you're just trying to see as many different meanings out there that people have – as many different patterns and connections with what people do in the world.

Yeah so, I mean, it sounds a bit hard to understand at first – when we talk about **intuition**, because those words have common meanings that don't mean what the Myers-Briggs terms actually mean. But when you actually break it down, it's pretty simple: like perceiving

the world first and foremost in an abstract way – like the physical world, the concrete world doesn't matter as much as the meaning underneath it... the patterns underneath it.

Tim: Yeah and I'm certainly fond of some of the resources out there today that help to simplify the concepts or, essentially, introduce newbies to the concepts of Myers-Briggs. So I'm not sure if you've been to truity.com but they seem to have a very easy-to-understand approach – nice pictures, easy wording and you can do the tests there. So I always use this as a starting point if I'm trying to speak to friends or family who really haven't had any experience in personality typology. So do you find these various resources like truity.com for example quite helpful?

Frank: So I haven't dug deep into truity.com as an example, because every site or every teacher of typology is gonna have a slightly different approach, which is one of the problems of typology: is that there's no unifying theory – it's basically like, everyone doing their own thing. But going to somewhere like truity.com is a good place to get your bearings and at least get started.

And what I always tell people is that you have to go out there and look at all these different places you could learn typology and just find something that makes sense for you. Because everyone is teaching something slightly different, slightly different methodology and different goals too – like what they think typology should be used for. And you've got to do something that is gonna make sense for you ultimately.

Tim: Yeah and I guess one of the reasons why I found typology so interesting is that it's helped me to understand other people. So I think we spoke about this – or we touched on it a little bit earlier – but all of a sudden, it starts to make sense why your friends behave the way that they do. Because if somebody is leading with a dominant function of say, **extraverted sensing**, that would be really different to both myself and you.

So all of a sudden, you start to understand why people behave in the ways that they do. And so, what I really enjoy about it is: looking at my friends or colleagues or acquaintances and saying “Oh OK, so that behaviour that I thought was a little bit weird, or a little bit strange or not quite 'my scene' is actually completely understandable.” So if you think of a personality like an ESTP or an ENTJ for example, I would perhaps have looked at their behaviour and gone “Wow, like, I'm not quite sure what that's all about.” And now I can really understand why they behave the way they do.

Frank: Right, yeah exactly. I've found that since I've gotten into typology, I've just become way more patient with people because I realise that, it's not that they're weird – it's just that they have a different personality. And I think, in practical terms, what I have seen this help the most with, are people who are, kind of, argumentative – people who are **thinkers**. You know, you and I, we're **feeling** types, so we can engage in the logic, but it's not our preferred way of making decisions or talking about what we should do.

So when people come along who are **thinkers**, and **thinkers** tend to be more blunt, it used to like, really upset me – it used to make me think “Wow, this person is kind of a jerk” but now I just realise “Oh, no, that's just how they do things.” And they expect me to come back at them and engage in the logic. So I've just started doing that. It's almost like you're trusting the math – it doesn't feel right in the moment, like “Oh man, I really don't like engaging in debate. I don't like doing things that I'm not used to doing. I don't prefer talking in this more blunt, logical way, but I'm just gonna trust that that's what this person wants me to do – hey, it turns out it was right. All I had to do was 'talk their language' and I got

along a lot better with them.”

Yeah, so that's what I think typology can really unlock for everyone: is this better understanding of people. And even like, you talked about an ESTP – someone who has lead **extraverted sensing**... now an ESTP is the exact opposite type from me. So I would have thought before “Oh, you know, how can I relate to this person?” But now looking into it further, I realise “Even though they're the opposite type, we have all of the same cognitive functions.” So in a way, they're who I should be trying to learn things from, because they can do things that I don't do well. Their dominant function is my inferior function, so I need to figure out how to do what they do, a bit more.

And I never expected that – I thought it was just some kind of arcane knowledge so I could group people together in my mind and make sense of why some people were the same, why some people were different. But it's actually had a very practical impact on how I interact with others.

Tim: Yeah and I love the way that you put that, because sometimes when I've tried to speak to friends in my city about typology, they're not always that interested. They might say “Well, I'm not really into that stuff and I don't like putting people in boxes.” But in terms of how you described the last question I asked you, for me that's what I get really excited about, is this idea that: I can actually connect better with the people around me.

Because I can see with all my friends – they've got vastly different personalities. And for a long time it completely baffled me, you know, trying to understand the INTJ or the ISTP, or what not. And now that I have a better understanding, I can connect better with them – have better relationships and do really awesome work with them, when I not only have a better understanding of their cognitive functions and how their brains work, how they interact with the world – but also from my own perspective, in terms of my own personality.

And for me, when I think about those possibilities, in terms of minimising conflict and friction and misunderstanding... and maximizing “awesomeness” – I just get really excited, man.

Frank: Yeah, definitely. I think that's the potential that people miss out on. And you bring up a good point, like people say “I don't want to put people in boxes. Man, people aren't like that”, because they don't really understand what's going on. And yeah, to a degree, you put people in a quote-unquote “box” when you give them a type, but just because someone is a **feeler**, for example, doesn't mean that they don't **think**. Everyone does everything.

And these preferences that we're talking about – they're not 100% of the time that you prefer one thing over the other... it might only be like 55% of the time, but it's still a preference. It's like, just because you're right-handed, doesn't mean that you don't have a left-hand. So once people can understand that – that we're not actually putting people in boxes – we're just trying to understand their preferences... that can be like, the gateway to opening them up to receiving it.

But I totally relate to what you're talking about: people like... they're not open to it, either because of the “box thing” or because MBTI is not scientific. Some people don't have a very good understanding of it, so they think it's just like a horoscope. And that is all wrong – those perspectives are based on like, just not a very deep understanding of what typology is and what it can do for people.

Tim: Yeah and I can certainly understand the skeptic's point of view, because if they are thinking to themselves “Well, you gonna put me in a box – I'm just like the next person and the next person... where is the diversity?” But if you think about it, I could meet somebody else who is an ENFP and they might identify with a different type on the Enneagram or a different outcome on the Big Five Personality Test [different personality typology models]. There's still a lot of variety and there's still a lot of scope for diversity even within say, an ENFP.

And what's also really interesting is that – and I'm sure you would agree with me, that: no one personality is better than the next personality. It's not like “this one is better than that one or what not.” Because ultimately, that's the way you were born – you have this personality... you come into the world and you experience the world a certain way. And so each personality, I guess, has 'pros and cons' – if you wanna put it that way. Like you have your “good side” when you're fully actualized, and you have your, sort of, “darker side”, if you will, or your weaker side, that you can work on, if you become more self-aware. And so it isn't really a competition and no two people really are the same. But the frameworks just help us to, essentially, lead better lives, right?

Frank: Yeah. Well, one of the interesting things is, you can think of it like: instead of, necessarily, a good side or bad side – and you might even think of these preferences as being more like “What do I feel most responsible for? Do I feel responsible for making decisions when it comes to a value system with **feeling**? Or do I feel responsible for making decisions and making sure they're **logical**? Do I feel responsible for the **facts**, which are the sensory observations? Or do I feel responsible for the meanings of them, the **intuition**?”

So when a person becomes like “self-actualized”, as you said – in a way, it's them just taking responsibility for every part of their personality, including their lower functions that they're not naturally going to want to feel very responsible for. So in a sense, if a person becomes very well developed, a very well-rounded individual – they could be an ESTP, but you might not be able to distinguish them anymore from an INFJ because they take responsibility for the **intuition** and the **feeling**, not just the **thinking** and the **sensing**.

So I think that's another way to look at it, to look at typology in a positive way is that: it's not just about “This is my type, I'm stuck with it forever – I'm stuck with these bad things about it.” But you can actually do the work to take on your lower functions and become an all-round better person because of that. Because you're becoming responsible for every area of life.

Tim: Yeah and that's why I think it's a helpful framework, because ultimately I'm sure people out there in the world that are doing really good work – some of the folks that are really excelling and contributing to society – just have a good idea of who they really are, what their strengths are, how they can play to that. And they've put some effort into developing... you know, working those muscles.

And so, speaking of which, some of the good work you've done, is you've launched a merchandise store and a “fun club”. Tell us about some of that stuff.

Frank: Yeah, well, you know, it's the typical YouTube thing. I actually... my artist – my friend Maria who designed my shirts and stuff that I have on sale – she just came to me out of nowhere, I had never met her before and she was like “Here's some designs, you

can sell them.” I was like “Oh, OK.” She was doing the smart thing that the entrepreneur-gurus tell you to do, is just reach out to someone and say “You’ll do something for free.” So that started the merchandise store, where I have several different shirts for sale.

And I think, you know, it’s an interesting thing because you see some YouTube channels... I don’t want to ‘throw shade’ here, but you see a lot of YouTube channels where it just seems like “Why do you have merch?” Like, I don’t understand why someone would buy a t-shirt and it’s like very little effort put into it. But for me, I wanted to make sure that the... when I was selling shirts and mugs and stuff, it didn’t just feel like, you know “Here’s some crap you can buy”, but more like “Here’s how you can feel like more a part of the group – more a part of the channel. You’re already a part of it ‘cos you’re watching, but if you want to have a physical piece of it... here you go.” And we’ve had that store going for several months now and we’ve got a lot of cool designs – some of them we just came out with.

And then yeah, “The Fun Club”... I know you’re into music, so maybe this will interest you: I got the name “Fun Club” from... I got a old Wings album, I got “Red Rose Speedway” from 1973. And on the back of it, it’s like “Join the Wings Fun Club” ‘cos you know, back then they would actually have a letter – a physical letter sent out. And so I was like “Oh, that’s cool.” So I made “The FJ Fun Club” – which is really just an email list that I haven’t utilised very much. But if you sign up for it, you at least get an email on your birthday. So yeah... and you can find links to all that stuff on my YouTube channel.

Tim: Yeah, well I was just going to ask “What’s the best way for folks to get hold of you?” But I guess they just pop onto YouTube, type in “Frank James” and they’ll find you right there. Speaking of my email that I will be receiving on my birthday... I’m looking forward to that. And I’m also looking forward to the eventual release of the ‘ENFP coffee mug’.

Frank: Oh yeah. You know, the ENFPs... they’re always showing up in the comment section. So I think it would be fun to have a series of mugs or whatever with a bunch of different types. So I have got that now in the mind of possible future designs, just for Tim.

Frank: Cool, well Frank it’s been really awesome speaking with you today. I must say before we wrap up that, I think you’re an excellent actor. I’m not quite sure how you are able to change between all these different personalities and clothes and different senses of humour. But I guess, if you check out the videos and all the different personalities put together, you get this really unique, creative, fun experience – so I really encourage the listeners to go and to have a watch.

But in terms of the future and projects coming up in the not-so-distant future – what’s on the cards for Mr Frank James?

Frank: Well Tim, first of all, thank you for your kind words – you’ve been a great host.

What’s coming up next? You know, I don’t really look that far ahead. I’m kinda like gearing up to the point where I can plan out further ahead. But I think, in terms of the “16 personalities videos” we’ve got maybe a few more coming up that have to do with the whole current quarantine and everything – just trying to get a few laughs out of that.

And I’m also gonna be... I started focusing on my channel more about the Enneagram, which is a whole different personality system. So I have done some teaching videos on that. And I think, I’m also going to start a series on MBTI that’s like, just the very basics – like 101 stuff for people who don’t know anything. So that should get started in the next

month, yeah.

So if you head over to YouTube and type in “Frank James” – my face will show up everywhere, that's me. And if you don't know anything about typology and you want to learn more, go ahead and subscribe and I'll be getting some videos out for you soon.

Tim: Awesome man. Well, thanks again. It was really great speaking with you today. And I'm gonna keep following your channel with all the new videos. And I look forward to my birthday email and my ENFP mug. But Frank keep up the good work – really, really awesome speaking with you. And I guess, I look forward to speaking with you again in the future and learning a bit more about the Enneagram .

Frank: Yeah Tim, I'd love to come back on the show – just let me know and we'll make it happen. It's been great, thank you so much for having me.