

Please do not be frightened by this article.

Many of the points are expressed in extreme terms.

Some of the nicest people you know are combos and some of the biggest achievers are combos.

The Combo

POWER

Some people have the ability to be both Detail (Left-brain) Dominant and Generality (Right-brain) Dominant simultaneously. They can concentrate on the detail and see it as part of the overall pattern at the same time. This is a very powerful combination and such people tend to be exceptionally gifted intellectually.

Often, they are brilliant organizers because they can see all the details in relation to the overall picture. Therefore, they will maintain a balance and attend to all the details without losing sight of the ultimate goal. In contrast, a Generality (Right-brain) Dominant will tend to ignore or forget details and a Detail (Left-brain) Dominant will pay undue attention to the details and lose sight of the general plan.

They can have encyclopedic knowledge and work their way through masses of books.

Similarly, the Combo can immediately relate what he is now learning to his general knowledge.

THE NEED FOR PERFECTION

But, this power can be misused by the person subjecting every decision to simultaneous *Detail* and *Generality* forms of analysis. He will analyze a detail, then look at the result of his analysis as part of the whole, reconsider his decision, re-analyze it as a detail, etc., etc., without ever being able to come to a final conclusion.

He will set up a closed-loop circuit of continual re-appraisal of decisions. So, like a motor spinning without a load, he will tend to burn himself out as each decision becomes a major intellectual task of endless analysis.

For example, let's say that someone wants to buy a packet of wafers. He goes to the local Supermarket and sees that there are five different types on the shelves.

The Detail Dominant will scan the shelves, see which one takes his fancy and take it to the check-out.

The Generality Dominant will pick up each one in turn, check their weight and price, work out

best value for money and decide which one is most suitable.

Mr. Combo will pick the first type, check the weight and cost, calculate its value-for-money, then pick up the second type, check the weight and cost, calculate its value-for-money, then go back to the first packet and look at it again.

Then he will pick up the third type, check the weight and cost, calculate its value-for-money, then go back to the first packet and look at it again. and go back to the second pack and check it over again.

Then he will pick up the fourth type, check the weight and cost, calculate its value-for-money, then go back to the first packet and look at it again. and go back to the second pack and check it over again and check the third pack again.

Then he will pick up the fifth type, check the weight and cost, calculate its value-for-money, then go back to the first packet and look at it again. and go back to the second pack and check it over again and check the third pack again and then check the fourth packet again.

Then he will go back, checking all the packets all over again.

He repeatedly checks all the packets again because each time he looks at a packet, he sees a different aspect to the problem. There is the make and there is the hashgacha and there is the flavor and there is the shape of the wafer and its color and crispiness and size - for example, if each individual is large, it is quite filling, but if you are going to hand the packet around it will not last long, On the other hand, if the wafer is small, if you are going to hand them around the packet will last longer but each will not be very satisfying.

And so, Mr. Combo stands by the shelves, driving himself nuts over what for someone else would be a trivial problem.

I told this example to someone who I had detected as being a *combo* and he told me that he had needed to buy a new tube of toothpaste that very morning. He had gone to the store and found that they had four or five different types on sale.

Trying to make decision proved so traumatic, he had to leave without buying a tube!

TALKING...TALKING...TALKING

The *combo* is constantly monitoring his feelings and he needs to verbalize his feelings. Usually when I work with people on their reading, I can repeat exercises continually with few interruptions. The *combo* usually has to give a full report on his feelings/mistakes/performance/etc. after each exercise. This means that in the time I can usually do fifty exercises, I can only do about ten with a *combo*.

However, I must be grateful to the *combos* because their accurate feed-back has helped me in my researches tremendously and helped me gain insights and develop new techniques which otherwise would have been impossible.

QUESTIONS...QUESTIONS...QUESTIONS

Because he has immediately relates what he hears to what he already knows and thinks about it, the *combo* is naturally full of good questions. If his parents or teachers have the time and patience and intelligence to listen carefully to his questions, they will appreciate their quality. However, tragically, this is not all that common and often the *combo* just has his questions ignored or even ridiculed. He then loses his self-confidence and can become very confused because he *knows* that his questions are good and he cannot understand why they are rejected.

In later years, the *combo* can become very embittered when he sees from his own studies that his questions are indeed valid.

In shiur, the *combo* can be a big nuisance, because the moment the rebbi opens his mouth, the *combo* has a question. Usually the question is excellent but on a level above that of the shiur.

The rebbi can react in one of three ways. If he is not all that bright or has not prepared well for the shiur, he will simply tell the talmid to keep quiet. The talmid is then effectively quieted and also given to understand that he has asked a dumb question.

If the rebbi recognizes the validity of the question, he might tell the talmid to come to him with the question after the shiur. Usually, the talmid takes this for a hint that the question is dumb and that the rebbi is being kind to him by not exposing his stupidity to the rest of the class.

What the rebbi should do is to explain to the class the depth and relevance of the question but

also show how and why it is not directed to the immediate point and level of the shiur. The *combo* will then understand why his question, though valid, is out of order at the moment. Furthermore, it will encourage him to concentrate on the basic levels of the gemora which he otherwise tends to ignore.

Because of the *combo's* intellectual agility, it can be very difficult to pin him down and accept any sort of advice. Dealing with such a person can therefore be both frustrating and painful because the *combo* usually does seek help and he does want to improve and release himself from the self-destroying prison he puts himself into. However, while rejecting advice after advice, he still clings to you, pleading for help and salvation.

Usually, the result is that soon the relationship sours and the advisor rejects the *combo* with a sad. "*Just leave me alone and do what you like!*" If the advisor tries to impose his advice, the *combo* might snap back with a "*Leave me alone and don't try to run my life for me!*" And soon after he will be back seeking help and advice.

After consultation with *combos*, it seems that the most effective way to deal with an obstinate *combo* is to "*give him over the head and smash him down*" - though gently, of course!

Who do you think you are? Do you know everything? If you have all the answers how come you are doing so badly? Do you really think you know more than I do? How many years have you been teaching people? Just look at yourself - are you anything to be proud of? If you know so much how come you're in this mess and can't get yourself out of it? You rejected X's advice because of whatever and you rejected Y's advice because of whatever and you rejected Z's advice because of whatever. Of course, you know best and they are big idiots for giving their silly advice but look at yourself! Are you any better off now? Did you come up with anything better? Perhaps X, Y and Z are not such fools. Perhaps you should follow their advice and if you won't follow their advice, why should I waste my time giving different advice which you will reject anyway?

THE NEED FOR CONTROL

The *combo* needs to be in total control. When he plays with others, he sets the rules and he has to win. If need be, he changes the rules so that he wins, and calls the others *cheaters* when they keep to the old rules.

In an argument, he has to win and, again, he sets the rules and can change the parameters so that he is right. If he is challenged, he gets more upset than a regular person because challenging him, or proving him wrong is not only proving him wrong, but is challenging the whole "virtual reality" which he has set up - you are trying to destroy his whole world. Therefore, he will defend himself with unusual vigor and might end in him being abusive - to an extent which the original argument did not warrant.

THE PROBLEMS

I. Gemora

Because the *combo* immediately detects inconsistencies with knowledge he already has, the *combo* sometimes fails to pick-up basic vocabulary and learning skills. This is because his questions divert his attention from the basic meaning of the text.

Levi did not do well in his bechina. he did not know some simple words and could not work out a simple text of gemora. I assumed that Levi was new to learning and therefore I suggested that he goes to a yeshiva which would give him experience in basic gemora learning. The yeshiva he did go to referred him to me to check his reading to help him with his poor vocabulary.

I screened his reading-skills thoroughly and found that his reading was much better than expected. Therefore his poor vocabulary could not be explained by poor reading skills. I then asked him to draw the diagrams and he showed up as a combo. We chatted and he told me that he was far from new to learning - that he came from a very orthodox family and had attended cheder, mesifita and yeshiva all his life.

I explained the significance of the combo label and showed him how his problem was not a reading problem but an attitude problem. When he learns Gemora he must first concentrate on determining exactly what the plain meaning of the text is.

Solutions

The *combo* must be trained to enjoy directing his considerable power to the basic interpretation of the text and regarding that as his challenge. These basic interpretations are:-

- a. plain meaning
- b. assumptions
- c. implications.

It might be necessary to train the *combo* in basic sentence analysis - subject, predicate, verb,

object, etc. It might also be necessary to train him how he can extract information from a phrase or sentence by asking the basic questions

Who? What? Where? When? Why? How? By whom? etc.

It is only logical to insist that before you can argue with a person you must first hear and understand what he has said. Therefore, the *combo* should not allow himself to verbalize a question on the text until he has exhaustively analyzed it.

II Making the detail the whole

A *combo* has the ability to give a small detail the significance of the whole.

"You never help me! I have done nothing all day! You never answer my question! I never do anything good!"

They can see a small defect in an object or person and condemn the whole because of it. Often, older bachelors are *combos* who consistently reject possible partners because of small defects they see in them. Similarly, they can be harsh to spouses and children by condemning them totally because of small faults in their behavior/character. They seem to lack appreciation for others because a small failure arouses a complete condemnation, despite past favors. He claims that he does not understand anything - because he is not clear about one small aspect.

A *combo* can therefore be very hard to please. As one dissatisfaction is satisfied, another minor dissatisfaction takes its place, filling the *combo's* horizon just like the first did.

Mr. and Mrs. Horowitz spend thousands of dollars sending their Shimmie to visit his grandparents who lived at the other end of the world.. The grandparents gave Shimmie a wonderful time. When he returned home, the parents did something that displeased him. "You never do anything for me!" The parents were shocked! How could he say such a thing! "We just spent thousands of dollars sending you on such a nice holiday. We didn't send any of you brothers or sisters. Only you! You yourself told how much you enjoyed yourself! How can you say such a thing!" Shimmie replied, "I didn't really enjoy myself. I only went to please you!" The parents felt like picking up their son and throwing him out into the street.

They can ask what seems to be the most irrelevant questions. "What color shoes was Avraham wearing when he went out of Ur-

Chassdim? What did he eat for breakfast? How many camels did he take with?" Who cares? So what? How am I supposed to know? But these questions are important to the Combo because he needs to get the **entire** picture, and he needs those details to complete his picture.

He can be badly smashed by a small criticism – or built up by a small compliment.

Solutions

The *combo* must be taught a sense of proportion. Does a small scratch really make the whole machine useless? Is she really so bad because she has this minor fault

You might need to *give him over the head* -

Are you so perfect? Is right of you do demand perfection from others? Does the machine work properly or doesn't it? So it has gotten a scratch on it! So what! Keep a sense of proportion! Is really important or isn't it? If you think it is important, will you please tell me how and why!

But you always need to show your love and appreciation of him and your acceptance of him as a person. You need to give him jobs and responsibility which show you respect him and know you can give him responsibility and are confident he will do the job.

III Virtual Reality

The *combo* is able to work-out how each individual should react in any given circumstances. He can thereby make his own little world in which he assumes each person reacts as he reckons. Usually, he will be correct. When someone does not behave as assumed, the *combo* can explain the errant behavior so that it fits in with his idea of the reality.

It was the day after Sarah had undergone an operation. Ya'akov and Rivka, Sarah's close relatives were staying in the area but Rivka explained to Sarah's husband, Yitzchak, that they would not visit Sarah. Since it was the day after the operation, obviously Sarah would be in no mood to receive visitors. Yitzchak reckoned that Sarah, who had not seen her relatives for quite a long time, would appreciate their company. However, Rivka insisted that they did not feel it right to take the risk.

That afternoon, Yitzchak visited her wife and told her that Ya'akov and Rivka had felt it better that they do not come to visit. Sarah was shocked and begged Yitzchak to try and convince Ya'akov and Rivka to come because she was feeling low and really wanted company to help cheer her up.

When Yitzchak returned he gave Ya'akov and Rivka the message. "Oh no!" responded Rivka, "Sarah is only saying that because she is afraid that if she admits she does not want to see us, we will be offended. But don't worry. You can assure Sarah that we understand and of course we will keep away as she really wants us to do."

Yitzchak could say nothing to convince Rivka to change her mind. When he visited his wife and told her that they would not be coming she burst into tears because she was so looking forward to seeing her relatives.

Another problem associated with the virtual reality is the fact that any challenge to the reality of the virtual reality is actually a challenge which carries the risk of undermining the whole of the *combo's* carefully worked out world. Therefore, a *combo* will react far more violently to something which does not seem correct to him. For example, if you will tell a *non-combo* an unusual fact, he will probably either accept it or disagree. But the *combo* might become excited and exclaim, "But it can't be like that!" and continue to protest to an extent which does not seem justified to the *non-combo*.

A further result of the virtual reality is that the *combo* imagines that he is a paragon of care and consideration, yet he finds that he does not get on well socially. People do not seem to appreciate his sterling qualities. In fact, he might even be thoroughly unpopular. The reason for this is that unfortunately, what he imagines to be care and consideration does not actually fit in with what the recipient regards as care and consideration (as in the example above)!

Another problem is that they can have two standards. They can insult, because they are telling the truth and you must tell the truth at all cost even if it hurts "That's the way I am and you must accept me for what I am and appreciate that I tell the unvarnished truth." But if you tell him the truth about him . . . Phew! Does he get insulted!!! He does not believe what you say. He questions your expertise and integrity and checks up on you by asking others. But if you question what he says... Phew! Does he get insulted!!!

When arguing with them, they can change their parameters off the argument, but deny that they are changing one iota of what they said originally. If you say white, they will say black - then if you say black, they will say white - and deny that they ever held differently! The only solution is to record the conversation - but even

then they will suspect that you are really tricking them.

They can ask what seems to be entirely irrelevant question, at the oddest of times, when it should be clear to him that you cannot concentrate on his question.

It is erev Shabbos, close to candle-lighting time. You have just put the blech on the stove and are carefully carry the boiling-hot, heavy urn to the blech. "Why is the moon yellow?" Benny asks. You look at him in amazement! But Benny repeats his question and looks at you, expecting you to give him you total attention and oblivious to the fact that you are staggering with you heavy and dangerous load and under the usual erev Shabbos pressure to get everything ready on time.

Solutions

Logically, there are two aspects to the problem. Firstly, the combo has tremendous intellectual power. Because of this, he needs to learn how to control the power.

"When you go to buy a packet of wafers, how much do you stand to lose? How much damage can you do if you make the wrong decision? Is it really worth while standing and worrying over the choice for half-an-hour? The whole packet cost \$1. If you stand there for half-an-hour how much are you losing in wages?"

Secondly, he needs to learn to be sensitive to feed-back from other people.

You want to do him a favor, but does he really want it? What are his feelings on the matter? Listen to how he is reacting to your suggestion. Is he really agreeing or can you detect resistance in his manner? Do you really think that you know what is best for him, better than he knows? And even if you do know better, would you like it if your friend tried to run your life for you?

Other Problems

Apparent Low Intelligence

A combo can seem so dumb! You ask him a simple question and he looks back at you with a blank stare.

"What day is it today?"

He looks at you blankly.

"Noo! What day is it today?"

He continues to give you that blank stare which borders on subnormal intelligence.

Of course, he knows that today is Sunday – but that answer is too simple – the teacher obviously

wants something more – perhaps today is a holiday, or a yorzeit, or what? He cannot think of anything - so he blocks.

Solution

You must create a risk-free zone and encourage him to “just go for it” with no risk of being laughed at.

Weird answers

They can give such weird answers to apparently straightforward questions.

“Who is bigger, a man or a boy?”

He might answer, “A boy.”

Before you call him retarded, ask him why he gave that answer.

He might explain that the word “*man*” is made of level letters but the word “*boy*” has the letter “*b*” which goes up and the letter “*y*” which goes down, so as a graphic unit, it is bigger than the word “*man*”

Ooops! He is right! But who would think of such a thing?

Solution

If he gives “wrong” answers, first ask him how he understood the question and how he is answering it.

Difficult social life with members of the family

All is quiet in the house. The children are playing nicely together or doing their homework. Benny walks in. Within five minutes, it seems that all hell breaks loose in the house. Fighting, screaming, squabbling! Benny denies doing anything to anyone. On the contrary, they all started with him.

*"You **always** pick on me and you **always** blame me for **everything**!"*

Obsessive/Compulsive Behaviour Disorder

Combos with a *detail* (left-brain) tendency might develop the habit to repeatedly re-assess details. This can become a compulsive habit which eventually takes over many aspects of decision-making.

The sufferer needs to be taught how this is caused by mis-control of what is essentially a wonderful and powerful mechanism.

Borderline Syndrome

Combos with a tendency to ADD or ADHD might develop severe lack of self-confidence. Since they are constantly monitoring and analyzing their behaviour, they realize that their behaviour is consistently in error. Therefore they

need constant reassurance and develop the "testing" relationship which is characteristic of the borderline syndrome.

Combos are Manipulators

They will manipulate you to achieve their goals. If you send them to a therapy, they will make themselves "dumb" and have fun manipulating the therapist.

Combos are Survivors

Combos have the ability to utilize resources for their own survival. Part of their strategy is to make themselves appear helpless and become an object of your chessed and sympathy.

They "desperately need" . . .

It is "essential" that you . . . for them

But if you do not supply, they will find someone else who will.

Combos can Kill

It might seem a harsh way to phrase the situation, but once a *combo* has "locked" onto a sympathetic person who can supply their needs, they can "squeeze" the last ounce of chessed from the helper without regard to the helpers own needs.

The *combo* can become a "*cuckoo*", inveigling himself into the helper's family and pushing out the helper's own family, ignoring the toll he is taking on the helper's own health and matrimonial peace.

To survive, the helper must establish firm boundaries beyond which he must not allow the *combo* to trespass. He must *be cruel to be kind*. He must be prepared to face the *combo's* abuse for his being apparently insensitive to the *combos* "*overriding*" needs and be prepared for the *combo* to tell others how the helper is cruel, unfeeling and unsupportive.

Eventually, if the *combo* finds a "*better*" helper, he will tell the second one how the first helper "*never did anything for him!*"

In Illness

When the *combo* is seriously ill, he is an ideal patient. He will tolerate great pain, bear it with a smile and joke with his nurses and express a lot of appreciation.

The more the *combo* recuperates, the less pleasant he becomes.

Once he feels strong enough to get back into control, he becomes less tolerant of pain and discomfort. He then tries to use his manipulative ability to achieve his goals.

Eventually, it becomes almost impossible to keep him happy, because he always focuses onto the negative details, and then he can become very troublesome and even abusive.

The Combo does not believe you

The *combo* has his own ideas of what the truth is. If you confirm his idea of what the truth is, he will be happy. If not, he will turn to anyone else, even if they are less expert than you - or even not expert at all! Then he will quote them against you.

Teasing

Combos can enjoy teasing. They seem to be able to home into what will hurt the other person most and come out with statements like, "*Actually I want to join the army when I am old enough!*"

This seems to be a reaction to a desire for attention. You need to be a good listener for a *combo*. Let him talk and talk and talk and empty himself out of all the thoughts going through his mind that he does not really know how to deal with. Dedicate time for him when he knows he can come to you and he will be able to tell you anything he wants and you will listen.

Solutions

You can criticize a *combo* – but only from a standpoint of love. If he feels that you dislike him, he will hate you.

First build him up!

Give him important tasks which show you trust him and know that he has a lot of good talents.

He can be a fantastic organizer. He is a natural mechanech – give him a boy to tutor.

If there is a local disaster – ask him to go in and help – intuitively he knows what to do and how to do it.

Once he knows you believe in him, you can gently start to guide him to improving his relationships and way of talking etc.

But please do not forget

The healthy *combos* can be fantastic achievers. There is a good chance that one is your employer or the head of your local chess organization.

To work with one, you need infinite patience, enjoy their good points, a good sense of humour, a tough skin, give lots of love - and the chances are that you will get tremendous nachas.

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