

Personality and The Big Five
From *Building Your Brilliance*
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Looking at your personality traits can provide useful information in understanding why you act in certain ways. Personality is defined as patterns of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that make a person unique. Measuring personality and behaviors is best done by looking at individual traits. Currently, the most reliable and scientifically sound theory of personality is the Big Five. It is within the work of the Big Five that researchers have reached a consensus that people vary along five major dimensions that spell the acronym OCEAN.

O for Open to Experience
C for Conscientious
E for Extraversion
A for Agreeableness
N for Neuroticism

NOTE: Neurotic is not the same as being clinically neurotic and the word EMOTIONALITY can be substituted for Neuroticism.

When looking at the categories of personality traits, a person is not strictly one or the other side of the spectrum. Rather it is natural for individuals to exhibit parts of both sides. Carl Jung himself said, “There is no such thing as a pure introvert or extravert. Such a person would be in the lunatic asylum.” Dr. Brian A. Little, author of *Who Are You, Really?*, shares that, “these five traits do not have rigid boundaries: individuals are aligned with each trait on a spectrum, with most of them piled up in the middle of the range and fewer appearing at the extremes.”

Personality and Energy

Reflect on your interactions with others. When are you more energized? Check each trait beneath the major categories of Extraverted and Introverted to see a clearer picture of what energizes you.

Extraverted

- Talkative
- Involved
- Outwardly focused
- “Speak to think”
- Gregarious
- Flamboyant
- May act before you think
- Energized by action

Introverted

- Reflective
- Observant
- Inwardly focused
- “Think to speak”
- Intimate
- Reserved
- Think before you act
- Energized by ideas



Where are you on the continuum of extraversion and introversion?

How does this impact your relationships with others?

How does this impact the completion of your goals?

Personality and Project/Time Management

Reflect on how you manage projects and your time. Place a check beside the traits under each category that describe your relationship with time.

Conscientious

- Resolved
- Decided
- Fixed
- Control
- Closure
- Planned
- Structured
- Definite
- Scheduled
- Deadline



Casual

- Pending
- Wait and see
- Flexible
- Adapt
- Openness
- Open-ended
- Flow
- Tentative
- Spontaneous
- What Deadline?

Where are you on the continuum of Conscientious and Casual?

How can you use this information to better manage your time?

How does it impact completion of projects and work towards goal achievement?

Personality and Thinking

The following categories can be called the “thinking” categories. How does your mind work when gathering and processing new information? Check the traits on each side that describe you.

Open to Experience

- Global
- Future-oriented
- Imaginative
- “Why”
- Big picture
- Possibilities
- Indirect
- Conceptual
- Generalities
- Radical



Closed

- Specific
- Present-oriented
- Realistic
- “How”
- Pieces and parts
- Practical
- Precise
- Facts
- Step-by-step
- Cautious

These dimensions can influence how you go about problem solving. How do they impact the work that you do?

Which do you need to call on to complete your goals?

Personality and Focus Where do you focus your energy when making decisions? Place checks next to the traits that describe your focus when making decisions.

Agreeable

- Informal
- Personal
- Accommodating
- Involved
- Subjective
- Caring
- Values-based
- Collaborative



Disagreeable

- Formal
- Impersonal
- Analytical
- Detached
- Objective
- Strong-minded
- Logic-based
- Competitive

What do you want to pay attention to when “thinking” and problem solving?

Do you rely on one side of the continuum more than the other? Are there times when you would benefit from using one side or the other more than you are currently?

How can you use this information to make sound decisions regarding your goals?

Take a moment to reflect and identify your typical behavior when managing your emotions. Place a check next to those on each side that best describe your reactions to life.

Personality and Emotional Approach How do you react to the events and people in your life? Place checks next to the traits that describe how you typically react.

Neurotic (Emotionality)

- Apprehensive
- Intense
- Expressive
- Concerned
- Modest

Stable

- Optimistic
- Calm
- Composed under pressure
- Detached
- Confident

Take a moment to reflect on which side describes your typical reactions to the emotions of life? Do you go back and forth between the sides or are you mostly on one side or the other?

Is this behavior helping you accomplish your goals?

List the reactors that you would like to rely on more heavily to accomplish your goals. How will they help?

Personality and Stress

Think about what stresses you and how that impacts each of the categories of the Big Five. Are you stressed because you are not able to work using your natural preferences? For instance, are you stressed because you are more inclined to introversion and to complete your goals you are spending time with others?

Exercise: Personality and Stress

Look at each of the Big Five categories and think about your behavior under stress by reflecting on the questions provided.

Energy

What happens in your interactions with others when you are stressed? What could you do to manage your energy so as not to get stressed in this domain?

Project/Time Management

What happens to project and time management when stressed? Which of the behaviors below describe your behavior?

Thinking

What happens to your thinking process when stressed? Do you notice any of the behaviors listed below?

Decision Making Focus

How is your decision making impacted when stressed? Which of the behaviors listed below do you notice when making decisions under pressure?

Emotional Approach

How does your natural way of reacting to stress impact your success?

After considering your typical stressed behaviors, what do you think you can do to manage your stress so it doesn't interfere with your success?

Remember that sometimes our stress behavior rescues you from not so good situations. For instance, when I get stressed, I start to make lists and detailed plans. In fact, I can become a little obsessed with my planning. It is rescuing me out of the chaos I have created. A good question might be: what if I planned a bit more ahead so chaos wouldn't ensue?

The important thing to remember is that you have all these traits within you and can amplify or dial down the traits depending on the goals you are trying to achieve. Personality systems are a great way to understand your behavior and how you typically interact with others. It is never to be used as a way of excusing disrespectful behavior. It is with this information you can reflect on why and how you react to circumstances and how, on average, you tend to behave day-to-day. Looking at this will help you assess your strengths and areas that you may need to stretch and develop to meet your current goals.

What personality traits could you start using in an effort to prevent some of the stress in your life?