



# Personality

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## Definition:

*“Personality is an individual’s unique and relatively consistent patterns of thinking, feeling, and behaving.”*

The word personality comes from the Latin word persona. In the ancient world, a persona was a mask worn by an actor. While we tend to think of a mask as being worn to conceal one’s identity, the theatrical mask was originally used to either represent or project a specific personality trait of a character.

- Personality – an attempt to describe and explain how people are similar, how they are different, and why every individual is unique. It tries to explain the whole person.
- Some people also say that Personality is: “Psychological organization of the individual as a whole and especially to those features that distinguish the individual from others”. It is distinctive patterns of behavior, thought, emotion that characterize each person's adaptation to the situations of life”.
- Personality - A relatively stable set of a characteristic that influences an individual’s behavior.
- Personality is an interaction between biology and environment.

Personality is a complex construct shaped by the interplay between biological factors and environmental influences. On the biological side, genetics play a crucial role in determining traits such as temperament, which can influence how individuals respond to various situations. Neurotransmitters and brain structure also contribute to personality, affecting mood and behavior patterns.

On the environmental side, experiences, upbringing, culture, and social interactions significantly shape personality development. Family dynamics, education, and peer relationships provide contexts in which traits can be expressed or modified. For example, a supportive environment may foster traits like openness and resilience, while a more stressful environment might lead to anxiety or withdrawal.

Overall, personality emerges from a dynamic interaction where biological tendencies interact with environmental factors, creating a unique individual profile that evolves over time. Understanding this interplay can provide valuable insights into human behavior and personal development.

## Personality Characteristics

- **Positive Affect:** an individual's tendency to accentuate the positive aspects of oneself, other people, and the world in general.
- **Negative Affect:** an individual's tendency to accentuate the negative aspects of oneself, other people, and the world in general.

## Personality Assessment

- ❖ The personal interview
- ❖ Direct observation
- ❖ Objective tests
- ❖ Projective tests

Personality assessment encompasses various methods to gauge individual traits and behaviors, with each approach offering distinct advantages.

- **The personal interview** is a qualitative method that involves face-to-face interactions between the assessor and the individual. This format allows for an in-depth exploration of the person's thoughts, feelings, and experiences, providing insights into their personality through open-ended questions and conversational dynamics. Interviewers can adapt their questions based on responses, enabling a more nuanced understanding of the individual's personality and motivations.

Face-to-face meeting designed to gain information about someone's personality, current psychological state, or personal history. There are two types of interview:

- **Unstructured Interview:** Conversation is informal, and topics are discussed as they arise
  - **Structured Interview:** Follows a prearranged plan, using a series of planned questions
- **Halo Effect:** Tendency to generalize a favorable or unfavorable first impression to unrelated details of personality (make a good first impression).

The halo effect is a cognitive bias that causes an individual's overall impression of a person to be influenced by one positive trait. Essentially, when we perceive someone as having one admirable quality (like attractiveness or charisma), we are likely to attribute other positive qualities to them, even without evidence.

The term "halo effect" was coined by psychologist **Edward Thorndike in the 1920s**. He observed that military officers' evaluations of soldiers were often influenced by their overall impressions rather than objective criteria.

The halo effect operates on the principle that our minds tend to make quick, generalized assumptions based on limited information. If we see someone as likable, we may unconsciously assume they are also intelligent, hardworking, or capable.

For example, Teachers may favor students who are engaging or well-spoken, impacting their grading and feedback or a brand known for one high-quality product may gain a halo effect, leading consumers to assume all its products are of similar quality.

- **Direct observation** involves assessing behavior in natural settings, where observers can watch how individuals interact with their environment and others. This method is particularly useful in understanding real-time responses and social dynamics, offering a more authentic view of personality traits in action. For instance, observing someone in a workplace or social setting can reveal patterns of behavior, such as leadership skills or social anxiety, that might not be captured through self-reports.
- **Objective tests** consist of standardized questionnaires that measure specific personality traits through fixed-response formats, such as multiple-choice or true/false questions. Instruments like the Big Five Personality Test and the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI) fall into this category. These tests provide quantifiable data that can be compared across individuals, allowing for statistical analysis and greater reliability. Because they minimize subjective interpretation, objective tests are often used in clinical, educational, and organizational contexts.
- **Projective tests**, such as the Rorschach Inkblot Test and the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT), utilize ambiguous stimuli to elicit responses that reveal underlying thoughts, feelings, and desires. The rationale behind this approach is that individuals project their own unconscious concerns onto the ambiguous images or scenarios presented, thereby uncovering deeper aspects of their personality. While these tests can provide rich, qualitative insights, they often require skilled interpretation and can be less reliable due to their subjective nature.

Each method of personality assessment—personal interviews, direct observation, objective tests, and projective tests—offers unique perspectives and strengths, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of an individual’s personality. Combining these approaches can enhance the accuracy and depth of personality evaluation, catering to diverse contexts and needs.

## Personality Theories

1. **Trait Theory** - understand individuals by breaking down behavior patterns into observable traits
2. **Psychodynamic Theory** - emphasizes the unconscious determinants of behavior.
3. **Humanistic Theory** - emphasizes individual growth and improvement.
4. **Behavioral Theory** – emphasizes Focus on external environment and on effects of conditioning and learning.

## 1. Trait Theory:

“Traits are relatively stable and consistent personal characteristics”.

Trait theory is a prominent framework in psychology that focuses on identifying and measuring individual personality traits, which are considered stable characteristics that influence behavior across various situations. Pioneered by psychologists like Gordon Allport, Raymond Cattell, and Hans Eysenck, trait theory posits that personality can be understood through the assessment of specific traits, rather than through the analysis of dynamic processes like motivations or unconscious conflicts.

Trait theory comprises of:

- Personality Types and Traits
- Identification of Personality Traits

### Personality Types and Traits:

A personality type is a discrete category into which a person can be sorted. A personality trait is an enduring personal characteristic that underlies a person’s reactions to a variety of situations.

### Identification of Personality Traits

- ✓ **Gordon Allport**, one of the earliest proponents, distinguished between common traits (shared among individuals in a culture) and personal traits (unique to the individual), emphasizing that personality is a complex configuration of these traits.
- ✓ **Raymond Cattell** was a key figure in personality psychology, best known for developing a comprehensive model of personality through the use of factor analysis. He identified 16 primary personality factors, which he believed could provide a detailed understanding of individual differences. These factors are often measured using the 16 Personality Factor Questionnaire (16PF).

### Cattell's 16 Personality Factors

1. **Warmth (A):** Reflects how friendly and approachable a person is.
2. **Reasoning (B):** Indicates the ability to think logically and solve problems.
3. **Emotional Stability (C):** Measures a person’s ability to remain calm and stable under stress.
4. **Dominance (D):** Relates to how assertive and controlling a person is in social situations.
5. **Liveliness (E):** Reflects a person's enthusiasm and energy levels.
6. **Rule-Consciousness (F):** Indicates adherence to rules and societal norms.
7. **Social Boldness (G):** Measures confidence in social situations and willingness to take risks.
8. **Sensitivity (H):** Reflects emotional sensitivity and empathy towards others.
9. **Vigilance (I):** Indicates a person's level of suspicion and cautiousness toward others.

- 10. Abstractedness (J):** Relates to how imaginative and abstract a person's thinking is.
- 11. Privatness (K):** Measures a person's tendency to keep their thoughts and feelings private.
- 12. Apprehension (L):** Reflects a tendency to worry and feel insecure.
- 13. Openness to Change (M):** Indicates a person's willingness to try new experiences and adapt.
- 14. Self-Reliance (N):** Measures independence and reliance on oneself.
- 15. Perfectionism (O):** Reflects a tendency toward high standards and organization.
- 16. Tension (Q2):** Indicates a person's level of anxiety and stress.

Cattell's 16 personality factors provide a nuanced understanding of human behavior, emphasizing the complexity of personality traits. His work has laid the groundwork for further research in personality assessment and has influenced both psychological theory and practical applications, such as career counseling and personal development. The 16PF remains a widely used tool in various fields, including clinical psychology, business, and education, to assess personality in a comprehensive manner.

- ✓ **Hans Eysenck** suggests that there are only three bipolar dimensions to personality: extraversion, neuroticism, and psychoticism.
  - **Extraversion-Introversion:** This dimension reflects where individuals draw their energy from. Extraverts are sociable, outgoing, and energized by interactions with others, while introverts are more reserved and gain energy from solitary activities.
  - **Neuroticism-Stability:** This dimension measures emotional stability. High neuroticism indicates a tendency towards anxiety, moodiness, and emotional instability, while low neuroticism reflects emotional resilience and calmness.
  - **Psychoticism:** This dimension relates to aggressiveness and interpersonal hostility. High levels of psychoticism are associated with a lack of empathy, impulsivity, and a propensity for antisocial behavior, whereas low levels indicate more conventional, empathetic behavior.

Assumption of trait stability has led researchers to examine personality traits longitudinally

- ✓ **McCrae and Costa** (1984, 1990) proposed 5-factor model of personality traits:
  - Neuroticism
  - Extraversion
  - Openness to experience
  - Agreeableness
  - Conscientiousness

### **The "Big 5":**

Modern personality research argues for 5 basic personality traits (OCEAN)

- Openness: whether a person is open to new experiences.
- Conscientiousness: whether a person is disciplined and responsible.
- Extroversion: whether a person is sociable, outgoing and affectionate.

- Agreeableness: whether a person is cooperative, trusting, and helpful.
- Neuroticism: whether a person is unstable and prone to insecurity.

## **The Big Five Personality Traits (OCEAN)**

### **1. Openness to Experience:**

This trait reflects a person's willingness to engage with new experiences, ideas, and unconventional thinking. Individuals high in openness tend to be imaginative, curious, and open-minded. Some important characteristics are Creativity, appreciation for art and beauty, curiosity, and a preference for variety and novelty.

### **2. Conscientiousness:**

This dimension measures a person's degree of organization, dependability, and goal-directed behavior. High conscientiousness indicates a strong sense of duty and reliability. Some important characteristics are Self-discipline, carefulness, persistence, and a preference for planned rather than spontaneous behavior.

### **3. Extraversion:**

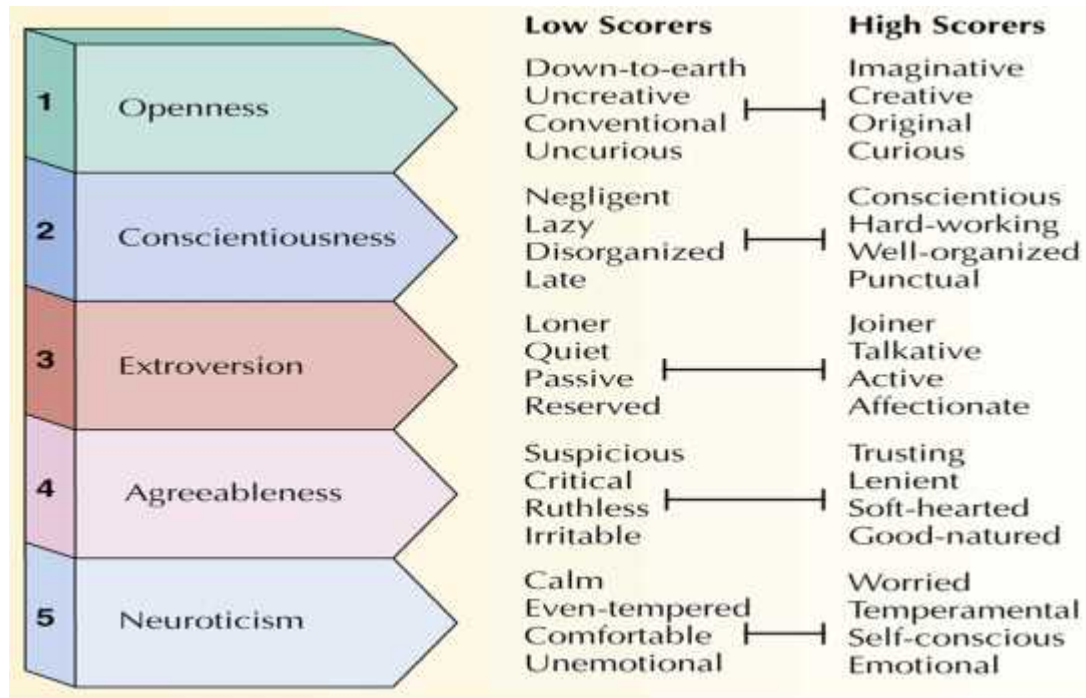
Extraversion reflects the extent to which individuals seek stimulation in the company of others. Extraverts are sociable, talkative, and energized by social interactions. Some important characteristics are Outgoingness, enthusiasm, assertiveness, and a tendency to experience positive emotions.

### **4. Agreeableness:**

This trait indicates a person's propensity for kindness, empathy, and cooperation with others. High agreeableness suggests a person is more compassionate and trusting. Some important features are Altruism, trust, modesty, and a tendency to avoid conflict and seek harmony.

### **5. Neuroticism:**

Neuroticism measures emotional stability and the tendency to experience negative emotions such as anxiety, anger, and depression. High levels of neuroticism suggest a greater likelihood of experiencing stress and emotional instability. Some important characteristics are emotional instability, moodiness, anxiety, and sensitivity to stress.



## 2. Psychodynamic theory

The psychoanalytic perspective of personality, pioneered by Sigmund Freud, emphasizes the interplay of unconscious processes, childhood experiences, and internal conflicts in shaping an individual's personality. At its core, this perspective suggests that human behavior is largely influenced by unconscious motivations, often rooted in repressed memories and unresolved conflicts from early development.

Personality theory contending that

“Behavior results from psychological forces that interact within the individual, often outside conscious awareness”.

- Theory of Personality
- Method of Therapy
- Technique of Investigation

Freud developed his theories based on intensive clinical studies of individual cases – women with hysterical symptoms.

### Personality structure

Freud introduced the structure of the mind, dividing it into three components: the id, which represents primal instincts and desires; the ego, which mediates between the id and reality; and the superego, which embodies moral standards and societal expectations. This dynamic interaction leads to various defense mechanisms, such as repression and denial that protect the individual from anxiety.

- **Id:**

The id's unconscious psychic energy constantly strives to satisfy basic drives to survive, reproduce, and aggress. The id operates on the pleasure principle: It seeks immediate gratification.

To envision an id-dominated person, think of a newborn infant crying out for satisfaction, caring nothing for the outside world's conditions and demands. Or think of people with a present rather than future time perspective—those who often use tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs, and would sooner party now than sacrifice today's pleasure for future success and happiness (Keough et al., 1999).

- **Ego:**

As the ego develops, the young child responds to the real world. The ego, operating on the reality principle, seeks to gratify the id's impulses in realistic ways that will bring long-term pleasure. The ego contains our partly conscious perceptions, thoughts, judgments, and memories.

- **Superego:**

Around age 4 or 5, Freud theorized, a child's ego recognizes the demands of the newly emerging superego, the voice of our moral compass (conscience) that forces the ego to consider not only the real but the ideal. The superego focuses on how we ought to behave. It strives for perfection, judging actions and producing positive feelings of pride or negative feelings of guilt. Someone with an exceptionally strong superego may be virtuous yet guilt-ridden; another with a weak superego may be wantonly self-indulgent and remorseless.

Because the superego's demands often oppose the id's, the ego struggles to reconcile the two.

It is the personality "executive," mediating the impulsive demands of the id, the restraining demands of the superego, and the real-life demands of the external world.

Violence, the exertion of physical force to injure or destroy. Always accompanied by emotion of anger or hostility. Which may or may not be consciously perceived. Can be expressed, suppressed or repressed.

The three aspects of personality inevitably come into conflict with each other

Conflict = anxiety

However, much of this conflict is unconscious due to defense mechanisms. In Psychodynamic Theory,

- Goals are not so ambiguous.
- Focused
- Not so intensive



- Less intensive therapist training
- Flexible

### 3. Humanistic Theory

Humanistic theory, often associated with psychologists such as **Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow**, emphasizes the inherent goodness of people and their natural drive toward self-actualization and personal growth. This perspective contrasts with the more deterministic views of psychodynamic and behavioral theories.

Humanistic psychologists contended that the most important factor in personality is the individual's conscious, subjective perception of his or her self.

“A theory that asserts the fundamental goodness of people and their striving toward higher levels of functioning”

Humanistic personality theories reject psychoanalytic notions:

- Humanistic theories view each person as basically good and that people are striving for self-fulfillment.
- Humanistic theory argues that people carry a perception of themselves and of the world.
- The goal for a humanist is to develop/promote a positive self-concept.

Approach that focuses on human experience, problems, potentials, and ideals

- ✓ **Human Nature:** Traits, qualities, potentials, and behavior patterns most characteristic of humans. . It encourages understanding people in the context of their experiences and relationships.
- ✓ **Free Choice:** Ability to choose that is NOT controlled by genetics, learning, or unconscious forces. Humanistic theory emphasizes that individuals have the power to make choices and take responsibility for their actions. This belief in free will is fundamental, as it posits that people can actively shape their lives and personalities.
- ✓ **Subjective Experience:** Private perceptions of reality. Humanistic theorists prioritize individuals' subjective experiences and perceptions. They emphasize understanding how people view their world and the meanings they attach to their experiences.
- ✓ **Self-Actualization (Maslow):** This is the process of realizing and fulfilling one's potential and capabilities. Maslow posited that self-actualization is the highest level of psychological development, where individuals achieve personal growth and a sense of purpose. Individuals who are self-actualized tend to be creative, autonomous, and able to appreciate life. They often seek meaningful experiences and relationships.

#### **Hierarchy of Needs:**

**Maslow's Hierarchy:** Abraham Maslow proposed a five-tier model of human needs, often depicted as a pyramid:

- **Physiological Needs:** Basic needs such as food, water, and shelter.

- **Safety Needs:** Security, stability, and protection from harm.
- **Love and Belongingness Needs:** Social connections, love, and acceptance.
- **Esteem Needs:** Recognition, self-esteem, and respect from others.
- **Self-Actualization:** The need to realize one's potential and pursue personal growth.

According to Maslow, individuals must satisfy lower-level needs before they can focus on higher-level needs.

- ✓ **Peak Experiences:** Temporary moments of self-actualization.
- ✓ **Self-actualizing tendency:** According to Rogers, the drive of human beings to fulfill their self-concepts, or the images they have of themselves.  
Maslow suggested that self-actualization is the highest level of psychological development, where individuals achieve personal growth and a sense of purpose. Individuals who are self-actualized tend to be creative, autonomous, and able to appreciate life. They often seek meaningful experiences and relationships.
- ✓ **Unconditional positive regard:** In Roger's theory, the full acceptance and love of another person regardless of his or her behavior. Rogers emphasized the importance of unconditional positive regard in fostering personal growth. This concept refers to accepting and valuing a person without conditions or judgments, which creates a supportive environment for self-exploration and development.
- ✓ **Conditional positive regard:** In Roger's theory, acceptance and love those are dependent on another's behaving in certain ways and on fulfilling certain conditions. Rogers argued that many individuals develop conditions of worth, leading them to seek approval based on meeting external standards rather than their true selves. This can hinder personal growth.

#### 4. Behavioral Theory

According to the behaviorists, learning can be defined as

“the relatively permanent change in behavior brought about as a result of experience or practice.”

The focus of the behavioral approach is on how the environment impacts overt behavior.

Remember that biological maturation or genetics is an alternative explanation for relatively permanent change.

Behaviorists are not interested in the conscious decision of the individual to disrupt, modify, or go against the conditioning process; they are only interested in that aspect of feedback that connects directly to overt behavior.

Behavioral theory, primarily developed in the early to mid-20th century, focuses on observable behaviors rather than internal mental states. This perspective emphasizes that all behaviors are learned through interaction with the environment and can be modified through various conditioning processes. The key concepts and principles of behavioral theory:

## 1. Learning through Conditioning:

- **Classical Conditioning:** Introduced by Ivan Pavlov, this concept refers to the learning process in which a neutral stimulus becomes associated with a meaningful stimulus, eliciting a conditioned response. For example, Pavlov's experiments with dogs demonstrated how a bell (neutral stimulus) could trigger salivation (conditioned response) when paired with food (unconditioned stimulus).
- **Operant Conditioning:** Developed by B.F. Skinner, this theory focuses on how behaviors are influenced by their consequences. Positive reinforcement (rewards) encourages the repetition of a behavior, while negative reinforcement (removal of unpleasant stimuli) can also strengthen behaviors. Punishment, on the other hand, aims to decrease undesirable behaviors.

The behavioral learning theory is represented as an S-R paradigm. The organism is treated as a "black box." We only know what is going on inside the box by the organism's overt behavior.

## 2. Reinforcement and Punishment:

- **Reinforcement:** Any consequence that increases the likelihood of a behavior being repeated. It can be positive (adding a rewarding stimulus) or negative (removing an aversive stimulus).
- **Punishment:** Any consequence that decreases the likelihood of a behavior being repeated. It can also be positive (adding an unpleasant stimulus) or negative (removing a pleasant stimulus).

## 3. Observable Behavior:

Behavioral theory emphasizes the importance of studying only what can be observed and measured. Internal thoughts, feelings, and motivations are generally not considered significant for understanding behavior.

## 4. Environmental Influence:

Behaviorists argue that the environment plays a crucial role in shaping behavior. External stimuli can trigger specific responses, and learning occurs through interactions with the environment.

## 5. Habit Formation:

Behaviors are seen as habits that can be developed through consistent reinforcement. Over time, repeated behaviors can become automatic and ingrained. The feedback loop that connects overt behavior to stimuli that activate the senses has been studied extensively from this perspective.