

# DPP-EN

Personality. Big 5

Dorin Stanciu

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## Abstract

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“Man’s main task in life is to give birth to himself, to become what he potentially is. The most important product of his own effort is his own personality.”

Erich Fromm<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Erich Fromm (“Erich Fromm,” 2020), American psychologist, born in Germany (1900-1980)

## The Big Five personality traits

Note: this lecture content on Big 5 borrows heavily from the corresponding Wikipedia entry<sup>2</sup>, but why reinvent the wheel when the Wikipedia article is a very good synthesis of Big 5.

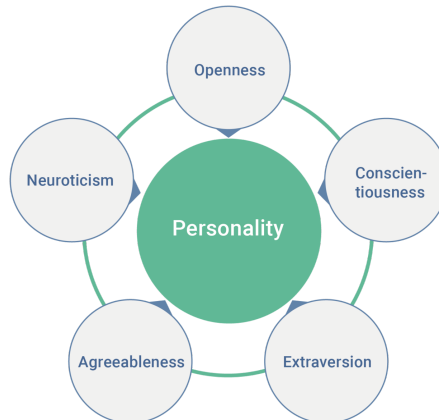


Figure 1: The Big Five Model (By Anna Tunikova for peats.de and wikipedia)

### Overview

- aka as the five-factor model (FFM) and the OCEAN model;
- developed from the 1980s onwards;
- developed in psychological trait theory;
- is a suggested taxonomy, or grouping, for personality traits

### Factors in Big 5

- openness to experience (inventive/curious vs. consistent/cautious);
- conscientiousness (efficient/organized vs. extravagant/careless);
- extraversion (outgoing/energetic vs. solitary/reserved);
- agreeableness (friendly/compassionate vs. challenging/callous);
- neuroticism (sensitive/nervous vs. resilient/confident);

### Description of Big 5 factors

1) Openness to experience

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<sup>2</sup>Big Five personality traits

- overview of *openness*
  - a general appreciation for art, emotion, adventure, unusual ideas, imagination, curiosity, and variety of experience.
  - intellectually curious, open to emotion, sensitive to beauty and willing to try new things.
  - more creative and more aware of their feelings.
  - more likely to hold unconventional beliefs.
- high openness
  - can be perceived as unpredictability or lack of focus, and more likely to engage in risky behavior or drug-taking.
  - are said to pursue self-actualization specifically by seeking out intense, euphoric experiences.
- low openness
  - seek to gain fulfillment through perseverance and are characterized as pragmatic and data-driven—sometimes even perceived to be dogmatic and closed-minded.
- Sample items
  - I have excellent ideas.
  - I am quick to understand things.
  - I use difficult words.
  - I am full of ideas.
  - I am not interested in abstractions. (reversed)
  - I do not have a good imagination. (reversed)
  - I have difficulty understanding abstract ideas. (reversed)

## 2) Conscientiousness

- Overview of *conscientiousness*
  - a tendency to display self-discipline, act dutifully, and strive for achievement against measures or outside expectations.
  - related to the way in which people control, regulate, and direct their impulses.
- high conscientiousness
  - often perceived as being stubborn and focused.
- low conscientiousness

- associated with flexibility and spontaneity,
- can appear as sloppiness and lack of reliability.
- additional notes
  - High scores on conscientiousness indicate a preference for planned rather than spontaneous behavior.
  - The average level of conscientiousness rises among young adults and then declines among older adults.
- Sample items
  - I am always prepared.
  - I pay attention to details.
  - I get chores done right away.
  - I like order.
  - I follow a schedule.
  - I am exacting in my work.
  - I never forget my belongings.
  - I always end up being helpful to most things.
  - I often remember where I last put my things.
  - I give attention to my duties.

### 3) Extraversion

- Overview of *extraversion*
- *extraverts*:
  - breadth of activities (as opposed to depth),
  - surgency from external activity/situations,
  - energy creation from external means.
  - pronounced engagement with the external world.
  - enjoy interacting with people,
  - often perceived as full of energy.
  - tend to be enthusiastic, action-oriented.
  - they possess high group visibility, like to talk, and assert themselves.
  - may appear more dominant in social settings (as opposed to introverted people in this setting).
- *introverts*:
  - have lower social engagement and energy levels than extraverts. tend to seem quiet, low-key, deliberate, and less involved in the social world

- need less stimulation, and more time alone than extraverts.

#### Notes on *introversion*

- > Their lack of social involvement should not be interpreted as shyness or depression; instead they are more independent of their social world than extraverts.
- > This does not mean that they are unfriendly or antisocial; rather, they are reserved in social situations.

- *people are a combination of extraversion and introversion* (see Hans Eysenck about the basis of the individual differences).
- Sample items
  - I am the life of the party.
  - I do not mind being the center of attention.
  - I feel comfortable around people.
  - I start conversations.
  - I talk to a lot of different people at parties.
  - I do not talk a lot. (reversed)
  - I think a lot before I speak or act. (reversed)
  - I do not like to draw attention to myself. (reversed)
  - I am quiet around strangers. (reversed)
  - I have no intention of talking in large crowds. (reversed)

#### 4) Agreeableness

- Overview
  - general concern for social harmony.
- Agreeable individuals
  - value getting along with others.
  - generally considerate, kind, generous, trusting and trustworthy, helpful, and willing to compromise their interests with others.
  - have an optimistic view of human nature.
- Disagreeable individuals
  - place self-interest above getting along with others.
  - generally unconcerned with others' well-being,
  - less likely to extend themselves for other people.

- sometimes suspicious, unfriendly, and uncooperative.
- often competitive or challenging people, which can be seen as argumentative or untrustworthy.

Note: discuss the relationship agreeableness - leadership > *Goes both ways*

- Sample items
  - I am interested in people.
  - I sympathize with others' feelings.
  - I have a soft heart.
  - I take time out for others.
  - I feel others' emotions.
  - I make people feel at ease.
  - I am not really interested in others. (reversed)
  - I insult people. (reversed)
  - I am not interested in other people's problems. (reversed)
  - I feel little concern for others. (reversed)

## 5) Neuroticism

- Overview
  - the tendency to experience negative emotions, such as anger, anxiety, or depression.
  - sometimes called *emotional instability* (or stability).
- According to Hans Eysenck's (1967) theory of personality:
- neuroticism is interlinked with low tolerance for stress or aversive stimuli.

**Note** Neuroticism is a classic temperament trait that has been studied in temperament research for decades, before it was adapted by the FFM.

- high neuroticism
  - emotionally reactive and vulnerable to stress.
  - more likely to interpret ordinary situations as threatening.
  - can perceive minor frustrations as hopelessly difficult.
  - tend to be flippant in the way they express emotions.

- Their negative emotional reactions tend to persist for unusually long periods of time, which means they are often in a bad mood.

The text below is a verbatim quote from the source article (I place it without any paraphrasing because it is very clear and concise and it conveys an important message):

"For instance, neuroticism is connected to a pessimistic approach toward work, to certainty that work impedes personal relationships, and to higher levels of anxiety from the pressures at work. Furthermore, those who score high on neuroticism may display more skin-conductance reactivity than those who score low on neuroticism. These problems in emotional regulation can diminish the ability of a person scoring high on neuroticism to think clearly, make decisions, and cope effectively with stress. Lacking contentment in one's life achievements can correlate with high neuroticism scores and increase one's likelihood of falling into clinical depression. Moreover, individuals high in neuroticism tend to experience more negative life events, but neuroticism also changes in response to positive and negative life experiences. Also, individuals with higher levels of neuroticism tend to have worse psychological well being.

At the other end of the scale, individuals who score low in neuroticism are less easily upset and are less emotionally reactive. They tend to be calm, emotionally stable, and free from persistent negative feelings. Freedom from negative feelings does not mean that low-scorers experience a lot of positive feelings.

Neuroticism is similar but not identical to being neurotic in the Freudian sense (i.e., neurosis.) Some psychologists prefer to call neuroticism by the term emotional instability to differentiate it from the term neurotic in a career test."

- Sample items
  - I get irritated easily.
  - I get stressed out easily.
  - I get upset easily.
  - I have frequent mood swings.
  - I worry about things.
  - I am much more anxious than most people.
  - I am relaxed most of the time. (reversed)
  - I seldom feel blue. (reversed)

## References

Erich Fromm. (2020). *Wikipedia*.