

ALTRUISTIC PERSONALITY SCALE

Reference:

Rushton, J. P., Chrisjohn, R.D., & Fekken, G. C. (1981). The altruistic personality and the self-report altruism scale. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 1, 292-302.

Description of Measure:

A 20-item scale designed to measure altruistic tendency by gauging the frequency one engages in altruistic acts primarily toward strangers. Participants answer on a 5-point scale ranging from Never (0) to Very Often (4).

Abstracts of Selected Related Articles:

Krueger, R. F., Hicks, B. M., & McGue, M. (2001). Altruism and antisocial behavior: Independent tendencies, unique personality correlates, distinct etiologies. *Psychological Science*, 12, 397-402.

The relationship between altruism and antisocial behavior has received limited attention because altruism and antisocial behavior tend to be studied and discussed in distinct literatures. Our research bridges these literatures by focusing on three fundamental questions. First, are altruism and antisocial behavior opposite ends of a single dimension, or can they coexist in the same individual? Second, do altruism and antisocial behavior have the same or distinct etiologies? Third, do they stem from the same or from distinct aspects of a person's personality? Our findings indicate that altruism and antisocial behavior are uncorrelated tendencies stemming from different sources. Whereas altruism was linked primarily to shared (i.e., familial) environments, unique (i.e., nonfamilial) environments, and personality traits reflecting positive emotionality, antisocial behavior was linked primarily to genes, unique environments, and personality traits reflecting negative emotionality and a lack of constraint.

Eisenberg, N., Guthrie, I. K., Cumberland, A., Murphy, B. C., Shepard, S. A, Zhou, Q., & Carlo, G.(2002). Prosocial development in early adulthood: A longitudinal study. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 82, 993–1006.

Consistency of measures of a prosocial personality and prosocial moral judgment over time, and the interrelations among them, were examined. Participants' and friends' reports of prosocial characteristics were obtained at ages 21–22, 23–24, and 25–26 years. In addition, participants' prosocial judgment was assessed with interviews and with an objective measure of prosocial moral reasoning at several ages. Reports of prosocial behavior and empathy-related responding in childhood and observations of prosocial behavior in preschool also were obtained. There was inter-individual consistency in prosocial dispositions, and prosocial dispositions in adulthood related to empathy/sympathy and prosocial behavior at much younger ages. Interview and objective measures of moral reasoning were substantially



interrelated in late adolescence/early adulthood and correlated with participants' and friends' reports of a prosocial disposition.

Fulker, D. W., Neale, M. C., Nias, D. K. B., & Eysenck, H. J. (1986). Altruism and aggression: The heritability of individual differences. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 50, 1192-1198.

Five questionnaires measuring altruistic and aggressive tendencies were completed by 573 adult twin pairs of both sexes from the University of London Institute of Psychiatry Volunteer Twin Register. The questionnaires measured altruism, empathy, nurturance, aggressiveness, and assertiveness. The intraclass correlations for the five scales, respectively, were .53, .54, .49, .40, and .52 for 296 monozygotic pairs, and .25, .20, .14, .04, and .20 for 179 same-sex dizygotic pairs, resulting in broad heritability estimates of 56%, 68%, 70%, 72%, and 64%. Additional analyses, using maximum-likelihood model-fitting, revealed approximately 50% of the variance on each scale to be associated with genetic effects, virtually 0% with the twins' common environment, and the remaining 50% with each twins' specific environment and/or error associated with the test. Correcting for the unreliability in the tests raised the maximum-likelihood heritabilities to approximately 60%. Age and sex differences were also found: altruism increased over the age span from 19 to 60, whereas aggressiveness decreased, and, at each age, women had higher scores than men on altruism and lower scores on aggressiveness.

Scale:

Using the following scale, please select the category that conforms to the frequency with which you have carried out the following acts.

1	2	3	4	5
Never	Once	More than once	Often	Very Often

- 1.) I have helped push a stranger's car that was broken down or out of gas.
- 2.) I have given directions to a stranger.
- 3.) I have made change for a stranger.
- 4.) I have given money to a charity.
- 5.) I have given money to a stranger who needed it (or asked me for it).
- 6.) I have donated goods or clothes to a charity.
- 7.) I have done volunteer work for a charity.
- 8.) I have donated blood.
- 9.) I have helped carry a stranger's belongings (books, parcels, etc).
- 10.) I have delayed an elevator and held the door open for a stranger.
- 11.) I have allowed someone to go ahead of me in a lineup (in the supermarket, at a copy machine, at a fast-food restaurant).
- 12.) I have given a stranger a lift in my car.
- 13.) I have pointed out a clerk's error (in a bank, at the supermarket) in undercharging me for an item.
- 14.) I have let a neighbor whom I didn't know too well borrow an item of some value to me (eg, a dish, tools, etc).
- 15.) I have bought 'charity' holiday cards deliberately because I knew it was a good cause.
- 16.) I have helped a classmate who I did not know that well with an assignment when my knowledge was greater than his or hers.
- 17.) I have, before being asked, voluntarily looked after a neighbor's pets or children without being paid for it.
- 18.) I have offered to help a handicapped or elderly stranger across a street.
- 19.) I have offered my seat on a bus or train to a stranger who was standing.
- 20.) I have helped an acquaintance to move households.

Scoring:

Score scale as a continuous measure.

