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Healthy personality pdf

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A study of almost 2,000 Estonians found that open people were less likely to eat a traditional diet (e.g. meat, potatoes, bread) and more likely to eat a healthy diet (e.g. fresh fruit and vegetables, cereals, fish).Similarly, the same researcher found that open Scots were more likely to eat a Mediterranean-style diet (e.g. pasta, oil, vinegar, poultry) and less likely to eat a convenience diet (e.g. canned vegetables, meat pies, sausage rolls).Other papers have found openness to experience to predict consumption of healthy foodstuffs like fruit and vegetables, and nuts, red wine and fiber.The second reason may be that open people, being more intellectually curious, are more cognizant of what they eat. Indeed, openness has been related to higher levels of cognitively restrained eating and to healthy eating beyond just a varied diet, such as avoiding foods flavored with fats. In fact, one paper found that openness was the most consistent predictor of healthy eating behaviors.ConscientiousnessPerhaps the next most consistent predictor of healthy eating is conscientiousness. This trait has always had a strong relationship with health — it is, for instance, a consistent negative predictor of mortality — and it's no surprise that it is related to diet, too.In a meta-analysis of several large-scale longitudinal studies, conscientiousness was found to be the only significant predictor of obesity, with conscientious people being at lower risk and having a higher chance of reverting to non-obesity. Similarly, another paper found that conscientiousness was the only trait to significantly predict BMI (negatively). Several other papers have linked the trait to health indices such as waist size and triglycerides.In terms of eating, conscientiousness has been associated with a diet high in fruit and fiber and low in fat and salt; increased intake of fruit and vegetables; an avoidance of fats and the tendency to swap high-fat foods for low-fat foods; a lower propensity toward binge eating; and reduced alcohol consumption.These findings are ostensibly explained by the higher-order cognitive functions associated with conscientiousness. Conscientious people are better able to plan their diet and refrain from indulgence. As an example, the trait has been found to predict cognitive dietary restraint.ExtroversionThird, the literature suggests that extroversion is a liability when it comes to healthy eating. For example, the trait is associated with higher BMI. One longitudinal study found that weight gain over two years was predicted by extroversion alone.Extroversion is typified by a sensitivity to rewards and an approach-focus, and it is easy to see how indulgent foods play their part here. Brain imaging research has shown that those higher in reward sensitivity exhibit higher activation in their brain's reward circuitry when shown appetizing, as opposed to bland, food. Meanwhile, reward sensitivity has been related to overeating and weight gain.It is hardly surprising, therefore, that extroverts are less likely to avoid meat fats (e.g. burgers, steaks), that extroverts like sweet foods and that extroversion correlates with increased alcohol consumption.However, these findings are not always consistent, suggesting that extroversion may be a less significant predictor of dietary behaviors than other traits.On the other hand, one reason for these inconsistent findings may be the interaction between multiple personality traits. In a review of the neuroscience literature on dietary behavior and personality, researchers demonstrate that obesity is related to lower activity in the lateral prefrontal regions, which are associated with self-control (i.e., conscientiousness), higher reactivity of the reward circuitry (i.e. extraversion), and a weaker link between the two.People with higher reward circuitry benefit from the moderating role of the prefrontal regions. In other words, extroverts may be able to resist unhealthy dietary behaviors when they have high levels of conscientiousness.In support of this, one study found that low conscientious individuals reported more snacking between meals during a stressful period than during a non-stressful period, and another study found that emotional eating was linked to lower conscientiousness.AgreeablenessThe relationship between agreeableness and healthy eating is perhaps the least pronounced. However, it is significant. Low agreeableness has indeed been linked to a higher BMI in midlife and to a greater increase in BMI across the lifespan.The reason for this is likely to be that agreeable people are more likely to "stick to the rules" when it comes to their diet. For example, agreeableness has been correlated positively with vegetable consumption among teenagers, negatively with alcohol consumption, and positively with a diet high in fruit and fiber and low in fat and salt. Agreeable people, being warm and kind, also have more positive attitudes toward healthy diets.While some researchers found a correlation between agreeableness and obesity, the authors suggested that this may simply be because agreeable people are more honest in their self-reporting. However, in the aforementioned Scottish study, agreeableness did in fact correlate with the convenience diet (e.g. sausage rolls, meat pies, etc.). It's feasible that agreeable people are more susceptible to unhealthy foods when they are socially expected.NeuroticismThose higher on neuroticism have been found to have higher BMI in a number of studies, and they suffer from diet-related health problems such as metabolic syndrome.The explanation for this can be found in emotional eating, which has been linked to neuroticism. Emotional eating has its roots in psychosomatic theory — that is, people eat in response to negative emotions such as anxiety, in order to reduce these feelings and instead induce feelings of comfort and safety.So, because neurotic people are more likely to feel negative emotions, they feel a stronger urge to comfort-eat. No wonder that people high in neuroticism consume more sugar and fats, eat less fruit, keep eating after they are full, binge eat and find it hard to avoid food flavored with fat (e.g. butter, cream).Interestingly, Schaefer, Knuth & Rumpel (2011) report that theirs is the only fMRI study to have found neuroticism to be positively correlated with activity in the brain's reward circuits. The stimuli used in the research were chocolate bars; the authors suggest that these are more rewarding for neurotic people since they use them as comfort foods.However, neuroticism has also been associated with unhealthy eating on the other end of the spectrum. Studies have found high levels of the trait among those classified as underweight and those with eating disorders such as anorexia. The likely explanation is that neurotic people have lower self-esteem and feel greater pressure to refrain from eating. Indeed, several studies have correlated neuroticism with restrained eating.What to Do?So how can we use this information to shed a few pounds and fit into our bikinis — or mankinis? Although personality traits are largely stable over a lifetime, there are some short-term fixes. For example, introducing some conscientiousness by eating in a tidier room has been found to make people 47 percent more likely to choose an apple, over some chocolate, for a snack.Beyond the role of personality, Brian Wansink's Mindless Eating identifies a number of fascinating nudges which can help us eat less. For example, we eat less food off of red plates, we eat less food from smaller containers, and we eat less food when there is less variety to it (e.g. fewer flavors). Researchers say they've developed a new test that can be taken online that will determine whether your personality is a healthy one.Share on PinterestThe health of your personality can affect many aspects of your life. Getty ImagesThere's something reassuring and entertaining about investigating our own personalities. After all, they're what make us each unique.But have you ever thought about whether your personality is a healthy one?A new test from researchers at the University of California at Davis claims to identify if you have a "healthy personality" by using 30 facets of the Big Five model of personality traits, which organizes traits into five broad dimensions: extraversion, agreeableness, neuroticism, conscientiousness, and openness."Philosophers and psychologists have speculated on healthy personality functioning for generations," Wiebke Bleidorn, PhD, associate professor of psychology at UC Davis and lead author of the study, told Healthline. "We married these ideas with one of the most common evidence-based models of personality traits in contemporary research: the five-factor model." Bleidorn explains that each of the dimensions in the model has six facets, such as gregariousness and assertiveness for extraversion, which is why the overall model includes 30 traits. "We found that experts can reliably identify a healthy profile of scores on these 30 traits, and that this profile is specific, heritable, stable over time, and positively associated with a wide range of adaptive outcomes," she said.To come to their conclusions, researchers first created a basic trait profile of a prototypical healthy individual. They then used data from seven independent samples of more than 3,000 participants who were college students or experts in positive psychology (the study of what makes life most worth living). The responses were used to test whether the generated healthy profile can be used to assess healthy personality functioning at the individual level.To do this, they computed a healthy personality index for each participant that indicated how similar their own individual personality profile matched the expert-generated profile for the healthy personality."At the practical level, this research shows that a single number can be used to represent psychological health. At a theoretical level, it integrates humanistic and trait theories about personality that have long been seen as competitors. For research, it provides an empirical means to quantify a construct regarded as important by both of these perspectives," Bleidorn said.Bleidorn says the psychologically healthy personality can be characterized by the following traits:capable to experience and express emotionsconfident in their own abilitiesemotionally stablefairly resilient to stressstraightforwardwarmfriendlygenuineShe points out that psychologists and students in the study tended to agree on what traits are healthiest and least healthy. "This suggests that there may be broad agreement about what traits are healthiest regardless of one's training or background," Bleidorn said.As far as whether personality type can affect overall health, she says a lot of existing research shows that personality traits are strong predictors of important life outcomes, including mental and physical health, well-being, and even longevity. "More research is needed to better understand the pathways through which broad personality dispositions, such as, e.g., higher levels of competence or lower levels of anxiety, may lead to be better health outcomes," Bleidorn said. "The current state of evidence indicates that traits may impact health outcomes via both biological (e.g., lower cortisol levels) and behavioral (e.g., fewer risky health behaviors like smoking) pathways."Caroline Clauss-Ehlers, PhD, psychologist and associate professor at Rutgers University, agrees. However, she says cultural context is an important factor."In this study, a lot of what they're talking about is resilience and being able to overcome adversity. Part of what we've been looking at in my research lab is that resilience is also driven by culture context," Clauss-Ehlers told Healthline. "So, what's in the environment that is going to help the person?" she said. "For instance, in New York, there are pockets where there are a lot of cases of asthma and diabetes, so making good choices is important, but also having access to things that make you able to make those choices is important."Share on PinterestResearch shows that personality traits are strong predictors of important life outcomes, including mental and physical health, well-being, and even longevity. Getty ImagesWhile the UC Davis study identified specific traits that are most related to healthy functioning — such as self-esteem, self-concept, clarity, optimism, ability to resist impulses, and regulate behavior — Bleidorn says future research can now focus on interventions designed to improve behaviors related to these traits and healthy functioning. "Keeping in mind that traits are fairly stable and not that easy to change," she added.Clauss-Ehlers believes people can absolutely improve the health of their personality — if they're given the knowledge and awareness to do so. "You can always work toward making good decisions or if you're engaging in behavior that's not good for your health, like smoking or drinking soda all the time. You can work toward changing that, but that often takes resources and support [so you're able] to make an informed choice about having a healthy personality. The economic access and justice piece are critical, and that didn't show up in the study," Clauss-Ehlers said.She adds that personality is always on a continuum. "I don't think it's a black-and-white issue. We may be healthy in one area of our lives and not necessarily healthy in another area," she said. "Someone may be a jogger or work out, but smoke cigarettes."To determine if your personality is healthy, take the UC Davis test online. But Bleidorn says there are a few things to keep in mind. "The healthy profile is a very abstract amalgam, and this research does not preclude the likelihood that people who lead fulfilling and generative lives could have a very different configuration of personality traits," she said. "There are likely a variety of paths to optimal functioning that are missed when the focus is on the healthiest profile, on average."While taking the test or any personality type test, Clauss-Ehlers says to think about context and ask yourself the following questions:Why are you completing the answers the way you are? Are you engaging in certain behaviors because you don't have information to do otherwise? "[Results of the test] are one piece of information, but there are other aspects of information that are important," Clauss-Ehlers said. "Understanding why you have the personality factors that you do, why you make decisions that you do, and what information you have and don't have access to is important, too."

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