

# Do you have a healthy personality? Researchers think they can tell you

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What are the most psychologically healthy personality traits? Scholars have been interested in characterizing the healthy personality as long as they have been trying to understand how people differ from one another.

Researchers from the University of California, Davis have identified a healthy personality prototype in a recent study using a contemporary trait perspective.

They found that the healthy [personality](#) can be described, with a high level of agreement, in terms of the 30 facets of the "big five" model of personality traits. This model organizes personality into five major factors: neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. Scientists have also identified facets for each of these factors that describe more specific kinds of behaviors. In this study, experts and laypeople agreed that a healthy personality consists of low neuroticism along with high levels of openness to feelings, warmth, positive emotions and agreeable straightforwardness.

Their findings were just published in the *Journal of Personality and Societal Psychology*.

"We believe our results have both practical implications for the assessment of and research on health personality functioning as well as deeper implications for theories about psychological adaptation and functioning," said Wiebke Bleidorn, associate professor of psychology at UC Davis, the lead author of the study. "In addition to providing a comprehensive description of a psychologically healthy individual in terms of basic traits, the profile generated and tested provides a practical assessment tool for research on health personality functioning."

The purpose of the research was to address the healthy personality question by generating an expert-consensus model of the healthy person, surveying hundreds of professional personality psychologists along with hundreds of college students from Texas and Michigan. They found a striking agreement among all of these groups in regards to what a healthy personality entails.

"People in general, no matter whether they are [experts](#) or not, seem to have quite a clear idea of what a healthy personality looks like," Bleidorn said.

## **Big five traits associated with life outcomes**

There is also a large body of research showing that the big five traits identified as neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness and conscientiousness are stable, heritable, and predict life outcomes such as health, self-esteem, academic performance, marital quality, and work performance.

Using the big five as a framework and an expert-consensus approach, the researchers first attempted to generate a basic [trait](#) profile of a prototypical healthy individual. In a second step, they used data from seven independent samples of over 3,000 participants 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.

As predicted, individuals with healthy personality profiles tended to be better adjusted as indicated by higher self-esteem, self-concept clarity, and optimism. Individuals with healthy personality scores were also more likely to describe themselves as being able to resist impulses, regulate their behavior, and focus their attention. They also described themselves as being low in aggression and antisocial behavior.

The associations with measures of narcissism and psychopathy yielded a more complex picture, however. Specifically, people with healthy personalities tended to score lower in the maladaptive aspects of narcissism such as exploitativeness but relatively higher in the potentially

adaptive aspects of grandiosity and self-sufficiency. In a similar vein, people with healthier personalities scored low on the maladaptive facets of psychopathy measures such as blame externalization or disinhibition but relatively higher on the more adaptive facets of these scales such as stress immunity or boldness.

Overall, these results provide initial evidence for the convergent and divergent validity of the healthy personality index, researchers said.

Assess your own personality [here](#).

**More information:** [The Healthy Personality from a Basic Trait Perspective](#) (Preprint)

Provided by UC Davis

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