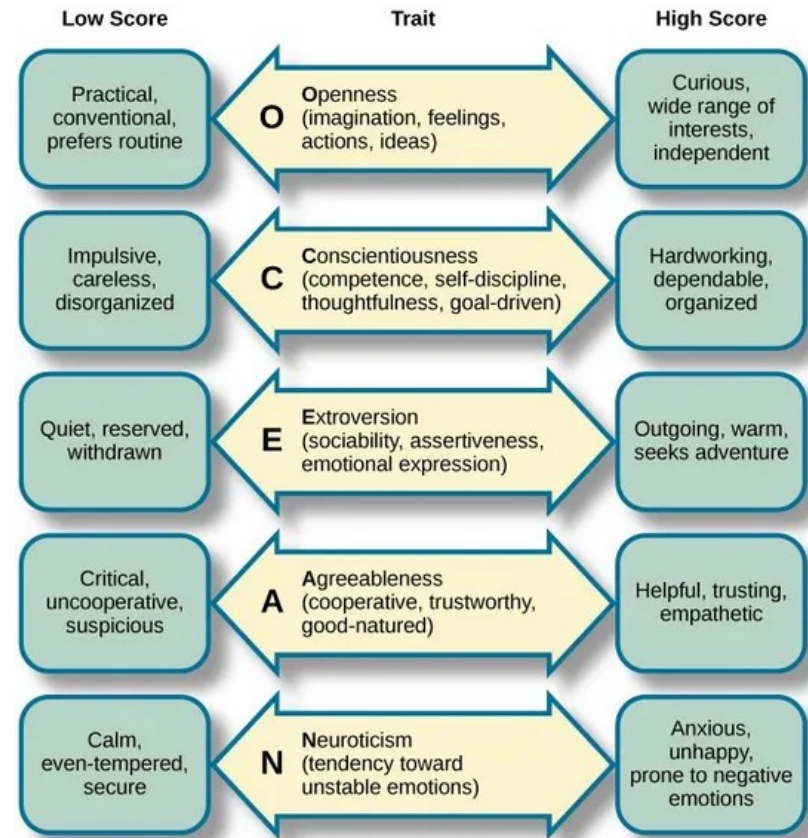


Personality Traits

There is now a great deal of research, across cultures and ranging from infancy to old age, that concludes that there are five durable personality traits which can be observed even in earliest infancy and persist through our lifetimes. These traits shape what we perceive, how we interpret our perceptions, and how we learn from them. We derive our sense of our "self," others, and the world as a consequence. I think the chart here contains some judgments about one end of these scales or the other. It is helpful to recognize, instead, that there are difficulties with either extreme. Here's what the psychologists say:

- The Big Five personality traits are extraversion (also often spelled extroversion), agreeableness, openness, conscientiousness, and neuroticism.
- Each trait represents a continuum. Individuals can fall anywhere on the continuum for each trait.
- The Big Five remain relatively stable throughout most of one's lifetime.
- They are influenced significantly by both genes and the environment, with an estimated heritability of 50%.
- They are also known to predict certain important life outcomes such as education and health.
- An acronym for this set of traits is OCEAN.

To the right is the chart they present, but I disagree with the language and some of the assumptions in it. I do think the studies can be helpful. My own revised version follows.



Personality Traits: Revised by Peg. Take with a grain of salt

Extremes: Difficulties	Tendency	Trait: a continuum	Tendency	Extremes: Difficulties
Stuck, unwilling to change, stubborn, rigid, refusing to accept the new or improved, cannot accept impermanence	Prefers order, stability, continuity	Closed-Open ←-----→ (imagination, feelings, actions, ideas)	Prefers novelty, change, experimentation	Undiscerning embrace of novelty, distractible, scattered energies, lack of continuity or depth, unable to draw on wisdom from the past, chaos
Martyred; focus on task and goals to the point of damaging relationships, rigid, dutiful to the point of harm to self/others	Responsible, self-disciplined, goal and task oriented, dependable	Conscientious-Carefree ←-----→ (competence, self-discipline, thoughtfulness, goal-oriented)	Creative, impulsive, risk-taking, adventurous, unconventional, free in thought and action	Irresponsible, foolish, unmindful of others, unethical untrustworthy, unreliable, amoral
Isolation, paranoia, depression, anxiety, extreme thoughts, behaviors, or emotions which have no corrective. Unable to respond to the needs and expectations of others	Enjoys solitude, finds pleasure in solitary activities. In distress, seeks time alone	introversion-Extroversion ←-----→ (Sociability, assertiveness, emotional expression)	Energized by social interactions, enjoys being in the company of others. In distress, seeks the company of others.	Dependent on social interaction, needy, clinging, may act out to gain attention, approval; fear of being alone/ abandoned.
Uncooperative, irritable, difficult to be with, agitated and easily angered. Refusal to accept situation, others' opinions or agreements. Unsatisfiable, cannot be persuaded. Combative, destructive	Resists situations and ideas proposed by others. Is not easily led or convinced. Maintains a position or view despite others' positions. Does not trust "experts." Does not "go along to get along."	Resistance-Agreeableness ←-----→ (cooperative, trustworthy, easy-going)	Cooperates and collaborates with a situation and the people in it. Finds ways to harmonize with the positions or views of others. Is willing to accept consensus or compromise.	Subject to "groupthink," may collude with injustice or cruelty, may be easily drawn into unhealthy views or dangerous situations. Subject to peer pressure, persuasion, coercion
Stoic, repressed, shut down, unfeeling, distant, unmoved by suffering of others, robotic	Maintains equanimity and stability, even in upsetting situations, calm, self-regulating	Neutrality of emotion/ excitability of emotion ←-----→	Emotions are close to the surface and easily activated. Touched by emotions in others.	Volatile, easily triggered, quick to take offense. Melodramatic or extreme expression of emotions; violent

