

PERSONALITY AND STRESS

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Discussion Topics

1. What Is Personality?
2. Stress and Health Personality Vulnerability Factors
3. Stress and Health Protective Personality Factors

MODELS OF
PERSONALITY,
STRESS, AND
HEALTH

MODELS OF PERSONALITY

Models of Personality, Stress, and Health

- **Biological predisposition model:** biological factors influence a person's responses to stress

Models of Personality, Stress, and Health

- **Health-related behavior models:** how personality factors influence health-related behaviors
 - Personality influences stress-motivated health behaviors either positively or negatively, which in turn affects our long-term health

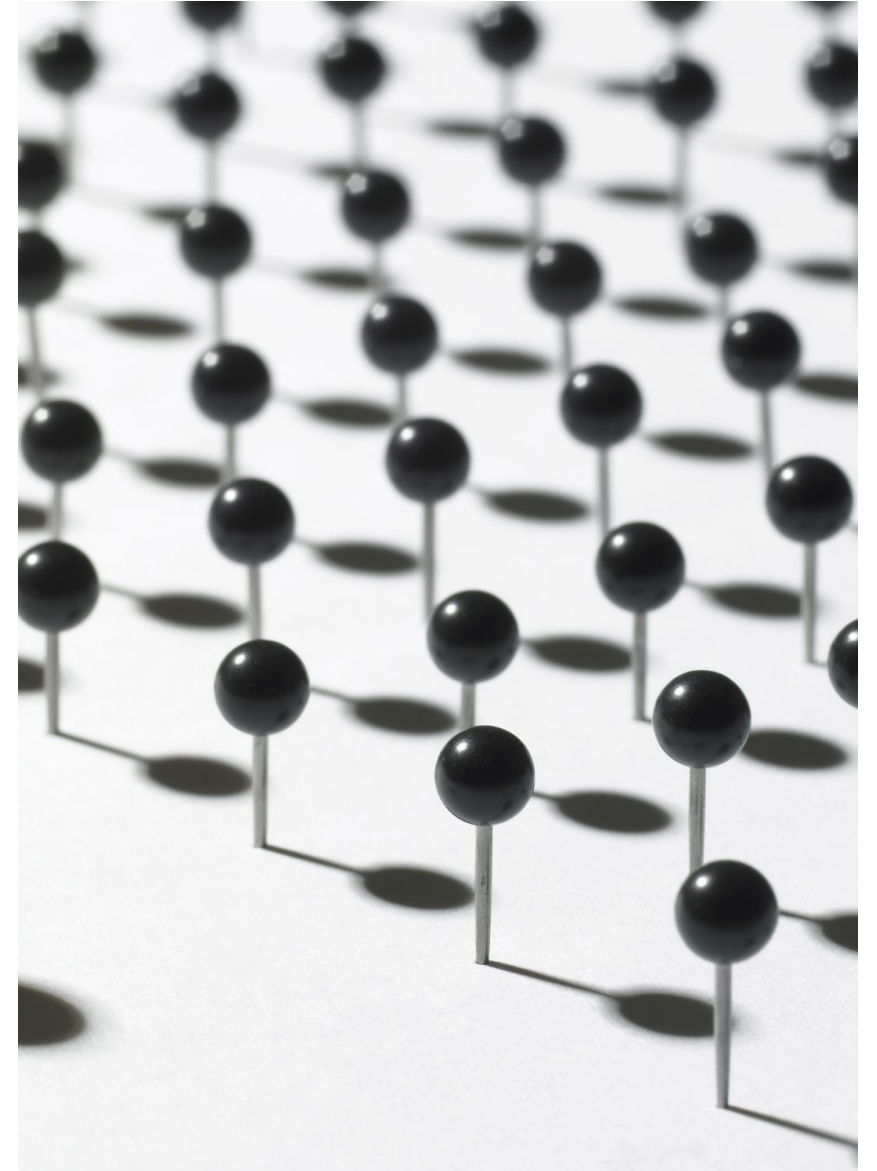
Models of Personality, Stress, and Health

- **Moderation models:** personality influences the strength and direction of relationship between stress and health
 - Personality acts as a buffer against stress or an intensifier of stress

WHAT IS PERSONALITY ?

What Is Personality?

- Personality is the overall enduring pattern of thoughts, emotions, and behaviors that define an individual
 - Personality traits predispose a person to act in a certain way; states are more temporary



What Is Personality?

- Allport established trait theory
- Cattell used factor analysis to determine the major domains of personality
 - Developed the Sixteen Personality Factor (16 PF) Questionnaire



Eysenck's PEN Model

- Eysenck used uncorrelated factors to map the personality
- Found the Big Three supertraits/personality types
 - **Psychoticism:** people with psychoses and also non-psychotic, creative people score high on this type
 - Broadly reflects traits associated with non-conformity or social deviance
 - Unfortunate choice of labeling
 - **Extraversion:** generally a positive connotation; sociable, lively, assertive, etc.
 - Extroverts have greater capacity for environmental stimulation than introverts
 - Both seek out levels of stimulation that support their optimal levels
 - **Neuroticism:** associated with being tense, irrational, and moody
 - High neuroticism corresponds with frequent and intense experience of negative emotion during life stress

Sample questions by Eysenck that assess neuroticism

1.	Do you sometimes feel happy, sometimes depressed, without any apparent reason?
2.	Does your mind often wander while you are trying to concentrate?
3.	Are you inclined to be moody?
4.	Are you frequently “lost in thought” even when you are supposed to be taking part in a conversation?
5.	Are you sometimes bubbling over with energy and sometimes very sluggish?
6.	Are your feelings rather easily hurt?
7.	Do you get attacks of shaking or trembling?
8.	Are you an irritable person?
9.	Are you troubled with feelings of inferiority?
10.	Do you suffer from sleeplessness?

SOURCE: H.J. Eysenck, *Eysenck on Extraversion*, p. 33, New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1973. Used by permission of John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

The Big Five

- Also known as Five Factor Model (FFM)
- Costa & McCrae developed a self-report instrument to measure the Big Five (known as OCEAN)
 - N: Neuroticism
 - E: Extraversion
 - O: Openness
 - Conscientiousness
 - Agreeableness

Table:

- The Big Five Factor dimensions

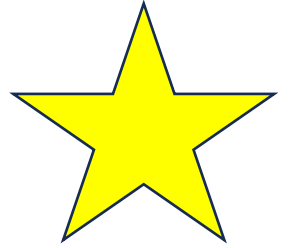
Factor	Description of High Scorer	Description of Low Scorer
Extraversion (E)	Talkative Passionate Active Dominant Sociable	Quiet Unfeeling Passive
Agreeableness (A)	Good-natured Soft-hearted Trusting	Irritable Ruthless Suspicious
Neuroticism (N)	Worrying Emotional Vulnerable Anxious	Calm Unemotional Hardy Self-controlled Sense of well-being
Openness (O)	Creative Imaginative Prefers variety	Uncreative Down-to-earth Prefers routine
Conscientiousness (C)	Conscientious Hardworking Ambitious Responsible	Negligent Lazy Aimless Irresponsible

STRESS AND
HEALTH
PERSONALITY
VULNERABILITY
FACTORS

Neuroticism

- It was once thought that psychological conflicts such as neuroses could cause physical ailments, but there is no supportive evidence
- Neuroticism described with terms such as anxious, tense, low self-esteem, etc.
- Of all personality factors, neuroticism seems to carry the highest risk to health and well-being

Neuroticism

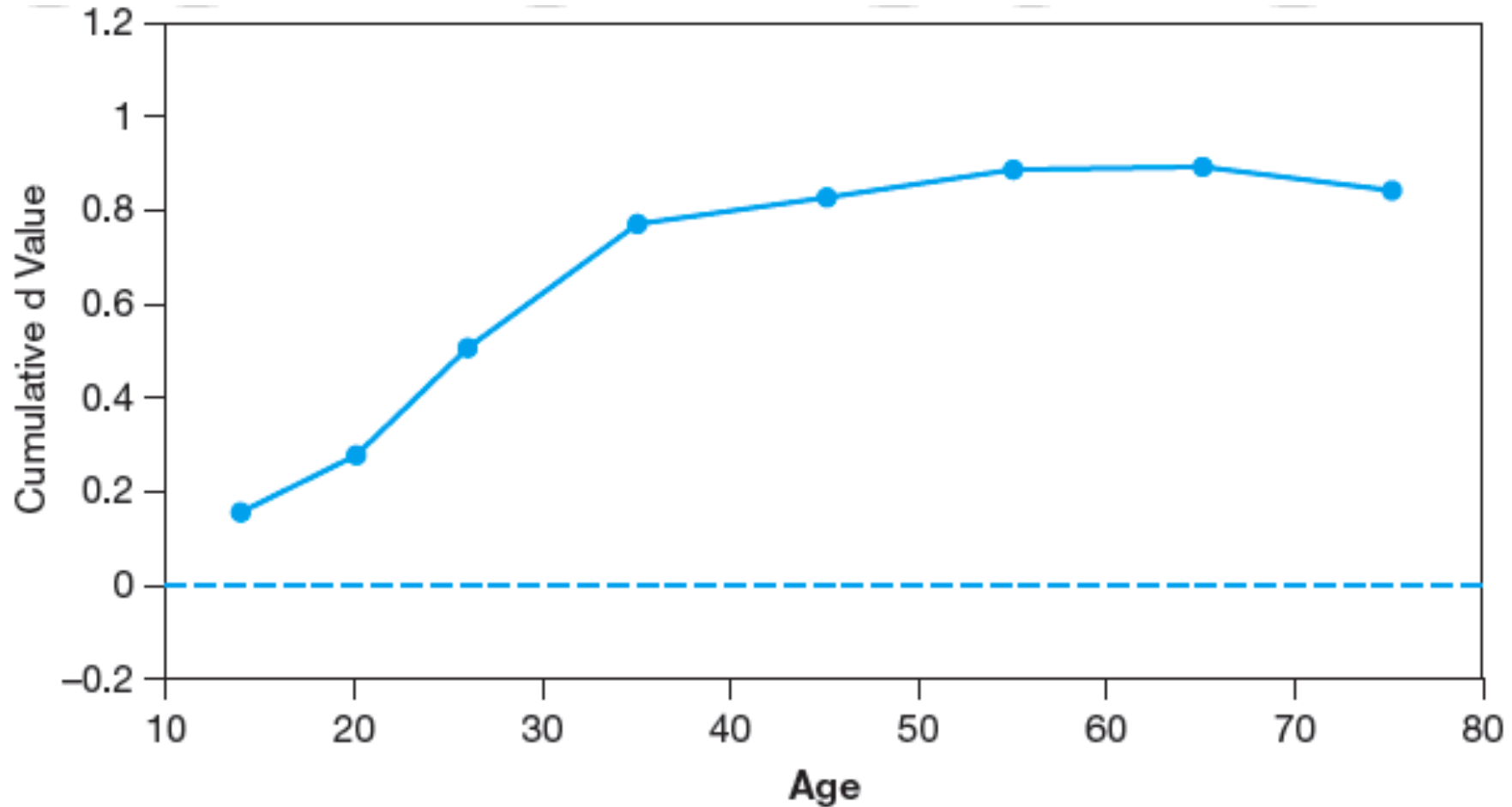


- **Neurotic cascade:** five distinct yet interrelated processes:
 1. **Hyperreactivity:** more likely to react to stressors with more negative affect because it is biologically predisposed
 2. **Differential exposure:** people high in neuroticism often set up scenarios that lead them to experience more hassles or negative life events
 3. **Differential appraisal:** more likely to appraise situations negatively when they are non-threatening and lack confidence to gain control
 4. **Mood spillover:** high neuroticism can lead to rumination which leads to negative emotions beyond the event
 5. **The sting of familiar problems:** flawed solutions to problems are often repeated despite their ineffectiveness; lack of psychological flexibility

Neuroticism (cont'd.)

- People high in neuroticism more likely to develop internalizing disorders
- Mixed evidence for a link between neuroticism and early mortality

Emotional Stability Across the Lifespan. Average standardized mean-level change reported by Roberts and Mroczek (2008). *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 17; 1, 31–35.



The Type A Behavior Pattern

Type A behavior pattern:
exaggerated sense of time
urgency, competitiveness,
and drive

Type B behavior pattern:
opposite of Type A; more
relaxed and easy-going

- Is Type A related to CHD?
 - Early studies showed a link, but later ones did not
 - Some self-reports used early on were weak predictors of CHD

The Type A Behavior Pattern (cont'd.)

- Type A itself not linked to CHD, but its “**toxic core**” is
 - Example: **hostility associated with inflammation** and as a result, CHD
 - **Hostility and anger more likely in men**, and how they deal with it is linked more to CHD
 - Suppressed anger and destructive anger expression, especially in men, are more robust predictors of CHD

STRESS AND
HEALTH
PROTECTIVE
PERSONALITY
FACTORS

Conscientiousness



- Conscientiousness seems to be most protective of the Big Five
 - Linked to health and longevity more than the other traits
 - Highly conscientious individuals may be more likely to engage in healthy behaviors and/or less likely to engage in health harming behaviors
- Biological or moderating variables may play a role in protectiveness

Extraversion



- Extraversion associated with good feelings and happiness
 - Extraverts appear to be more responsive to reward, less deterred by punishment, and experience positive affect for longer periods of time
- Inconsistent results on extraversion's link to longevity
- Extraversion linked to greater relationship satisfaction

Extraversion, Openness and Agreeableness



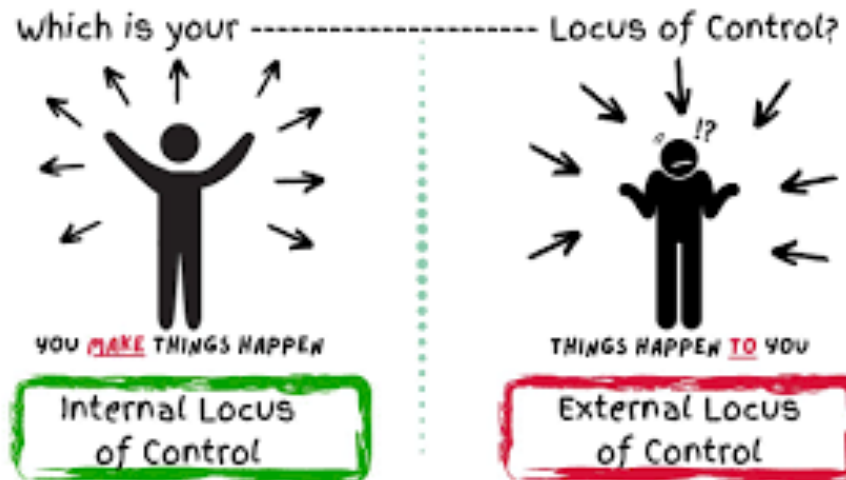
- **Extraversion** and conscientiousness are associated with resilience
- **Openness** may have some health protective effects such as a flexible coping style when dealing with stressors
- **Agreeableness** in conjunction with other factors may lead to increased relationship satisfaction and longevity

Dispositional Optimism



- There is a small to moderate mean effect size for the relationship between health and optimism
 - Very meaningful from a health viewpoint
- Optimists may be more effective at coping with stress and use engagement coping
- Optimism may also be related to lower inflammation levels of the HPA axis

Dispositional Constructs Perceptions of Control



Locus of control: expectancies about our actions and reinforcements that follow

Internal locus of control: actions will lead to predictable outcomes and reinforcements

External locus of control: reinforcements are influenced by external factors (fate, luck, etc.)

Internal locus of control may be related to more healthy behaviors and less psychological stress

Dispositional Constructs Perceptions of Control

- **Hardiness**

- Composed of:
 - **Control:** ability to cope with difficulties and influence outcomes
 - **Challenge:** seeing stress and change as catalysts for personal development
 - **Commitment:** being deeply involved in life's endeavors and one's values even in times of stress
- May buffer stress reactions against illness, but studies are limited to men and may just be from low neuroticism



Summary

- Personality is the enduring pattern of emotions, thoughts, and behaviors that define a person; traits are the characteristics
- Eysenck's PEN model centered on supertraits: psychoticism, extraversion, and neuroticism
- Big Five consists of neuroticism, extraversion, openness, conscientiousness, and agreeability
- Type A behavior pattern is not a reliable predictor of CHD, but hostility and anger are

Summary

- Conscientiousness is protective of health and longevity
- Extraversion is related to positive affect and subjective well-being
- Dispositional optimism seems to have protective effect on health
- Internal locus of control may protect against negative health behaviors