

# Understanding Personality



# Defining Personality

- A person's pattern of thinking, feeling and acting.
- Personality can be divided into layers
  - Conscious- Things we are aware of
  - Preconscious- Things we can be aware of if we think of them
  - Unconscious- Deep hidden reservoir that holds the true "us". All of our desires and fears



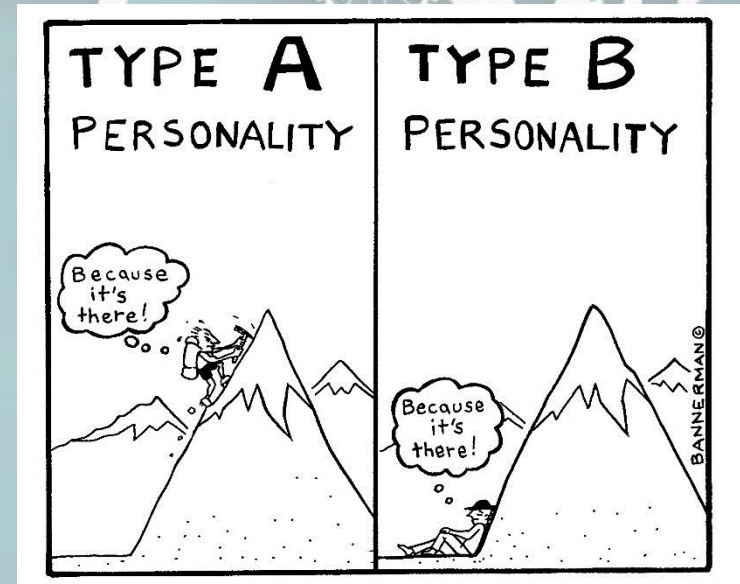
# General Classifications of Personalities

## Type A Personalities

- Feel time pressure.
- Easily angered.
- Competitive and ambitious.
- Work hard and play hard.
- More prone to heart disease than rest of population.

## Type B Personalities

- Relaxed and easygoing.
- But some people fit in neither type.



# Trait Theories of Personality

- Theorists believe that we can describe people's personalities by specifying their main characteristics (traits).
  - Traits like honesty, laziness, ambition, outgoing are thought to be stable over the course of your lives
- Criticized for not taking into account individual differences

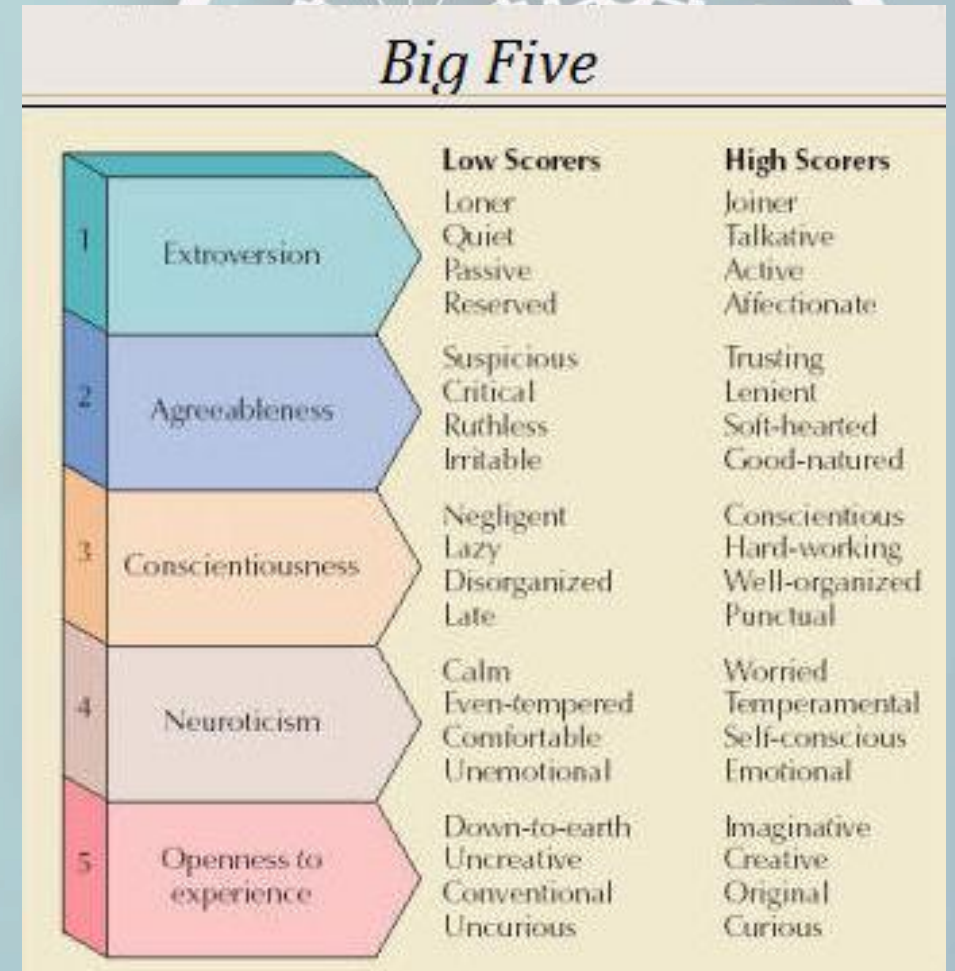


Eysenck, H.J. and Eysenck, M.W. *Personality and Individual Differences*. Plenum Publishing, 1958.



# Nomothetic Theory

- The same traits can be used to describe all peoples personalities
  - Places people along an introversion and extroversion scale
- **BIG FIVE** personality traits:
  1. Extraversion
  2. Agreeableness
  3. Conscientiousness
  4. Neuroticism
  5. Openness to experience
- Factor Analysis is used to see the clusters and score these tests



# Idiographic Theory

- Using the same set of traits to classify everyone is impossible
- Each person may have a few traits that are unique to them
  - Selfish may be important to describe one person but not another



# Biological Theory of Personality

- Examines idea that personality can be inherited
- Personality temperaments do seem to be stable from infants to old age
  - People generally have the same personality from development to death
- Somatotype Theory
  - Idea that body shape can actually influence personality
    - Ex. Muscular tend to be more aggressive



# Behaviorist Theory of Personality

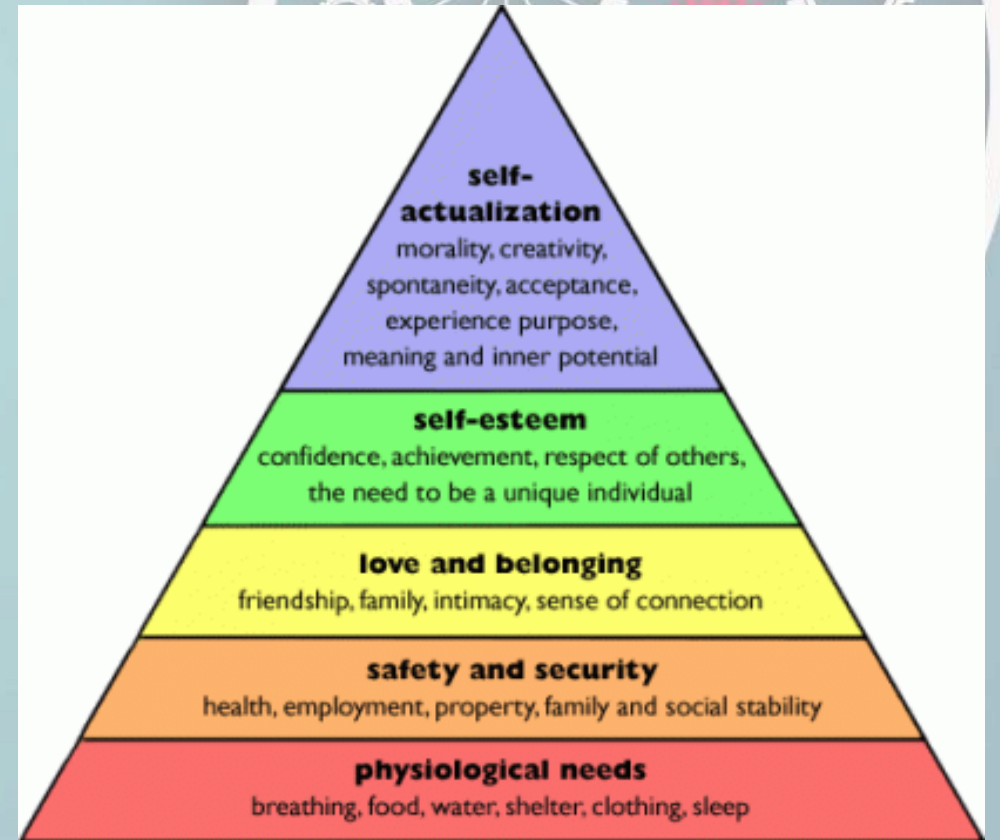
- The way most people think of personality is meaningless
- Personality changes according to the environment
  - Reinforcers and punishments
- If you change environment then you change the personality





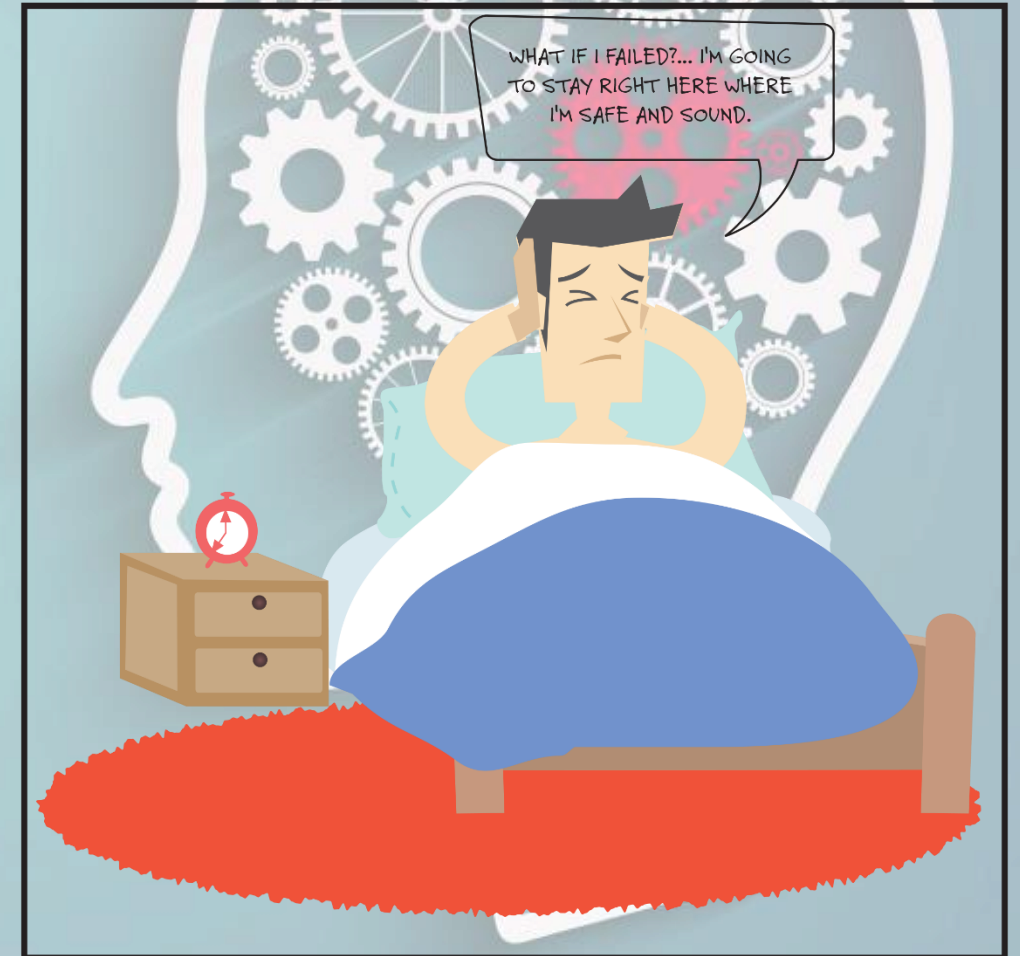
# Humanistic Theory of Personality

- Do not believe in Determinism
  - Your actions are dictated by your past
- They believe that humans have free will
  - Our ability to choose your own destiny
- We are innately good and as long as our self-esteem and self-concept are positive we will be happy



# Socio-Cultural Theory of Personality

- Focus on how we interact with our culture and environment
- Reciprocal Determinism
  - Traits, environment and behavior all interact and influence each other
- External Locus of Control can lead to a state of learned helplessness



# Assessing Personality

- Most common way is self-report inventories.
  - Ex. MMPI- Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory
- Test must be
  - Reliable- does it yield the same results over time.
  - Valid- does it measure what it is supposed to measure.
- The Barnum Effect
  - People have the tendency to see themselves in vague, stock descriptions of personality.
    - Horoscopes, astrologers and psychics all use this concept to make “predictions”, in reality they’re just making vague generalizations

