

Personality at Work

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The biggest misinterpretation of the concept of 'personality' is that we 'have' a personality and that the characteristics of such are static and unchangeable. We often hear – 'she has a great personality', 'there are some very difficult personalities at work', 'I had a personality clash with my boss' etc. Personality is often treated as a concrete factor or excuse for behaviour, however psychological theory tells us that it is more malleable than what we think. It tells us that we don't as such 'have' personality, but that we 'do' or perform personality – and although characteristics may remain throughout life we can unlearn unhelpful behaviours resulting from unhelpful neural patterns (schemas) we have taken on.

Personality is something that is acquired as a result of nature and nurture influences early in life. We structure a way of being that seems to support us through the circumstances into which we are born. Different cultures and different ways of being in family encourage the formation of differing ways of structuring and patterning personality. Essentially we learn to 'perform' personality in such a way that we unconsciously believe it serves us. We learn to think-feel, value-believe, speak and act as a person through the interactions with our environment.

Along the journey of life however, the early patterning of personality is challenged by life events and other people as we get reactions to the personality structures we have created. If we have a healthy attitude to development and are not stuck in unhealthy schemas, we will adjust and modify our personalities; learning to be socially adept and gracious.

The wonderful thing about understanding personality as something we 'do' is that it gives healthy populations scope to adjust the filters through which we perceive the world. Once adjusted, we develop more helpful psychosocial skills and are more at peace with ourselves and the world around us.

Personality plays a major part in assessing someone's alignment with the requirements of a job or career. The simplest example of a characteristic of personality is the Extraversion / Introversion preference, i.e. whether people are energised by the external world of people and things or the internal world of ideas, concepts and impressions. Both Extraversion and Introversion are patterned ways of being that can be useful, but used unconsciously, can also be unhelpful, even unhealthy.

Although our characteristics of how we do personality can help determine where our talents are, we have the potential to learn to be more dextrous and multitalented if we wish. Re-structuring personality is possible through re-patterning language, perception and mind-body or thought-feeling states. Most of us do this over a lifetime as we 'mature' and let go of 'stuck' patterns of being. The majority of us need help from others to model and encourage helpful and healthy psychosocial behaviours.

'Doing' healthy personality requires self-awareness and taking personal responsibility for behaviours and feelings and learning skills that better equip us to navigate the vast challenges that relationships at work present.

Kaye Avery, Career Coach, www.career-coach.co.nz