

Not Just One

I began this journey by researching the concept of personality and, more specifically, the aspects that I view as flaws in my character...aspects that I struggle with. These very struggles were brought into context by articles and commentary written by other extroverts. Shortly into my research, the traits that I quietly struggle with were suddenly backed up by psychological evidence. This realization put me in a vulnerable place and simultaneously made me feel more aware of and comfortable with my personality and its flaws.

In this short video, I mirror the multiple sides of my complicated personality. I want the viewer to feel as if they are inside my brain to experience the chaotic, emotional, and somewhat beautiful struggles that come with my unique personality. During my artistic process, I used old footage, found footage, and original footage to mirror the speed, color, and excitement I experience when I am engaged with the things I love. I also sought to reveal a more somber, vulnerable side of myself...to expose the slightly broken and emotionally drained side of my personality.

At times, we might feel like we can control our identity but, in reality, we have a little control of the environments that shape us. Without a comprehensive knowledge of these forces, how can we be objective when we judge one another? We may judge others on their personality without even knowing all the aspects of it. The aspects that shape one's personality are almost endless, for our personalities are malleable and, at times, contradictory.

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The Factors that Compose the Struggles of One's Personality

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When the Final project was introduced, I was aware that we were going to have to be writing about something we felt truly connected with, and could write a fair amount on it. I started my research with two different subjects that were slightly disconnected from each other, my goal was to find a median where I could write about the two in harmony. My two ideas were 1) My frustration with the fact that I feel like I give way more than I receive in most relationships, leaving myself feeling very emotionally drained. 2) The way that I use music as a coping mechanism for when I am feeling sad, frustrated, or just to keep me happy most of the time.

After doing a lot of searching I finally found that diving into personality, and the science behind why we enjoy certain things was the most interesting to me. I wanted to make a very personal paper on struggles of my personality, and the truth behind what builds our personalities. I wanted to convey how I am still constantly discovering new aspects of my personality, along with flaws in it, and how I cope. As I thought for hours and researched, I realized there are many positive traits to my personality that sometimes have negative effects on my overall mental health. Me being extroverted, I am very social, caring, empathetic, energetic, and many other things. When hearing that, many people would think there are little flaws in this personality type. There have even been many studies that show that “the happiness levels of extroverted individuals are less susceptible to the influence of external events. Another implication of this finding is that extroverts' positive moods last longer than those of introverts.” Overall, happier people are believed to be extroverted. But in reality being an extravert is exhausting, emotionally draining, and very difficult sometimes, because I often overwork myself. So, I wanted to know what is the relationship between my personality and the way I feel and the things I enjoy?

Personality is “the combination of characteristics or qualities that form an individual's distinctive character”¹. Personality is one big beautiful and a somewhat malleable chunk of our identity. McCrae and Costa's “Big Five” model splits it up into 5 categories²: openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, neuroticism (or emotional stability).

One of the first categories is Openness to experience. This is how open-minded and authority challenging a person is. Risk taking is a big part of openness to experience. It can be as small as trying a new flavor of ice cream, to skydiving, the enormity of the experience is not important.

One of the other important traits is conscientiousness. This is the personality³ trait that is of being careful, or vigilant. Conscientiousness implies a desire to do a task well, and to take obligations to others seriously. Conscientious people tend to be efficient and organized as opposed to easy-going and disorderly people. They display planned rather than spontaneous behavior. To obtain this trait you have to have a tendency to think carefully before acting, have respect for your surroundings, and the people who occupy those spaces.

Another more common category is extraversion. Extraversion and the lower scale of extraversion (introversion) are the central dimensions of human personality theories.⁴ Extraversion seems to be a scale of how outgoing, talkative, and energetic someone is. Whereas introversion is manifests in more reserved and solitary behavior. Often we use extraversion as a way to identify ourselves. How extroverted or introverted we are often defines in social situations and how our identities are portrayed.

¹ <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/personality>

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Personality_development

³ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conscientiousness>

⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Extraversion_and_introversion

One of the other traits is Agreeableness. This trait displays characteristics that are perceived as kind, and very cooperative ⁵. It means that you can be really considerate and cooperate with other people's decisions and feelings. Social harmony is something that can be reached with agreeableness.

The last one is neuroticism, it is a person's inability to stay emotionally stable and balanced ⁶. People who score high on neuroticism are more likely to be quiet, moody, and often feel really anxious, worried, frustrated, and depressed. Neurotic people, unfortunately, react more strongly to stressors. This means that often they will interpret ordinary situations as threatening and minor frustrations as hopelessly difficult. People with high neuroticism indexes are way more susceptible to mood and anxiety disorders.

What is a really important about understanding personality, is that everything is a scale, all these different aspects of your personality can vary in intensity. Even the most extroverted people have some introverted qualities to them and vice versa. For example, openness to experience it can be as open as an introvert trying a new food, or for an extrovert, agreeing to go cliff jumping for the first time. Nobody is 100% extroverted or introverted. Personality is also determined by your culture, your morals, and your surroundings. It can heavily depend on the way you were raised and what you believe is socially acceptable. People have a weird need to be constantly labeling themselves and others, and in that case, there are McCrae and Costa's "Big Five" model. This model assesses your personality traits as an adult. But there is also the EAS (emotionality, activity, and sociability) model, which is used for children⁷. Which is used to predict adult personality traits. We often use this models to label ourselves and others. When you read loads of articles you don't know what to believe, so I was craving real world context of how our personalities really work, I went on to find some experiments of our brain in action.

For an example, researchers lead by Michael Cohen, from the University of Amsterdam, created a hypothesis wondering "Could extroverts differ in how active their dopamine systems are? Able to test these ideas, in 2005 an experiment and study was released. Psychologists asked extroverts and introverts to gamble and had them hooked up to a brain scanner and tracked their brain activity. When they ended winning their gambles, and were rewarded by cash, they were thrilled. The more extroverted groups showed a stronger response in two parts of the brain: the Amygdala, which processes emotional stimuli, and the Nucleus accumbens, which is a key part of the brain's "rewards" circuitry and part of the dopamine system. The extroverts' brains responded more strongly when the gambling paid off ⁸. Therefore implying that extroverts respond more strongly to dopamine. Which is a neurotransmitter, a chemical responsible for sending messages between the brain and different nerve cells of the body. In less specific terms, dopamine has been identified as the body's reward activator, controlling the pleasure center of our brain while encouraging us to engage in thrill-seeking activities. ⁹ Food, sex, reward, social interactions, success, and so many more things, release dopamine, but us extroverts have a more robust reaction to them, as shown in the experiment.

⁵ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agreeableness>

⁶ <https://www.123test.com/personality-extraversion/>

⁷ the model measures the levels of emotionality, activity, sociability, and shyness in children. But the EAS model is very similar to the big five model and somewhat reflective. Theorists believe that finding high degrees of sociability and low degrees of shyness in the EAS result in extraversion in adulthood. They also mention that extraversion results in satisfaction in the later parts of your life

⁸ <https://www.medicaldaily.com/brain-introvert-compared-extrovert-are-they-really-different-299064>

⁹ <https://study.com/academy/lesson/what-is-dopamine-definition-function.html>

After you understand that concept, you may wonder if there are any flaws in an extroverted personality. And why you wouldn't to have that personality? Well, extraversion is almost a commercial for the perfect person but it can be a really challenging part of my identity, personally.

Feeling like it was quiet necessary, I took the Myers Briggs personality test. I discovered that I am an ENFP (Extrovert, Intuitive, Feeling, Perceiving) personality¹⁰

- **Extroverted (E).** Being extroverted means that the ENFP enjoys interaction with the outside world and focuses externally rather than internally.
- **Intuitive (N).** This means that the ENFP prefers to perceive the world through its possibilities rather than just hard facts.
- **Feeling (F).** Having a feeling preference means that the ENFP focuses on relationships with other people. When taking a decision, the ENFP takes in consideration emotions and feelings of others as well as their own gut feelings.
- **Perceiving (P).** Having a perceiving attitude allows the ENFP keep her options open and enjoy flexibility and spontaneity.

An ENFP cheerful and energetic, ENFPs view the world in terms of possibilities, and their wide range of interests reflects their curious and imaginative nature. Things they are interested in doing are not necessarily practical. As long as it's stimulating, it's good enough for the ENFPs. Charming, independent, energetic and compassionate, 7% of the population are ENFPs, and they can certainly be felt in any crowd. ¹¹ I fully resonated with this definition. It mentioned that "as long as it's stimulating, it's good enough for the ENFP." This explains why I am constantly searching for stimulating activities and stimulating people to surround myself with, and this can often result in me feeling emotionally drained, or frustrated a lot of the time because I am participating in activities that aren't necessarily practical or important. I realized that I may have been throwing the term "emotionally unstable" around quite casually so I went on to see the aspects of being emotionally drained, and I check off all the boxes: Unceasing fatigue, Illness or physical symptoms, Crying easily, Detachment, Irritability, and anger, lack of motivation ¹². I experience all of these things really often. I struggle with leaving enough for myself. I feel as though I am constantly caring for other people and putting so much energy and work into relationships, and often I don't receive the same amount of energy back. It is even said that people who have a lot of energy and compassion also require a lot of energy ¹³. Therefore people who make me happy and fuel me, also require loads of energy, and they act as vampires to the energy I have, leaving me with almost nothing. I am constantly feeling the need to be ON, (fully engaged and energetic) and it's challenging for me to turn off for a bit and do something for myself. This is

¹¹ <https://psychologia.co/enfp/>

¹³ <https://www.aconsciousrethink.com/5552/8-glaring-signs-mentally-emotionally-drained/>

because I fear comments like, “ You aren't acting like yourself. Are you ok?” or “You look sad.” Because it’s just easier to pretend I'm ON, opposed to explaining this to everyone. When I am constantly being social, caring, and engaged, it results in me running on a really low tank of gas, making me super irritable. I am like a Jenga tower, but each and every social interaction I participate in is like pulling four or five Jenga blocks out opposed to one or two, until it's just too much, too unbalanced, then I crumble and fall really easily. Tiny things that I can usually ignore and deal with, thoroughly annoy me or make me really sad. I end up taking my anger out on the people really close to me instead of dealing with the source of what is draining me. To this day, this is one of the most toxic parts of my personality. I fail to successfully ration my energy and love for people, and it ends up damaging relationships and interactions. I find myself pouring loads of energy into a few people, and leaving myself little to know energy. I end up crumbling into pieces and snapping at someone or saying something I didn't mean. This can make it seem as if I don't love or care for people sometimes; but in reality, it’s the opposite, I care too much. At the end of the day it's usually the person I know is going nowhere, my mother that has to deal with this. I no that no matter what I say, she can't just decide to stop being my mother. Yes she can get mad, upset, even furious, but unlike some friends I have, I know she's not going anywhere, so at the end of the day she is usually a punching bag for my irritable minimal energy mood. I forever struggle with displaying how much I love her, because she is present for the majority of the times where I am feeling emotionally drained, unlike anyone else in my life. She is one of the people who has really urged me to look deep into myself and realize why I act the way I do instead of punishing me, she is the reason I’m somewhat aware of the huge flaws in my personality that I have to deal with on the daily.

It took me years to discover and understand these parts of my personality and truly realize why I act the way I do sometimes. But I have slowly learned how to cope. I have used a lot of different methods to cope with my irritability and over stimulation, but only one method has consistently been useful is music. It is the one thing in my life that won't let me down. It will always be there to calm me and make me feel better and happier. Music isn't biased, music doesn't care if you are right or not. You don't have to give anything back to music, it just gives to you, and you don't have to work for it, or do anything to deserve it. Music doesn't ever stop giving.

Ever since I was a kid I was constantly dancing along to music videos, belting songs, making up songs, and listening to music almost all the time. It always amazed my parents that I would listen to a song once and the next day I would sing it and know almost every word. I feel like I have a whole dictionary full of song lyrics in my head at all times. Music can make me feel unstuck in certain emotions. It can either totally change my mood, or it can enhance and draw out some intense feelings, Whether it's happiness, sadness, or pure anger. Music was always just something I knew that I loved, until I did more scientific research behind it, and it slowly started to make more sense.

When someone sings to you as a kid or even when you are older, often a hormone called oxytocin can be released when singing, this is also called the cuddle hormone ¹⁴. I know that my mom sang a lot to me when I was a kid, and my dad was constantly playing different music for me. I think that it subconsciously began my love for music. My brain was responding positively to the chemicals that are being released, and my brain wanted more.

As I got older my love for music grew stronger and stronger and I started to realize the power that music can have. The feelings that you can get can be overwhelming whether they are sad or happy, some music can even remind you of a time, a person, a place. Music is beyond

¹⁴ <https://www.consciouslifestylemag.com/music-and-the-brain-affects-mood/>

powerful in the way it interacts with your brain, and you can certainly feel it. Not till more recently have I realized that there is an actual science behind the numbing of the pain that music can do, and how it affects your brain.

Listening to music can create peak emotions, which increase the amount of dopamine that's being released. Music can evoke and engage our emotions in many stages of our lives. It can evoke the deepest emotions in people and help people process fear, grief, sadness, and resentment,¹⁵ it can even relieve physical pain. In 2015, a study showed that people who listen to music before and after surgery experience less pain, and actually need way less pain meds.¹⁶ I find myself subconsciously using music not as a way to deal with physical pain, but emotional pain. I would consider it my main coping mechanism. As I said before I have a few major flaws to my personality, I constantly feel emotionally drained resulting in me feeling stressed, worn out, and overwhelmed. If I am feeling these ways, the first thing I always resort to is either blasting music, or putting a pair of headphones in and isolating myself from the real world. I have found that constantly listening to music that I enjoy neutralizes my emotions, if I am feeling emotionally unstable. Or it heightens my emotions if I was initially feeling happy.

For a while I knew that music made me feel good and helped me feel unstuck in the frustrated, sad, overwhelmed feeling I had, but my knowledge of the science behind it was limited. When I started diving into the psychology behind it, it all started to make sense. My brain wants more of what is making it feel good, which is the dopamine being released when I listen to music. That is why, for years I have been subconsciously, sometimes consciously, falling back on music to numb the product of the flaws in my extroverted parts of my personality that I struggle with.

Personality. A big part of our identities. The part of our identities that we maybe feel like we can we have some control over, but in reality it can feel like it's consuming us. We will constantly judge people of their personalities without even knowing all the aspects of it. “Oh they have a good personality” or “I don't know they have a really bad personality”, but is that all there is too it? A good or bad personality. No! The aspects of personality are almost endless. Personality can be something your confident about, confused about, or ashamed of. But we can refine ourselves, take care of ourselves, and learn more about ourselves, and avoid getting consumed by the toxic parts of your personality. Your personality is a constant work in progress, your personality is developing every day, and maybe even changing whether you like it or not.

¹⁵ <https://www.consciouslifestylemag.com/music-and-the-brain-affects-mood/>

¹⁶ <https://www.bbc.com/news/health-33865448>

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