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Can Our Personality Change? 4 Factors Surrounding Personality You Need to Know

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When we think of "personality," all of us must have our own understanding of what the word means. Generally speaking, we associate the word with numerous tangible traits that people exhibit on a daily basis. Such as telling ourselves or other people that they are "kind", "smart", "selfish", and many others. However, defining personality concretely is not all there is to it. After all, we are capable of changing our routines and habits. That is why we can even feel as if many of our personality traits seem to disappear or change over time. But is this true? How far can we mold our personality, and what factors affect this change?

"What is Personality, Really?" – Personality in Psychology

It is vital to first understand what "personality" means in psychology to answer the previous question. There are two differing views regarding personality and its implications: **the "type" vs. "trait" debate**. Scholars who view psychology as "types" (e.g., MBTI, Galen's Four Temperaments, etc.) believe that how human beings function follows specific patterns that are more or less fixed in nature (Bess & Harvey, 2001). However, variations and changes are observable, depending on personal circumstances. Notably, the basic premise of this view is that what drives people to act (i.e., their observable "traits") is largely the product of their

The basic premise of this view is that what drives people to act (i.e., their observable "traits") regularly is the product of their enduring personality type.



On the other hand, scholars who view personality as a "trait" disagree that humans function based on specific personality types. Instead, personality is governed by certain traits, encouraging specific tendencies to emerge. For instance, according to Costa and McCrae (1992), people who possess higher "trait conscientiousness" are more likely to succeed as they are highly organized and are capable of planning for the long term. Understanding human behavior through traits and tendencies makes trait inventories such as the Big Five Personality (Costa & McCrae, 1992) to be utilized for research and diagnostic purposes (Furnham & Crump, 2005). **In this context, personality is seen as more or less stable through specific traits and tendencies but can be developed over time.**

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Despite the previous and apparent differences, both views agree on one aspect of personality: **it is consistent and possesses a certain level of stability over time.** So it's not like we can wake up every day as a completely different person. But that also doesn't mean that we can't change our "personality" nor develop what we have for the better. On that note, here are four factors that can potentially drive personality growth:

1. Befriending People from Various Backgrounds

Granted that this is not something easy to do, nor find. But in an ideal situation where it is achievable, befriending people from various backgrounds can give us valuable insights about ourselves and others. It can also improve our ability to empathize with others, especially those coming from starkly different circumstances from us. It all boils down to one thing: it can help us discover our personality blind spots. And through it, we can better ourselves and mindfully approach difficult situations we face in life.

2. Reading Books that Challenge Our Perspectives on Life



It is natural for us to have deeply-held beliefs about life in general as human beings. It is how we navigate our environment, and it dictates how we interact with others. Hence its close relationship with how we behave and our personality, so to speak. Although there is no right or wrong when it comes to personal beliefs (as long as it is not harmful to others!), we need to challenge them from time to time. Especially in the case where these beliefs are no longer beneficial for ourselves, or it makes us complacent. You can achieve this through reading books that challenge your perspective or, alternatively, watching a mind-boggling movie now and then.

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3. Trying Out New Things

Besides cognitively and socially challenging ourselves, we can also try out new things. Even simple activities and hobbies can open new opportunities and possibilities that help us change for the better. For instance, if you're more of an avid fiction reader, you can try changing things up by writing your own fictional story. Through this simple act, you can discover new things about yourself or what you want to do in the long run. You can even find untapped abilities that you may very well have!

4. Self-Reflection

With all said and done, don't forget to give yourself space after trying out different things. After all, the most crucial bit is your personal take on the previous attempts to discover novel perspectives. Self-reflection, in this sense, means you need to give yourself lots of time to process the things you have experienced in life. Specifically, what attempts you wish to take to lead a more fruitful and meaningful life — unchained by any limiting concepts pertaining to personality.



The most important takeaway regarding personality is **not** what it means in essence, but **how we perceive and define it**. As personality can either be something that holds us back from doing the things we wish to do or encourages us to do better from what we have. The choice is fully ours to make.

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