Do you mind?

Newstead Wood's Psychology journal Sophie R | Daphney R | Evelyn F

Issue 2: Understanding people

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Introduction to psychology journal issue 2: understanding people

Again, do you mind? This issue focuses on the broad topic of 'understanding people', with articles exploring emotions, psychological effects, BPD and more. Understanding both ourselves and others is a key aspect of psychology; one that is deceptively simple. Can anyone ever fully comprehend their entire self? The best we can often do is learn about the psychology or science behind our thoughts and behaviour, to incrementally gain a deeper insight into people. I hope that reading this journal will help our dear readers to learn more about themselves and others.

Sophie R, editor

3 interesting psychological effects

IMAAN A, Y8

The Barnum effect

An effect in which people think information is about them when in fact the information in question is generic.

For example, Horoscopes. Astrology provides 12 different zodiac signs based on one's location and time of birth, categorizing personality traits and providing future predictions regarding career, love life, family, and personal development. The Barnum effect causes readers to make connections between the vague and generic descriptions and their own personal lives.

The Affect Heuristic

The affect heuristic describes how we often rely on our emotions, rather than concrete information, when making decisions. This allows us to reach a conclusion quickly and easily, but can also distort our thinking and lead us to make choices that could have been better.

For example, say you're cramming to finish an assignment. Overwhelmed by stress, you impulsively ask ChatGPT to write a couple of paragraphs from you. Barely checking them over, you copy and paste them into your document and turn in the assignment, minutes before the deadline. Unfortunately, you failed the assignment; the information in those paragraphs was incorrect, and your professor suspected that AI wrote it.

The anchoring bias

The anchoring bias is a cognitive bias that causes us to rely heavily on the first piece of information we are given about a topic. When we are setting plans or making estimates about something, we interpret newer information from the reference point of our anchor instead of seeing it objectively. This can skew our judgment.

There are two dominant theories behind the anchoring bias. The first one, the anchor-and-adjust hypothesis, says that when we make decisions under uncertainty, we start by assigning some initial value and subsequently adjusting it, but our adjustments are usually insufficient. The second one, the selective accessibility theory, says that the anchoring bias happens because we are primed to recall and notice anchor-consistent information.

For the second theory, let's say that you do research on which phone brand is the best. Person A sees their favourite celebrities (the anchor here) using Passionfruit, and doesn't bother to do any other research, so the best brand in their opinion is Passionfruit. Person B looks at only phone prices (the anchor here), and sees that the cheapest brand of phone is nokofone (even though it is a shady black market company) and so the best brand in their opinion is nokofone. Person C, again, has a different anchor; in this case it is the durability, aesthetics and data limit of the phone. The only phone brand that is the best choice, according to these 3 factors, is DuraBoll, so person C considers that brand the best.

How can we live a happy life, and what influences our happiness?

SOPHIER, Y12

Who doesn't want to be happier? Understanding human happiness is a key aspect of understanding our own and others' wellbeing, while also making us more conscious of the effects our decisions have on our future happiness. Let's find out the psychological mechanisms behind this emotion.

The longest study on human happiness ever is the Harvard study of Adult Development and is in its 86th year. Originally comprised of one third Harvard students and two thirds inner-city Boston boys, it has investigated and tracked their happiness from when they were young adults to elderly men. They found:

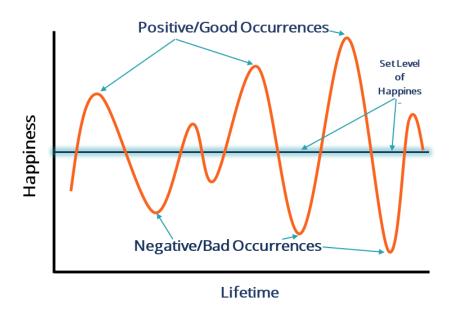
- Our relationships and our happiness within them affect our health
 - Meaning tending to relationships are a form of self-care :)
- Close relationships are what keep people happy throughout their lives
 - Not career success, money or fame!
- Being very satisfied with your relationships in middle age makes you a healthier elderly person
- Happy marriages protect mental health people in unhappy marriages feel more physical and emotional pain

These findings aren't like other sayings that go in one ear and out the other; they are backed by decades of research on a multitude of participants. Real life science has proven them true!

Let us focus on one of the more intriguing (and unexpected) findings: that lifelong happiness is due to close relationships. The idea that [our connections with others] are more impactful on happiness than say [our career success or looks] is a truth that has been hiding in plain sight. To me, it is comforting. Getting the best grades or job is not as important as your friendships, family or relationship for living a happy life. Despite this, many of us are guilty of prioritising the wrong thing. Who hasn't declined an offer to spend time with someone to focus on school or work? Of course, it is irrational to fully neglect your duties to spend time with loved ones – a balance ought to be maintained.

There exists further research highlighting the importance of one's emotional connections. James Coan (2017) conducted a study on pain tolerance. In the control condition, participants received small electric shocks alone. In another group, they held the hand of a stranger while being shocked, and in another held the hand of their partner (e.g. spouse, friend). He found that for the hand-holding conditions, there was less brain activity in the area detecting pain. in other words, social support from your loved ones can reduce the amount of physical pain you feel. Shocking!

Less wholesome is the conjecture that happiness is innate. Consider the hedonic treadmill. This theory suggests that we have stable levels of happiness that we return to throughout life, despite major life changes e.g. marrying the love of your life, or your entire family passing away. This is outlined in the graph below.



This idea can depress or scare some people – they think that no matter what happens to you, you are destined to return to a constant level of happiness. However, reality is much less deterministic. The whole area of study is Complicated with a capital C. So far, researchers think that both your genes and circumstances affect happiness, in a 1:1 ratio. This is a classic glass-half-full/empty situation; do we accept that our genes have already determined half of our happiness levels, or recognise and act on the knowledge that 50% of it is decided by our circumstances (like the people around you)? Some psychologists have proposed a U-shaped curve outlining happiness – it rises, then falls in middle age, then picks back up as one grows old. So for the most part, the hedonic treadmill should not be taken too seriously, especially considering how each of our lives are wildly different (and isn't that a rather beautiful thing?).

Following the link between determinism and happiness, let us think about how one's childhood affects future happiness. It certainly has an effect. Bowlby (a noted psychologist whose specialty was attachment) proposed the internal working model (IWM). This states that one's first attachment serves as a template for all future relationships. For example, if you had a loving, kind relationship with your first attachment figure (e.g. mother), you would expect your future social relationships to be similar. Unfortunately, the same is true for an unloving or neglectful first attachment. But! While it is true that a warm loving childhood is beneficial for a happy life, it is not a guarantee. Someone who did not have a good childhood is not fated to be unhappy. It may be more challenging to enter adult

relationships, due to expectations formed during childhood, but one's childhood does not determine one's happiness. You are in much more control than you may think.

Finally, let's investigate how money affects happiness. We all know the phrase - 'money doesn't buy happiness' - but do we believe it? A 2010 study by Angus Deaton and Daniel Kahneman (rest in peace) found that emotional well-being and life satisfaction does increase as one's income does – but not happiness. Even these two measures were only effective up to \$75,000 a year. After that, even if you become a billionaire, these two measures of happiness do not continue rising with salary: they plateau. Being a millionaire will not make you the happiest person in the world!

We also ought to consider the correlation/causation factor. Does money leads to life satisfaction? There is a plethora of factors that affect one's happiness, like social circumstances, genes, physical health and the people around you. While wealth may impact wellbeing, one thing we do know is that it is not the **only** determinant. There are just so many other elements!

Overall, I believe we can conclude that happiness is an infinitely complex emotion and state. Over our lifetime it morphs and changes, yet remains present in the world like the wind and the Sun. To end, I recommend the website 'Action for Happiness' which offers a calendar of daily tasks to encourage kindness and happiness. Reading and researching happiness can only do so much – application is the key to finding out more about it in the real world. Happy learning!



https://actionforhappiness.org/calendar

Why we can't stop scrolling...

EVELYN F, Y12

Have you ever been in bed and know that you should be sleeping but instead you are scrolling through your phone, let it be Tiktok or Instagram or something else? Have you ever put off work and scroll instead? If you haven't, then good for you. But if you have, then this article is for you.

It is perhaps already a well known fact that spending all this time on different apps will shorten our attention span and make ourselves become more easily distracted. Studies have shown a negative correlation between screen time and academic performance, suggesting that the more time a student spends on their phone, the worse their academic performance. It is also suggested that spending too much time on social media could lower the brain's ability to convert short term memory to long term memory. But most of you probably already knew or at least have an idea of all that, still, why do we keep on scrolling despite knowing all the negative effects it will have on ourselves and our lives?

As the saying goes, the first step to solving a problem is to acknowledge that you have one, we have to acknowledge that not being able to stop scrolling, or doomscrolling, is a problem, and perhaps even an addiction. How do we know that it has become a problem? Ask yourself, are you truly in control of your habit when it comes to your phone? Do you often spend more time than you intended to on it? If yes, you have your answer.

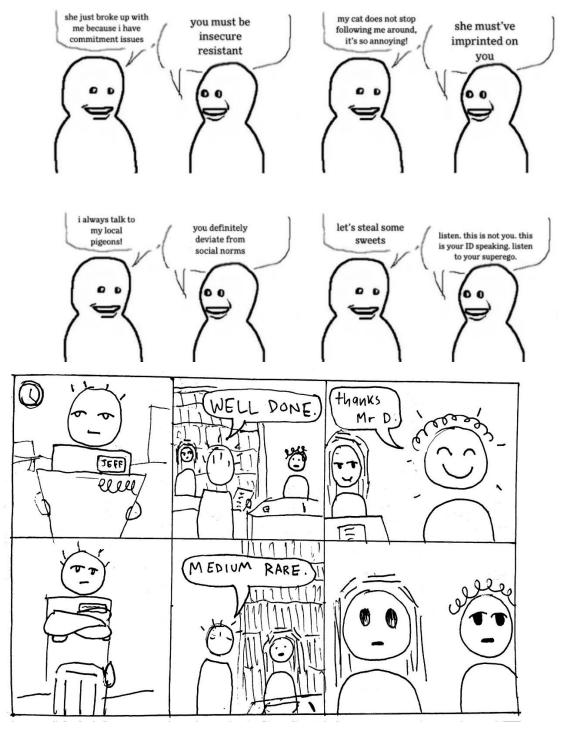
How do our devices have so much power over us? Apps are designed to hook us, according to Catherine Price, the author of How to Break Up With Your Phone, apps mimic the techniques used by slot machines, which are widely considered to be some of the most addictive machines ever to be invented because they are designed to trigger the release of dopamine, a neurotransmitter which delivers the message that a behaviour is worth repeating to our brains. Therefore, we are motivated to repeat the behaviour of doomscrolling, regardless of the consequences.

However, the question that matters the most is not why, but how do we stop? For that, there are a few tips given by Catherine Price. First, you could set your screen settings to black and white, which may seem pointless to some people, but removing bright colours is to remove a dopamine trigger, this is something easy and worth trying. Second, reduce your notifications as they are interruptions, decide what is and what isn't worth interrupting your lives for. Third, put some distance between your phone, it is common for people to go on their phones before bed and when they get up, so the easy solution is to get an alarm which is not your phone and put your phone in another room, then replace it with

something else such as a book so when you reach for your phone, you end up reaching for a book instead.

So what are you waiting for? Stop scrolling and reclaim control from your phone!

Cartoons



Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD)

DAPHNEY R, Y12

What is borderline personality disorder?

Borderline Personality Disorder is a personality disorder that is distinguished through a pattern of emotional instability and being unable to hold stable relationships with other people. It can affect a person's thoughts, emotions, behaviours, and self-image.

BPD is described as 'borderline' as many doctors have thought that this disorder was on the border between neurosis and psychosis. Neurosis is a term that describes mental disorders that have been caused by past anxiety which has been repressed, whereas psychosis is when an individual perceives reality in a different way from other people, and individuals who have psychosis may 'lose touch' with reality.

Around 1 person in 20 are estimated to be living with a personality disorder, and around 1 in 100 people suffer with borderline personality disorder. Despite borderline personality disorder affecting both men and women equally, it has been shown that 78% of patients with a personality disorder in the UK are women.

What causes borderline personality disorder?

Psychologists believe that BPD can stem from a combination of different factors, including traumatic events or genetic predispositions. Trauma, such as inadequate caregiving during childhood, parents who are alcoholics or with substance abuse, or experiencing the loss of a loved one, can increase the likelihood of developing BPD. Furthermore, researchers have discovered that genes, such as DPYD and PKP4, can increase the risk of developing BPD. Moreover, research indicates that low levels of serotonin are associated with this disorder.

What are the symptoms of borderline personality disorder?

One symptom of borderline personality disorder is emotional instability, which is the inability to regulate the range of intensity or appropriateness of an emotional response. This can therefore cause people with BPD to experience mood swings, that can last for a few hours or a few days, they may also have problems with controlling their anger, or have chronic feelings of emptiness and dissociation.

Another symptom of BPD is disturbed patterns of thinking or perception. This describes individuals to have inaccurate perceptions and interpretations of others and themselves, for example they may consider someone as their friend but the next day they may perceive them as their enemy, additionally they may de-value themselves or others, and can have distrustful and suspicious thoughts.

People with BPD may also experience impulsive behaviours, which can include uncontrolled spending sprees, binge eating, and reckless driving.

Lastly, BPD can cause unstable relationships with others. This is because emotional instability and disturbed patterns of thinking can make it much more difficult for an individual to maintain a healthy relationship. For example, those with BPD may first show a lot of love towards families and friends but can then suddenly become angry and aggressive towards them. Moreover, relationships may either feel incredibly intimate, since those with BPD want to ensure that they can avoid real or imagined abandonment.

What are treatments for borderline personality disorder?

There are many different types of therapies that are effective in treating individuals with BPD. For example, cognitive behavioural therapy can be used to explore thoughts, feelings, and behaviours to improve BPD. Additionally, Dialectical Behavioural Therapy can be used for people who self-harm, as it teaches them how to cope with these overwhelming and strong emotions.

Currently there are no psychiatric medications specifically used for treating borderline personality disorder. However, patients can still be prescribed medicine to address a co-occurring condition such as depression, anxiety or bipolar disorder that is associated with their BPD. These medications can include antidepressants, mood stabilisers or antipsychotics.

Motivation

YASMIN P, Y8

What motivation is, and why we need it

Motivation is the **driving force** behind our actions and is what leads all humans to **pursue goals**. It is necessary to our survival. All animals share motivation to acquire **basic needs** – such as food, water, shelter, and social interaction. Without motivation, we would have no survival instinct and would have died out in less than a century.

Generally speaking, when people talk about being motivated, they mean being **goal-directed** and **productive**. Though, what affects how motivated someone is: to achieve many goals and to be successful? After all – it's easier said than done to "be motivated".

2 main types of motivation

Extrinsic motivation – motivation to gain **external awards** such as money, trophies, praise or social recognition.

Intrinsic motivation – motivation to gain internal satisfaction, such as completing a jigsaw puzzle solely for the pleasure of solving it.

3 components of motivation

Activation – The decision to start a behaviour or activity.

Persistence - Continuing the effort towards a goal, despite of all the obstacles that may

Intensity - Concentration and vigor put into pursuing a goal.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

This is the most recognised theory of motivation—Abraham Maslow explained motivation through satisfaction of needs in order. Since satisfied needs don't motivate us, it's our dissatisfied needs that move us to completing them.



What factors into how motivated someone can be?

Many things play into how motivated a person is, such as their physiological needs, environmental conditions, their history and experiences with pursuing the certain goal, stress levels, the attitudes of the people around them (pessimistic/positive, disciplined/lazy) etc.

Ways to increase motivation

Breaking tasks that are large and complicated into smaller and manageable steps can help it seem easier and will make you feel more motivated to complete the task.

Adjusting goals to focus on tasks that are more important to you will also help you achieve your goals faster, more than goals that are less important.

A summary of 3 articles

SOPHIE R, Y12 Psychiatry's blind spots

The Economist

- Biological influences on mental health are not to be underestimated
- Bacterial infections can cause autoimmune conditions which lead to symptoms of mental disorders like OCD
- Psychiatry needs to understand that inflammatory disorders and metabolic conditions can affect mental health
- While the DSM is useful for diagnosis and description of symptoms, it doesn't consider the mechanisms behind disorders
- In 2013, \$20bn was spent trying to identify causal mechanisms between genes and mental health disorders however, little effects were found
- A new idea has emerged in psychiatry: that some mental health conditions have triggers that must be treated as medical, not psychiatric, conditions
- Autoimmune diseases like encephalitis (antibodies attacking brain neurons) have been found to cause psychosis and OCD
- Stanford University found that patients improve more when they are treated with diet and lifestyle changes, as well as medication – one's metabolic condition affects mental health e.g. by improving mood
- A firm called Cognoa is using AI to diagnose autism in children by analysing their behaviour
- There is a deep rift between neurology and psychiatry in the UK closing this gap would make diagnosis and treatment easier
- The final line o he article: biology is coming, whether psychiatry is ready or not.

Lost or fond – attachment insecurity affects the effect of nostalgia on recovery from sad mood

Cavanagh et al (2015)

- Nostalgia can be beneficial when feeling sad it can cause a reverie of reminiscence and improve mood
- The positive effect of nostalgia is stronger when people are confident in their social relationships (they have secure attachments)

- A quote from the introduction: If you distrust the reliability of your social relationships, calling them to mind may have little beneficial effect.
- Feeling lonely can trigger nostalgia
- This study hypothesised that engaging in a nostalgic reflection after seeing something sad would improve mood better than participating in an ordinary event
- However, the findings did not support the hypothesis. The people in the nostalgic condition actually had lesser mood recovery than the control group
- A strength of the study is that it was very controlled, making it easier to examine the relationship between nostalgia and sadness
- A limitation is that the researchers aren't sure if they can generalise their findings to other negative emotions like disgust or guilt

Moving While Black – attitudes to other racial groups influence speed judgements

Kendrick and Sinclair (2015)

- This study investigated how people feel threatened about others approaching them, depending on their race
- It contributes to the research into interracial interactions, studying the precursor act of moving towards someone before interacting – this can make people form judgements before exchanging even a word
- Previous studies have shown that some White people feel threatened by Black people due to racial stereotypes
- e.g. *Trawalter et al (2008)* found that White people with racial biases were more likely to interpret neutral black faces as threatening
- Research (*Artwohl, 2002; Solomon & Horn, 1986*) suggests that time moves slower for people in a fearful situation e.g. a car crash
- The researchers' hypothesis was proved right: White people who feel more intergroup threat judged Black faces moving towards them as slower than White faces (at the same speed)
- Also, as intergroup anxiety increased, time seemed to pass more slowly when viewing Black rather than White faces
- This research is relevant to real-life situations because moving towards each other can set the tone for an interaction
- It also highlights how complex interracial the dynamics of race-based threat and perception of people are
- Finally, it can help create interventions to guide people 'across the often rocky terrain of such encounters'

'The brain does not fully mature until the age of 25' – a discussion

EVELYN F, Y12

"The brain does not fully mature until the age of 25." I'm sure that most of you have heard of this 'fact' being tossed around on the internet. This leads to notions such as how people under 25 cannot make mature and responsible decisions. I have even seen people claiming that a 24-year-old should be considered a child because their brain hasn't fully developed.

To tackle the question of how accurate the statement "the brain does not fully mature until the age of 25" is, first, we have to look at what scientists say, not just what random people on social media say. In the conclusion of a paper on the maturation of the adolescent brain by Arain et al published in 2013, it was stated that "The development and maturation of the prefrontal cortex occurs primarily during adolescence and is fully accomplished at the age of 25 years." The prefrontal cortex is responsible for executive functions including decision making. It is also suggested that adolescents under the age of 25 are more vulnerable to the temptation of risky behaviour because of the low level of the neurotransmitter of GABA responsible for inhibiting risky behaviour compared to adults.

I contest the notion that people under 25 are incapable of making mature and responsible decisions, because:

For one, 25 is an estimate, just like how it is said that you reach your peak height at 18, there is no specific age, it is different for everyone, and there are factors such as biological sex, nutrition, rest, just to name a few. Not to mention, there is no actual evidence to suggest that the prefrontal cortex fully develops at 25.

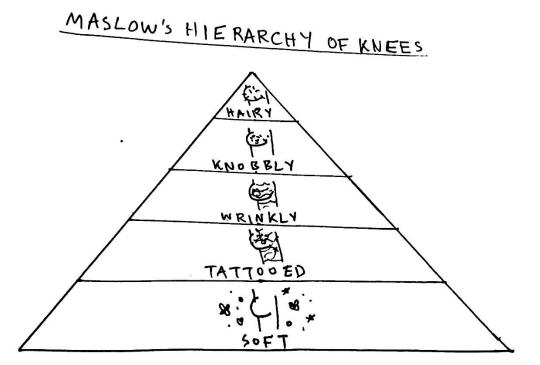
Secondly, low level of GABA makes you more likely to succumb to the temptation of risky behaviour such as doing drugs, it is not definitive, there are plenty of adolescents who have resisted such temptations.

Besides, there is a difference between the meaning of the word "mature" when we use it to describe our brain and when we use it to describe a person. When we say a brain is mature, we mean that it has physically fully developed, this is an objective fact. And when we say that a person is mature, we mean that they are emotionally, mentally well-developed, they are cultured, and they behave like what our society defines to be an adult, this is a subjective opinion. A person can simultaneously have a brain that has yet fully developed and be considered mature and responsible enough to make their own decisions.

Maturity as a person is gained through knowledge and experience not age, 25 isn't a magical point where suddenly you have it all figured out. A 20-year-old who has been through a lot can be considered to be more mature than a 30-year-old who has been shielded from the real world their whole life.

However, it is true that biological factors can cause adolescents under the age of 25 to be more vulnerable to risky behaviour, therefore, they are worth being taken into considerations when it comes to legal matters as in legal practice, there is a need for a specific age, the law cannot just say that you have to look at it case by case, that would be impractical.

Nevertheless, the idea that "the brain does not fully mature until the age of 25" holds little significance outside of legal matters. Adolescents under the age of 25 have the capacity to be mature and responsible despite their vulnerability to risky behaviour. The possibility of their prefrontal cortex not being fully developed may call for leniency but does not excuse bad behaviour. They should be held accountable for their decisions. They should also be allowed to make decisions for themselves.



The Big Five personality test

IMAAN A, Y8

FROM PERSONALITY TESTING INFO

FOR EACH STATEMENT 1-50 MARK HOW MUCH YOU AGREE WITH ON THE SCALE 1-5, WHERE 1=DISAGREE, 2=SLIGHTLY DISAGREE, 3=NEUTRAL, 4=SLIGHTLY AGREE AND 5=AGREE.

- 1. AM THE LIFE OF THE PARTY
- 2. FEEL LITTLE CONCERN FOR OTHERS
- 3. AM ALWAYS PREPARED
- 4. GET STRESSED OUT EASILY
- 5. HAVE A RICH VOCABULARY
- 6. DON'T TALK A LOT
- 7. AM INTERESTED IN PEOPLE
- 8. LEAVE MY BELONGINGS AROUND
- 9. AM RELAXED MOST OF THE TIME
- 10. HAVE DIFFICULTY UNDERSTANDING ABSTRACT IDEAS
- 11. FEEL COMFORTABLE AROUND PEOPLE
- 12. INSULT PEOPLE
- 13. PAY ATTENTION TO DETAILS
- 14. WORRY ABOUT THINGS
- 15. HAVE A VIVID IMAGINATION
- 16. KEEP IN THE BACKGROUND
- 17. SYMPATHIZE WITH OTHERS' FEELINGS
- 18. MAKE A MESS OF THINGS
- 19. SELDOM FEEL BLUE

- 20. AM NOT INTERESTED IN ABSTRACT IDEAS
- 21. START CONVERSATIONS
- 22. AM NOT INTERESTED IN OTHER PEOPLE'S PROBLEMS
- 23. GET CHORES DONE RIGHT AWAY
- 22. AM NOT INTERESTED IN OTHER PEOPLE'S PROBLEMS
- 24. AM EASILY DISTURBED
- 25. HAVE EXCELLENT IDEAS
- 26. HAVE LITTLE TO SAY
- 27. HAVE A SOFT HEART
- 28. OFTEN FORGET TO PUT THINGS BACK
 IN THEIR PROPER PLACE
- 29. GET UPSET EASILY
- 30. DO NOT HAVE A GOOD IMAGINATION
- 31. TALK TO A LOT OF DIFFERENT PEOPLE AT PARTIES
- 32. AM NOT REALLY INTERESTED IN OTHERS
- 33. LIKE ORDER
- 34. CHANGE MY MOOD A LOT
- 35. AM QUICK TO UNDERSTAND THINGS.
- 36. DON'T LIKE TO DRAW ATTENTION TO MYSELF
- 37. TAKE TIME OUT FOR OTHERS
- 38. SHIRK MY DUTIES
- 39. HAVE FREQUENT MOOD SWINGS
- 40. USE DIFFICULT WORDS
- 41. DON'T MIND BEING THE CENTER OF ATTENTION
- 42. FEEL OTHERS' EMOTIONS
- 43. FOLLOW A SCHEDULE

- 44. GET IRRITATED EASILY
- **45. SPEND TIME REFLECTING ON THINGS**
- 46. AM QUIET AROUND STRANGERS
- **47. MAKE PEOPLE FEEL AT EASE**
- 48. AM EXACTING IN MY WORK
- **49. OFTEN FEEL BLUE**
- 50. AM FULL OF IDEAS

Now calculate your score!

THE SCORES YOU CALCULATE SHOULD BE BETWEEN ZERO AND FORTY. BELOW IS A DESCRIPTION OF EACH TRAIT.

- EXTROVERSION (E) IS THE PERSONALITY TRAIT OF SEEKING FULFILLMENT FROM SOURCES OUTSIDE THE SELF OR IN COMMUNITY, HIGH SCORERS TEND TO BE VERY SOCIAL WHILE LOW SCORERS PREFER TO WORK ON THEIR PROJECTS ALONE.
- AGREEABLENESS (A) REFLECTS MUCH INDIVIDUALS ADJUST THEIR BEHAVIOR TO SUIT OTHERS. HIGH SCORERS ARE
 TYPICALLY POLITE AND LIKE PEOPLE. LOW SCORERS TEND TO 'TELL IT LIKE IT IS'.
- CONSCIENTIOUSNESS (C) IS THE PERSONALITY TRAIT OF BEING HONEST AND HARDWORKING. HIGH SCORERS TEND TO FOLLOW RULES AND PREFER CLEAN HOMES. LOW SCORERS MAY BE MESSY AND CHEAT OTHERS.
 - . NEUROTICISM (N) IS THE PERSONALITY TRAIT OF BEING EMOTIONAL.
- OPENNESS TO EXPERIENCE (O) IS THE PERSONALITY TRAIT OF SEEKING NEW EXPERIENCE AND INTELLECTUAL PURSUITS. HIGH SCORES MAY DAY DREAM A LOT. LOW SCORERS MAY BE VERY DOWN TO EARTH.

- END OF JOURNAL -