

The modern way of thinking about and assessing personality is with the Big Five personality traits ([goo.gl/VfCdCy](https://goo.gl/VfCdCy)).

### The Big Five

- O – Openness to experience
- C – Conscientiousness
- E – Extraversion
- A – Agreeableness
- N – Neuroticism

You can get a basic idea of your personality traits here:

[personality-testing.info/tests/BIG5.php](https://personality-testing.info/tests/BIG5.php)

Some key points about personality traits:

- ❖ A person can be happy and healthy no matter which traits they have, although certain people may find their traits are difficult to manage – e.g. Highly neurotic people may struggle with anxiety ... but just because they have this underlying trait, it doesn't mean they can't live happy and healthy lives.
- ❖ Personality traits are fairly stable over our life span, so rather than “working on them,” we want to learn how to best function with them – e.g. Some personality traits may cause us to have biased ways of thinking and behaving, and we can work on these biases (or “cognitive distortions”). We can see which distortions we have that that are negatively impacting our lives, and find alternative ways of thinking and behaving. And we can recognise that we all have different tendencies, and different interpretations of events, and that sometimes we can adjust these to improve our lives.

## 2. Our Guest – Dr Michelle McCormack

Dr Michelle McCormack is an experienced Health Psychologist who takes a compassionate approach to her clinical work. She completed her doctoral thesis on the association between binge eating, emotion regulation and attachment style and can help people experiencing binge eating disorder, bulimia or weight management difficulties. Additionally, she is experienced helping clients experiencing anxiety and mood disorders including major depression, generalised anxiety, social anxiety, and phobias.

Michelle has specialised training in the area of health psychology and can support people with medical conditions, such as infertility and pregnancy loss, diabetes, and chronic illness. As a Health Psychologist Michelle can help you stop unhealthy habits and support you in overcoming the physical, mental and emotional barriers that are preventing you from being the person you want to be.

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We'll hear from Michelle (and have some time for Q&A):

- ❖ What her job involves
- ❖ What she experiences in her job (insights, common problems, how people's personalities affect their lives)

When it comes to our personality traits and our behaviours, it can be very healthy and helpful to be self-aware and understand how and why we think and behave the way we do.

First, we'll look at 7 examples of cognitive distortions, or unhealthy thinking styles, that we may have (or may notice in other people).

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### TO DO

Make a note next to any of the cognitive distortions if you recognise that you sometimes think this way.

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#### 1. Black-and-white thinking

- 'If it's not perfect, then it's useless.'
- 'If you don't love me, then you must hate me.'
- 'Either I succeed, or I'm a total failure.'
- 'If I mess up this part, I may as well give up the whole thing.'

#### 2. Filtering

- 'I can't see anything good about my situation.'
- 'I don't have any good points.'
- 'There's no hope.'
- 'All I get is pain.'

#### 3. Over-generalising

- 'Everything's going wrong.'
- 'Nothing I do ever turns out right.'
- 'I'll always be a failure.'
- 'There's no hope.'

#### 4. Mind-reading

- 'She ignored me on purpose.'
- 'You don't really love me.'
- 'They think I'm boring.'
- 'You're only saying that because . . .'

#### 5. Fortune-telling

- 'I'll be depressed for ever.'
- 'I'll never get another job.'
- 'Things can only get worse.'

#### 6. Emotional reasoning

- 'I feel like a failure, so I must be one.'
- 'If I'm angry, you must have done something to make me so.'
- 'I wouldn't be worrying if there wasn't something to worry about.'
- 'Because I feel unattractive, I must be.'

#### 7. Personalising

- 'Everyone is looking at me.'
- 'That criticism was meant for me.'
- 'It must have been me that made her feel bad.'
- 'He didn't return my greeting. What did I do?'

Note: Excerpts taken from "Understanding and changing self-defeating beliefs," by Wayne Froggatt and Richard Lakeman. We encourage you to read the full piece at [testandcalc.com/Self\\_Defeating\\_Beliefs](http://testandcalc.com/Self_Defeating_Beliefs)

## 4. Cognitive Distortions – What can you do?

- ❖ For a start, catch yourself doing it. Know the cues to watch for: looking at things in extremes, only seeing negatives, building up the bad points in a situation (be it past, present or future), 'reading' other people's minds, predicting the future, assuming that what you feel is reality, and relating everything back to yourself.
- ❖ Watch especially for rigid thinking. When you find yourself resisting other ways of viewing something, this could be a sign that you are locking yourself into a narrowed, distorted viewpoint.
- ❖ Stop using words which exaggerate – like always, forever, totally, all, everything, everybody, nothing, nobody, never and the like.
- ❖ Get things back into balance – by looking for the side of the picture you have been filtering out. Make a list, for example, of the positives and the negatives. If you cannot find both, you know you are distorting reality. Few things are either one way or the other – so keep listing.
- ❖ Develop the habit of sticking to the facts – as far as you can unearth them. When you think you might be jumping to conclusions, ask yourself, 'What evidence do I have for assuming this? Is it the most likely explanation for the facts available? Are there any others which may be just as valid?'
- ❖ If you are worrying about something, rate the chances of it happening on a scale of, say, 0–100 per cent. Being this specific will help you clarify vague predictions.
- ❖ Finally, if it is possible, check out your interpretation of something you are concerned about and see how it compares with reality.

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## 5. Core Beliefs

Core beliefs are what we believe about ourselves, and people who have negative core beliefs will typically distort reality in a way that confirms their core beliefs. Common negative core beliefs are:

I'm unlovable  
I'm unworthy  
I'm a failure  
I'm bad  
I'm stupid

Note: Read more about core beliefs, what they mean and how to challenge them at [goo.gl/hJvntp](http://goo.gl/hJvntp)

Another important part of how we think and behave is how we are affected by our values. Below are some of the most common values.

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### TO DO

Read through the list, and write a letter next to each value:

V = Very important

Q = Quite important

N = Not so important

Make sure to score at least ten as Very important.

There are no right or wrong answers!

At the end, choose 6 of your Vs and write them out.

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- 1. Acceptance: to be open to and accepting of myself, others, life etc
- 2. Adventure: to be adventurous; to actively seek, create, or explore novel or stimulating experiences
- 3. Assertiveness: to respectfully stand up for my rights and request what I want
- 4. Authenticity: to be authentic, genuine, real; to be true to myself
- 5. Beauty: to appreciate, create, nurture or cultivate beauty in myself, others, the environment etc
- 6. Caring: to be caring towards myself, others, the environment etc
- 7. Challenge: to keep challenging myself to grow, learn, improve
- 8. Compassion: to act with kindness towards those who are suffering
- 9. Connection: to engage fully in whatever I am doing, and be fully present with others
- 10. Contribution: to contribute, help, assist, or make a positive difference to myself or others
- 11. Conformity: to be respectful and obedient of rules and obligations
- 12. Cooperation: to be cooperative and collaborative with others
- 13. Courage: to be courageous or brave; to persist in the face of fear, threat, or difficulty
- 14. Creativity: to be creative or innovative
- 15. Curiosity: to be curious, open-minded and interested; to explore and discover
- 16. Encouragement: to encourage and reward behaviour that I value in myself or others
- 17. Equality: to treat others as equal to myself, and vice-versa

- 18. Excitement: to seek, create and engage in activities that are exciting, stimulating or thrilling
- 19. Fairness: to be fair to myself or others
- 20. Fitness: to maintain or improve my fitness; to look after my physical and mental health and wellbeing
- 21. Flexibility: to adjust and adapt readily to changing circumstances
- 22. Freedom: to live freely; to choose how I live and behave, or help others do likewise
- 23. Friendliness: to be friendly, companionable, or agreeable towards others
- 24. Forgiveness: to be forgiving towards myself or others
- 25. Fun: to be fun-loving; to seek, create, and engage in fun-filled activities
- 26. Generosity: to be generous, sharing and giving, to myself or others
- 27. Gratitude: to be grateful for and appreciative of the positive aspects of myself, others and life
- 28. Honesty: to be honest, truthful, and sincere with myself and others
- 29. Humour: to see and appreciate the humorous side of life
- 30. Humility: to be humble or modest; to let my achievements speak for themselves
- 31. Industry: to be industrious, hard-working, dedicated
- 32. Independence: to be self-supportive, and choose my own way of doing things
- 33. Intimacy: to open up, reveal, and share myself – emotionally or physically – in my close personal relationships
- 34. Justice: to uphold justice and fairness
- 35. Kindness: to be kind, compassionate, considerate, nurturing or caring towards myself or others
- 36. Love: to act lovingly or affectionately towards myself or others
- 37. Mindfulness: to be conscious of, open to, and curious about my here-and-now experience
- 38. Order: to be orderly and organized
- 39. Open-mindedness: to think things through, see things from other's points of view, and weigh evidence fairly
- 40. Patience: to wait calmly for what I want

- 41. Persistence: to continue resolutely, despite problems or difficulties
- 42. Pleasure: to create and give pleasure to myself or others
- 43. Power: to strongly influence or wield authority over others, e.g. taking charge, leading, organizing
- 44. Reciprocity: to build relationships in which there is a fair balance of giving and taking
- 45. Respect: to be respectful towards myself or others; to be polite, considerate and show positive regard
- 46. Responsibility: to be responsible and accountable for my actions
- 47. Romance: to be romantic; to display and express love or strong affection
- 48. Safety: to secure, protect, or ensure safety of myself or others
- 49. Self-awareness: to be aware of my own thoughts, feelings and actions
- 50. Self-care: to look after my health and wellbeing, and get my needs met
- 51. Self-development: to keep growing, advancing or improving in knowledge, skills, character, or life experience
- 52. Self-control: to act in accordance with my own ideals
- 53. Sensuality: to create, explore and enjoy experiences that stimulate the five senses
- 54. Sexuality: to explore or express my sexuality
- 55. Spirituality: to connect with things bigger than myself
- 56. Skilfulness: to continually practice and improve my skills, and apply myself fully when using them
- 57. Supportiveness: to be supportive, helpful, encouraging, and available to myself or others
- 58. Trust: to be trustworthy; to be loyal, faithful, sincere, and reliable
- 59. Insert your own unlisted value here:
- 60. Insert your own unlisted value here:

Note: Excerpt taken from "The Confidence Gap," by Russ Harris. We encourage you to read the full piece at [actmindfully.com.au/upimages/complete\\_worksheets\\_for\\_The\\_Confidence\\_Gap.pdf](http://actmindfully.com.au/upimages/complete_worksheets_for_The_Confidence_Gap.pdf)