

ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT SKILLS (LII312)

5. TRAITS, ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIORS OF LEADERS – Pt. 1

5.1. Personality Dimensions

In psychology, personality traits are outlined within five broad domains or dimensions of personality that are used to describe human personality, also called the Big Five. The Big Five factors are openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism. Within each factor, a cluster of correlated specific traits is found; for example, extraversion includes such related qualities as gregariousness, assertiveness, excitement seeking, warmth, activity, and positive emotions. The Big Five model is able to account for different traits in personality without overlapping. During studies, the Big Five personality traits show consistency in interviews, self-descriptions and observations. This five-factor structure seems to be found across a wide range of participants of different ages and of different cultures.

A summary of the factors of the Big Five and their traits is outlined below:

- **Openness to experience:** (*inventive/curious vs. consistent/cautious*). Appreciation for art, emotion, adventure, unusual ideas, curiosity, and variety of experience. Openness reflects the degree of intellectual curiosity, creativity and a preference for novelty and variety a person has.
- **Conscientiousness:** (*efficient/organized vs. easy-going/careless*). A tendency to be organized and dependable, show self-discipline, act dutifully, aim for achievement, and prefer planned rather than spontaneous behavior.
- **Extroversion:** (*outgoing/energetic vs. solitary/reserved*). Energy, positive emotions, assertiveness, sociability and the tendency to seek stimulation in the company of others, and talkativeness.
- **Agreeableness:** (*friendly/compassionate vs. analytical/detached*). A tendency to be compassionate and cooperative rather than suspicious and antagonistic towards others.
- **Neuroticism:** (*sensitive/nervous vs. secure/confident*). The tendency to experience unpleasant emotions easily, such as anger, anxiety, depression, and vulnerability.

Also, Nettle (2009) states, “The central notion of personality psychology is the term trait. The trait is a continuum along which individuals vary. For example the trait of nervousness means the continuum of ‘never nervous at all’ to ‘often severely nervous’.”

5.1.1. Emotions

Our emotions seem to rule our daily lives. Routinely, we make decisions based on whether we are happy, angry, sad, bored, or frustrated. We choose activities and hobbies based on the emotions they incite. Researchers think of emotions in a different way. An emotion is a complex psychological state that involves three distinct components: a subjective experience, a physiological response, and a behavioral or expressive response. Fridja says (1986) “Emotional phenomena are non-instrumental behaviors and non-instrumental features of behavior, physiological changes and evaluative, subject related experiences, as evoked by external or mental events, and primarily by the significance of such events.” Emotions are elicited by significant events and they result from the interaction of an event’s actual or anticipated consequences and the subject’s concerns. In addition to understanding exactly what emotions are, researchers have also tried to identify and classify the different types of emotions. Recently, researchers have suggested that there are basic emotions that are universal throughout human cultures: fear, disgust, anger, surprise, happiness, sadness, embarrassment, excitement, contempt, shame, pride, satisfaction, and amusement.

5.1.2. Scruples

Having scruples is kind of like having a conscience, so your morals or scruples cause you to act in ways that you think are right. The idea of scruples has to do with ethics and morality or what is right and wrong. If you had no scruples at all, you'd just kill, steal, and cheat without remorse. Scruples are a kind of moral compass that lets you know what's right. Often people use this word in an outraged way when someone does something bad, for example, "Don't you have any scruples?"

5.1.3. Empathy

Empathy is a term that is often misunderstood. Empathy is the ability to see the world as another person, to share and understand another person's feelings, needs, concerns and/or emotional state. Empathy is a selfless act, it enables us to learn more about people and relationships with people, it is a desirable skill beneficial to ourselves, others and society. Phrases such as 'being in your shoes' and 'soul mates' imply empathy. Empathy is the recognition and understanding of the states of mind, beliefs, desires, and particularly, emotions of others. It is often characterized as the ability to "put oneself into another's shoes", or experiencing the outlook or emotions of another being within oneself. Being empathetic requires two basic components; effective communication and a strong imagination. Shared experiences can also help you to empathize. Empathy is a skill that can be developed and, as with most interpersonal skills, empathizing (at some level) comes naturally to most people. You can probably think of examples when you have felt empathy for others or when others have been empathetic towards you. Imagine a colleague becomes stressed at work due to an unfortunate situation in their personal life; their productivity falls and deadlines are missed. If you were empathetic you might try to relieve work pressures and offer to help out where you could. You could try to imagine how it must feel to be that person and understand why their work commitments were not being met. Also McLaren (2013) suggests "Empathy is a social and emotional skill that helps us feel and understand the emotions, circumstances, intentions, thoughts, and needs of others, such that we can offer sensitive, perceptive and appropriate communication and support." Sometimes empathy is considered perhaps the most advanced of all communication skills.

5.1.4. Adjustment

Have you ever tried to adjust your mood? Consider the following scenario, One day you wake up feeling irritated by everyone, focused on "what's wrong" in your life, or just plain apathetic to all of it. This cranky disposition just crept up on you. You may stay in this mood for some time, but finally you say to yourself, "I hate feeling this way! This is not who I am. I need an attitude adjustment!" Consider for a moment the possibility that you didn't just fall into your bad mood based on a single event, but that you very gradually became immersed in a lack of happy thoughts due to an absorption of negative energy from the people around you. Perhaps a coworker made an unflattering remark to you the other day, and you've been trying to think of a comeback ever since. Maybe a friend called four times in

the past week to vent about how her husband is a jerk and her kids don't appreciate her and trying to be a good friend, you make her feel better by listening to every sordid detail and recalling examples in your own life when loved ones had been insensitive to you as well. The effects of these incidents may not be immediately noticeable, but each one builds upon the one before it, until they attach to you and take hold. It is so subtle sometimes that you don't even realize it until it's too late and has affected your attitude in a big way. Your thoughts increasingly grow overly negative from day to day, gaining momentum, until finally you've had enough! As far as you're concerned, you are unloved and unappreciated, and no one is going to convince you any differently! So how can we adjust our mood? Here are three suggestions;

1) The Happiness Inventory:

The Happiness Inventory is where you write down all of the things you enjoy. For instance, you may list: playing your guitar (which you haven't made time to do in years); taking a bubble bath, going out to the movies; taking your dog for a long walk while the sun shines brightly on your face; or how about baking cookies; putting together a puzzle on the kitchen table; or dancing around the house to your favorite tunes. Maybe you love flowers -- go to the market and buy your special kind and just stare at them all day if you want. After all, this idea is like looking through a seed catalogue, full of a variety of beautiful, colorful options that are perfect just for you. Personal happiness can only come from the experience of joy. No one can do it for you; it has to come from feeling good on the inside. An imbalance in one's life -- caused by an abundance of negativity and a lack of fun and play will eventually manifest into a bad attitude that will be a challenge to shake off. Put balance back into your life by doing things that make you smile.

2) Note to Self:

Try this experiment: Sit down and have your "future self" write a letter to your "current self." Use your imagination and fantasize! The sky's the limit! Tell your "current self" how amazing life is! The "future you" is having the time of his life! The "current you" doesn't have to worry about a thing because that coworker who's always rude to you took a job somewhere else, you now own your own extremely successful business and your friend, who used to constantly complain to you, has never felt better and has nothing to say but positive things! You are able to live in the moment (which really isn't so bad) without thinking about the past or the future, because everything totally works out. Your "future self" is loving life, and

that is what you have to look forward to! All you need to do is be here now... the future will take care of itself and the past is old news.

3) Emotion Is Energy in Motion:

Take responsibility for your mood and choose not to stay in it. Realize that just as this energy moved into you, it must move out. Try not to be around others when in a bad mood so as not to spread the misery. Accept what it is, let it go, and allow yourself to move forward. The moment you start feeling a little depressed or begin having more and more negative thoughts, do not shrug it off and let it get worse. It's a slippery slope. The longer you ignore these emotions, the harder it will be to detach from them and live a happy, emotionally healthy life. Nip it in the bud!

If your life is balanced, and you set aside time on a regular basis to have fun and do things that make you feel happy, then no matter what life and other people throw at you, it won't affect you in such a negative way. Everything you encounter will be much, much easier to handle, because your vibration will naturally be higher, and you will not easily attach to the negative energy of others. Being stuck in a rut is largely a brain thing. Bad things happen, but it's how we internalize an experience in our minds that ultimately determines if and when we'll move past it. To sum it up how we feel impacts what we do. Which means, if you aren't getting the results you want, then perhaps your attitude is playing a role in your lack of success.

5.1.5. Openness to Experience

Openness to experience is one of the domains which are used to describe human personality in the Five Factor Model. Openness involves active imagination, aesthetic sensitivity, attentiveness to inner feelings, preference for variety, and intellectual curiosity. Thus, openness can be viewed as a global personality trait consisting of a set of specific traits, habits, and tendencies that cluster together. Openness tends to be normally distributed with a small number of individuals scoring extremely high or low on the trait, and most people scoring moderately. People who score low on openness are considered to be closed to experience. They tend to be conventional and traditional in their outlook and behavior. They prefer familiar routines to new experiences, and generally have a narrower range of interests. People high in openness tend to have more liberal political views, whereas those who are low in openness tend to be more conservative, and are more likely to endorse authoritarian, ethnocentric and prejudiced views. Openness has moderate positive relationships with creativity, intelligence and knowledge. Openness to experience has both motivational and structural components. People

high in openness are motivated to seek new experiences and to engage in self-examination. Structurally, they have a fluid style of consciousness that allows them to make novel associations between remotely connected ideas. Closed people by contrast are more comfortable with familiar and traditional experiences.

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