

DOES MY PERSONALITY LEAD TO DEPRESSION?



WELL, DOES IT?

“Does my personality assessment indicate I might have a propensity for depression?”

A college student in a university where I recently spent two days teaching students about the PLACE profile asked the previous question. Many reading this article know “P” in PLACE stands for Personality Discovery. How would you answer the student’s question?

WHAT IS PERSONALITY, ANYWAY?

Before answering the student’s question let me first cover how PLACE uses personality. Over the last 16 years I have had hundreds of people contact me regarding his/her definition of personality. Many encourage and/or challenge me (sometimes not so nicely) to expand, change or modify my description of personality that I have written in *Finding Your PLACE in Life and Ministry*. My description in the workbook (p. 6) is:

Personality is the inward and outward expression of emotional traits and characteristics that shape who you are, how you act and what you do.

During the opening section of Personality Discovery we encourage those attending our workshop to write their own definition of personality. After doing this I laugh and say, “Most likely whatever you wrote you can find an expert that agrees with you. There are about as many definitions of personality as there are people.” I even have a section in my favorites on my computer labeled “Personality” that has literally dozens upon dozens of experts and their definition of personality. My purpose in “Personality Discover” in the PLACE profile is to give individuals a snapshot of some past tendencies, characteristics, or traits in their lives that most likely will give them indications of current and future tendencies, characteristics, or traits that will influence how they will approach and live out their purpose in life and ministry.

BACK TO ORIGINAL QUESTION –DOES PERSONALITY LEAD TO DEPRESSION?

Now back to my original question –“Does personality lead to depression?” Based on how I am defining personality I would say “no” with a hesitation. I don’t believe personality based on how I describe personality leads to depression, but life experiences lived out and filtered through your personality can lead to depression.

Imagine you are a sales person with a high “D” personality who has a tendency even in making a sales call to be way too opinionated about a subject with a potential customer. The potential customer informs you (usually they just don’t buy) they will not buy from someone who is so opinionated about issues like you displayed during your sales process. You continue to lose sales and it becomes evident that you are losing them because you are far too opinionated about any and every subject that comes up with potential customers. You go several months and make few sales and now your livelihood is jeopardized. This leads to depression.

Now imagine you are a high “D” personality and very opinionated and you are selling your product to a potential customer and the customer asks specifically about a certain feature of your product. You passionately give your “opinion” only of your product’s feature based on the potential customer’s question. Your customer comments that they love your passion and opinion on how sold you are on your product. Shortly thereafter the potential customer becomes a customer. This scenario repeats itself several times over the next few months and you make numerous sales and realize it is because of your passion and opinion regarding your product that closes the sale with potential customers. You are ecstatic with your sales results.

In the above two scenarios it was not the opinionated “D” personality trait that lead to being depressed or ecstatic, but life experiences lived out through your personality. Yes personality traits can create a mood that leans toward being depressed or ecstatic, but it is life experiences that we draw upon that impacts personality. We draw upon life experiences that we filter through personality traits. Another way to state this is to say, “Life experiences trigger personality traits in certain situations that can at times cause us to filter other life experiences through a certain filter (i.e. –depression). The key to life and ministry is knowing when to temper a personality trait like being opinionated and when and how it is appropriate to passionately share your opinion. If one personality trait (opinionated) leads to another personality trait (depressed) then you must learn how to minimize your opinion based on situations that you encounter through your life.

By the way, the example I gave about being too opinionated came from my own personal life, both the positive and negative parts of the example above.

SO WHAT’S THE BOTTOM LINE?

Personality does not lead to depression, but life experiences can trigger personality traits that can lead to depression. We teach in the Personality Discovery section of PLACE the following two principles:

- The Holy Spirit is not factored in the personality description we provide

- Personalities are not bad or good; it is what you do with them and who (God or you) is in control that makes the difference.

**So the question should not be
“Does my personality tend to have a
propensity to lead to depression, but is
the Holy Spirit in control of my personality?”**

Serving Him Together,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jay". The letters are cursive and fluid.

Jay
Founder & President of PLACE Ministries