

## Eight Questions About Your Personality At Work

*Is your working environment right for you? Find out through these introspective questions.*

Personality tests have long been used in the workplace as an aid for employers to assess the suitability of potential candidates. Unfortunately, the results aren't always shared with candidates or examined in greater depth. However, taking a closer look at your personality in and outside the office can be an insightful and interesting task to do alone. Here, two experts turn the personality test on its head to make it work for employees rather than employers.

By gaining awareness of your choices and behavior and considering how they are reflected at work, you can develop an understanding of your relationships and nature, explains Youssef Nabil, Senior Consultant at Dubai based Innovative Human Resource Solutions. An understanding of your personality and personal preferences, will give you the chance to assess whether your working environment is right for you.

"Ultimately, success in career or life comes from knowing yourself," explains London-based career coach, Evelyn Cotter. There are swathes of employees unhappy at work because they have sacrificed their personal preferences or in other words, their core values, she goes on to explain.

Cotter adds that if you really get to know yourself, you will find that you have specific preferences for everything. Becoming conscious of those preferences will help you to make decisions that aid your happiness and progress.

It can be quite difficult to understand the intricacies of who you are without the help of an expert, but everyone can begin by becoming more reflective about their day-to-day life. Asking yourself the following questions can help:

### **1. At what moments have I felt most 'myself' at work and who was this self?**

Try to think of three examples at your current job when you have felt most yourself, it may be during a meeting, in negotiations with a client, analyzing a specific problem or heading up a team for the day, says Cotter, Founder of London-based Seven Coaching.

Once you have identified three examples, examine the frequency of these moments and whether or not they were part of your day-to-day role. There might be a pattern, or you may notice that these moments occurred when you were doing an additional task outside your usual responsibilities. How would you describe this person? Use adjectives to define them, for example confident, outspoken or thoughtful.

### **2. When do I feel most myself outside work and who is this self?**

The type of people you choose to spend time with and environments you enjoy are probably reflected in and outside of work, explains Cotter. For example if you enjoy being sociable then a workplace with a buzzy atmosphere might be most stimulating. This may explain why you feel demotivated in your new, smaller team. Try to examine three instances when you have felt most yourself outside work, perhaps on holiday, with a partner or alone listening to the radio. Define this self, is it outgoing, calm, focused? Are the stimuli that evoked this self missing from your daily life?

### **3. At seven what did I most enjoy doing? What values was I honoring then?**

“Values don’t change much from a young age,” explains Cotter. If you think back to the childhood activities you most enjoyed doing, such as dancing, role-play or building, the essence of these activities will most likely be the same as those you value now, for example creativity, freedom and expression. Take time to assess what it was you enjoyed about those childhood activities and use adjectives to describe that seven-year-old self. How does this compare to your life now? Are you honoring those values as an adult? “Priorities may change over time, but core values will remain,” Cotter adds.

### **4. In what situations have I felt least like myself?**

“Work and social conditioning makes us think that we shouldn’t pick and choose with careers,” explains Cotter. However, this results in people doing unsuitable jobs and can lead to stress, unhappiness and dissatisfaction. Remember three times when you have felt least like yourself and describe that person. Are there any similarities between the situations? For example, you may not have dared to express your opinion or perhaps you were discouraging towards a colleague or in a role with a lot of exposure. Consider the context of the situations: did they involve high stress, analytical skills or arguments?

### **5. When I felt under intense pressure or stress, how did I feel and how did I express those feelings?**

Stressful situations can provoke gut reactions, which are a reflection of our core personality, explain Nabil, Senior Consultant at Dubai based Innovative Human Resource Solutions. Taking a closer look at how you felt internally during a stressful situation, and what you expressed to those around you can be a “good opportunity to see how people see you” he explains. Your internal and external may not match up, Nabil goes on to add. For example, perhaps you feel extremely anxious but react in a snappy or unforgiving manner to colleagues. Taking time to evaluate the difference between your internal feelings and external behavior may explain clashes or misunderstandings with colleagues.

### **6. What routes do I use to approach problems at work?**

Bringing awareness to the way you approach problems can illuminate parts of your deeper personality, says Nabil. For example, do you take a step back to analyze a situation or react based on gut feeling? Do you avoid thinking about a problem until an answer is paramount or do you deal with it straight away? Try to think of three different situations—for example: teamwork, working alone and working in a foreign environment—to get a rounded answer.

Once you have analyzed the processes that were involved in each case, you may see that although you naturally leave things until the last minute, that’s not the best way to handle stressful situations. Nabil stresses, however, that “we are never one personality type.”

Rather, people often use a mix of senses, including thinking and feeling. Still, people often have a dominate trait, which is relied upon in times of stress.

### **7.What are my beliefs and are they true?**

“A lot of your beliefs aren’t of your own volition; they are inherited from family, society, school or culture,” explains Cotter, adding that while these beliefs may have served others, they might not be serving you. For example, think of your dream job. What is the first thought that comes to mind?

Negative beliefs become very ingrained into our sense of self; so much so that that they are difficult to discern from reality. For instance, a belief such as “small companies are oppressive” may prevent someone from accepting their dream job. Or, “I’m not tough enough for management” might stop an employee furthering their career. Cotter explains that “a belief is just a thought that you keep thinking”, they are not our personality, although they may drive our decisions. Try to catch yourself and provide evidence for and against your beliefs to assess how truthful they are.

### **8.What are my personal preferences?**

“Preferences define our personalities,” explains Nabil. Each person, he says, has a specific set of preferences for everything. If you take an in-depth look at how you prefer to go about each area of your work, you can build a full picture of who you are. For example, do you always pay close attention to details or do you brush over minutiae and go with the flow?

It is worthwhile comparing your preferences with your current job and working environment, and then considering whether or not those preferences are reflected in your role at work. If the answer is no, this may explain why you feel anxious about certain tasks or angered by particular colleagues.

Ultimately, Nabil explains that there is no right or wrong way to work, everyone is different and should find an approach and environment that fits them. The important thing is that you take the time to reflect on your personality and discover what’s best for you.

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