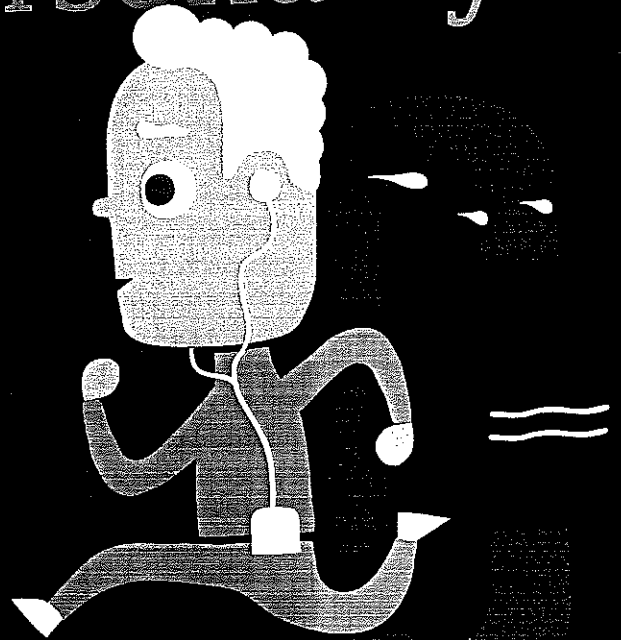


# What's the Right Exercise for Your Personality?

If you hate to exercise, it might be because you haven't found the right activity for you.

**Grant Leitma, Ph.D.**, leads you through a series of simple questions to help you identity an exercise plan that matches your personality type. And just like that, you'll know exactly what to do to make exercise a little more fun and a lot less dreadful.

# A



Have you ever had any of these thoughts:  
*What is the best type of exercise for me? . . .*  
*I just cannot get motivated to exercise. . . .*  
*How do I even get started? . . . Every time I feel like exercising I just lie down until the feeling passes.*

Meanwhile, your friend who is an exercise fanatic keeps telling you, "No pain, no gain."

And then you feel even worse.

Fortunately, exercise does not have to be painful, and it can be incorporated into your lifestyle rather easily.

One of the reasons many people fail to maintain an exercise regime—or even get started with one—is the failure to match their personality with an exercise pattern they will enjoy. If you are having trouble with the whole idea of exercising, it may be because you haven't found the right match between your personality type and your exercise type.

## Personality Plus

Personality is the consistent pattern of values,

thoughts, feelings, needs, and motives that are displayed by our behavior. One way to categorize personality is by three main groupings: type A, type B, and type C.

Type A personality feels compelled to be constantly engaged in high levels of activity. They get annoyed and become easily angered if they feel others are wasting their time. They feel the pressure to achieve and are very competitive.

Type B is quite the opposite. These individuals are more relaxed and at peace with themselves. They are often described as being more easygoing and are slow to get angry.

Type C keeps everything bottled up inside. They internalize their feelings and anger and can easily become discouraged or hopeless.

## Personality and Motivation

While it may appear an overly simplistic way of understanding personality, categorizing personality traits into three types can help capture



an important aspect of personality: motivation.

Each of us possesses different levels of motivation. Some evidence suggests that motivation is partly due to a person's personality type and rate of metabolism. In other words, as someone's rate of metabolism increases, so does their need to generate energy. People with higher levels of metabolism tend to be more aggressive and dominate (type A). They hate boredom and are happiest when they are busy. Therefore they excel in exercises that require a rapid expenditure of energy. Individuals with lower metabolic levels (type B or type C) require less expenditure of energy and should therefore select activities with lower energy requirements.

## Personality and Social-Psychological Needs

Psychologists have found that personality may be influenced not only by motivational and metabolic factors, but also by the drive to fulfill various social-psychological needs. Researcher James Gavin, Ph.D., has suggested that one way to analyze psychological needs is by evaluating how strongly a person scores in six social-psychological need areas. According to Gavin, the six categories of social-psychological need are (1) self-esteem, (2) achievement, (3) mood and tension release, (4) stress management, (5) search for meaning, and (6) playfulness.

Which of those areas are the strongest motivators in your life? If you are able to find a match between your motivational lifestyle and personality, it may just help you find the right exercise for your personality.

## Choosing the Right Activity

Research indicates that staying physically active is an important factor in health and longevity. In fact, it's not only good

for your physical health, but also for your mental health. Overall, physically active adults generally report better mental alertness, more feelings of hopefulness, and less fatigue, depression, anxiety, and stress.

You know you need to get started with some kind of physical activity, but which one should you choose? And how do you pick one you'll stick with and actually *do*?

Some people think that being physically active means you have to start running long distances. But marathons aren't for everyone. The goal is to find the activity to match your personality, so that you'll enjoy it more and have a greater chance of sticking with it.

When I took the personality/exercise assessment (page 28), I scored the highest on Achievement. No surprise, considering I work at a university that emphasizes achievement for administrators, faculty, staff, and students. To get an exercise plan to match my personality, I have pursued power walking two miles a day. I've stuck with this plan for a number of years and have found it to be a satisfying way to stay active. I also add in small things throughout the day, such as taking the stairs instead of elevators.

In addition, I have found ways to multitask while exercising so that I can more effectively manage my time. For example, while speed-walking I work through various work-related problems, listen to my favorite music or audio books, and meditate on Scripture. My activity time also helps to reduce the impact of stress and promote inner healing.

In the final analysis, finding an enjoyable pattern of physical activity is important, because once you enjoy exercise you'll be more likely to make it a lasting part of your lifestyle.

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