Reflection of personality test results

Emotions and personality traits are important to know and understand to help us build relationships and express our feelings. They can be applied to develop good work practices and for social workers to build empathy and trust with our clients.

The Big five project personality test showed the main trait of my personality as extremely extroverted, 94, outgoing, social and energetic. However, also score high for agreeableness 80 and open-mindedness 78. Together they show a picture of an active caring and inquisitive person who is generally conscientious and emotionally stable (Potter, 2017).

Trait theory is a superficial look at personality and does not explain the reasons why a person acts in a certain way (Burger, 2011). Ravelle (1995) suggests that the personality is not made by genetics but is programmed by genetics to be express in certain ways. My top personality trait score is extroversion. I am a very social and outgoing person. However I do not like large parties or places where there is little personal contact or discussion. I also score highly in agreeableness which describes my nature as someone who cares about the feelings of others or is compassionate (Potter, 2017). For example, when I was young my family were very involved in local government and were required to attend functions as a family. After the event people would gather for refreshments. At this point I would wander off spend time with the caretaker and his family who lived in the building. We became very close friends. This shows the unique structure of my extrovert personality and my need to be genuine in my relationships. In my adult years I still would rather be in the kitchen or supporting the people putting on the party rather than mingling with large crowds.

Trait theory has condensed thousands of descriptive words to create a five domain or trait view of personality (Ewen, 2011). Therefore, the personality is not just one trait but to be described across all five major traits to provide a unique profile (Burgess, 2011).

The personality is shaped by experiences showing traits can develop and seem to change over time (Burgess, 2011). My personality scored in the average range for negative emotionality describing me as neither nervous nor calm (Potter 2017). However, I do have high anxiety and I became aware of its impact to my relationships. For example, I finished school in year ten but had always wanted to go to university. I didn't feel smart enough to pass exams, so I avoided conversations about higher education or felt inferior around people who had a degree. I decided I to change my behaviour and enrolled to finish high school and gained a place at university.

Humanistic theory of personality argues that healthy people are generally wanting to grow and change (Myers, 2007). That after they have their basic human needs met, they will become aware of their needs and in an environment of safety and support will go on to fulfil them (Myers, 2007). My behavioural response to feeling this way motived me to study to remove the negative feelings.

Seigl (2012) outlines 10 functions of emotions. Including protecting us from physical harm. For example, as young children my sister and I were fighting next to the stove while we were learning how to boil and egg. Whilst fighting over who would get the first boiled egg we grabbed at the pot on the stove and boiling water went on my arm. I screamed and my body immediately

went into damage control. My heart rate increased, I began shaking with the shock and I turned red in the face. Then I cried and screamed in pain. Seigl (2012) describes this emotion an evolutionary autonomic response. It is the bodies way of letting us know it's in trouble and needing to get back to a safe and healthy state (Seigl, 2012). The physical response of screaming and crying caused my mother to quickly react to stabilise the pain and therefore stop the injury from causing any further harm to the body (Seigl, 2012).

Emotion can also come from a non-physical event (Seigl, 2012). When my father told me, he was diagnosed with stage four cancer I remember feeling an intense pain in my body. My brain was trying to process the information and I found it hard to think clearly or concentrate on work. I had learned through experience that cancer was a debilitating and life-threatening disease. I felt very unhappy and scared for my dad's treatment.

As an extrovert I like share my news with someone. If I'm not able to talk to anyone due to keeping confidence or time of day I like to take a moment to collect my thoughts. I generally sit quietly and reflect on the news and try some calming hot drink. I can either find it hard to discuss issues with other people or I become very chatty about a problem to try to make sense of it. To overcome these feelings I channel my energy into understanding or researching the problem. If news comes at a busy time, I feel quite frustrated that it either interrupts my plans or I want to stop work to spend time with the person. Burger (2011) describes the purpose of emotional response is to help us make changes to our current behaviour to fit in to the new environment.

In another example I received some very good news that my god daughter was going to have a baby. Her late age pregnancy caused some concern, but she was over the most critical period. I felt quite excited and enthusiastic to offer my support. My energy levels and joy about the situation was quite high. However as to not overwhelm her with my excitement I channelled it into making some gifts for her and the new baby. When I'm around her I smile a lot and I want to ask lots of questions and get involved in all the plans. Facial expressions such a smiling and expressing our joy in material and physical ways such as hugging help us to bond and build relationships (Seigl, 2012).

I have a high sociable or extrovert nature. I believe this will be an asset in my social work practice. In my previous work I supported young people into stable housing. Young people require many different agencies to provide support and management for their everyday needs such as for their income, education and housing. Social work practice is about working collaboratively with many different agencies and people, bringing them together to work to a common goal (Australian Association of Social Work [AASW], 2013).

I also score highly in compassion. If I was working with clients with high needs or trauma situations, I would use self-care practices to support my practice (Gerdes & Segal, 2011). I am also a highly anxious person and I like to talk out issues with people to bring clarity and calm the emotions. Gerdes and Segal (2011) argue that being self-aware in the situation is a stabilising force to create a healthy interaction. Mindfulness practice in daily life and social work practice is noted for developing the skills of self-awareness (Decker, Brown, Ong & Stiney-Ziskind, 2015). Therefore, I would incorporate

mindfulness practice through reflective writing or debrief sessions with supervisors to support and stabilise my emotions (Decker et al., 2015; AASW, 2013). I would also engage in reflective practice applying the Gibbs model of refection or another appropriate model to help clarify my feelings and ensure I have effectively managed the situation. This would help me to control my level of anxiety and helpful to lower risk of compassion fatigue (Sicora, 2010). As my personality scores highly in compassion. High levels of compassion are helpful in practice to understand clients and their needs (Decker et al., 2015). But, can mean you are more likely to experience compassion fatigue (Decker et al., 2015). I often find my high energy levels or exuberance to complete work can impact on overlooking the smaller details of work. In social work practice these are critical to complete correctly and on time. As a requirement of Social work practice the AASW (Australian Association for Social Work) practice standards (2013) we are to incorporate the use of technology for communication and support. There are many new technologies to support the social worker to complete tasks to higher level such as electronic diaries and grammar checks to organise tasks and produce high level work.

Becoming aware of our individual differences in personality and how we express our emotion can have a lasting positive effect on health wellbeing of a social worker in their practice. It may also be a factor in deciding the type of work they are suited to and when to seek help if needed.

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