

Discuss the type a
and type b
personalities and the
major health risks of
type a ...

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Type A and type B Personality Traits: Their Implications for Health Care. A personality type theory that helps categorize people into behavioral categories (that have certain overriding styles that affect health) is the one developed by the two cardiologists, Meyer Friedman and Mike Jordan in the 1950's. They realized that there were certain behavioral motifs that were typically seen in patients coming in with coronary conditions. Their investigations led them to develop a dichotomy; which they called Personality Type A and Personality Type B. Individuals who could not be easily categorized were classified as Type AB. They found that people who fell into the Type A category were more likely than the other group to suffer from heart - related conditions; as well as other debilitating conditions. This was again established by the ten year study by Friedman and Rosenman (1974); and treatment as well as preventive care for the Type A patients was explored by Friedman over the years. The theory was also further developed to establish the categories of Personality Type C and Personality type D. The theory has been severely criticised on a number of counts; including the statistical, predictive power, scale construction, and construct validity (Ray and Bozek, 1980). Many theorists believe the theory has been proven obsolete; but it continues to hold ground as part of Pop Psychology and general means of person description. The Type A Personality The Type A personality is also called as the " go - getter' personality. People who are categorized as having a Type A personality are often ambitious, aggressive in behaviour, business-like, like having control, very competitive and impatient. These people can get easily upset if there are delays in tasks and are also liable to rush others to keep up with them. They see competition in

nearly every activity; and respond to it by giving their all. Not winning is a major setback for the Type A personality; as it triggers self doubt. They also tend to be preoccupied with their status, and may seem tightly-wound. Others often describe them as workaholics and as over-achievers who take every deadline and boundary as a personal challenge. These individuals are also likely to be involved in a number of unrelated activities and do well in most or all of them. Friedman's research has isolated three salient elements that come together to form the Type A personality. These are: Free-floating hostility: This trait often shows up as rudeness and irritation; though it is basically a manifestation of the individual's need to excel. This makes them hostile towards anyone or anything that is unrelated to reaching a goal. Time urgency: The Type A personality feels a need to be constructively employed at all times; and may feel guilty if they do not do so. They are less capable of patiently waiting for something; and are likely to take extra effort to reach goals. Competitive drive: These individuals rise to a challenge easily, and are not ready to accept being second best. The stress that most Type A patients complain about is said to originate from decisions taken because of this trait. The individuals type-casted as having a Type A Personality often show certain typical physical characteristics including Facial Tension, Tongue Clicking and / or Teeth Grinding, Dark Circles formed Under Eyes due to a lack of sleep and Facial Sweating, often seen during tense moments.

The Type B Personality The Type B personality is characterized by a more easy-going attitude; an ability to let things go and be relaxed without any particular sense of urgency. They are able to enjoy life, and view failure in perspective to other things, including success. The Type B personality is

associated with less ambition, and with a need to have space and free time. These persons are often drawn to creative pursuits, and may have hobbies and other such activities that they indulge in simply to enjoy themselves without any need to win. Type B individuals are more likely to participate in recreational activities with no sense of competition, and are likely to equally enjoy the activity, regardless of winning or losing. These individuals are mostly described as care-free or easy-going. Given the competitive nature of the world around us, the Type B individuals get left out, and are likely to feel inadequate simply because they do not have the temperament that is considered so desirable by organizations. On the other hand, they are more likely to find their inter-personal interactions more fulfilling as they take the effort to invest in people. These individuals are less likely to suffer the stress related medical conditions (controlling for hereditary factors) that the Type A personality is apt to suffer from. Medical Concerns The Type personality theory was developed as a means of identifying at-risk patients. The risks are greater for Type A individuals, and can be summarized as:

Hypertension: There is nearly 84% more risk for individuals with Type A characteristics as compared to the Type B. Heart Disease: While propounders of the theory claim some form of heart trouble for all type A; evidence has shown that they are definitely more at risk. Research has shown that this risk is related to the stressful conditions that the Type A individual typically develops for themselves. Co-morbidity with Hypertension and fatigue related conditions is also a possibility. New evidence shows that the most significant facet of Type A behavior that is associated with heart conditions is 'Hostility'. The other facets are not

adequate predictors. Blood Clots and High Cholesterol: Other less researched threats are the formation of blood clots in major blood supply systems and the presence of high cholesterol. Cholesterol is known to be positively related to Hypertension and Stress. Thus, co-morbidity is also a concern. Job Stress: The Type A personality drives individuals to choose jobs that bring stress along with it. To an extent, these individuals relish the prospect of stressful conditions; and thus set the tone for the health concerns that come bundled with a stressful job. Social Isolation: Stress is increased by the social isolation that Type A individuals typically experience; due in part to both, their own hostile behaviors, and the lack of time they find to invest in relationships. Given these concerns, it is necessary to identify and help individuals who indulge in precipitating behaviors so that they are less likely to require emergency health care. Healthy attitudes and habits should be taught at an early stage, instead of encouraging the potential problem behaviors.

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