

# Type A and Type B Personalities

by Sophia Tutorial



## WHAT'S COVERED

This lesson will cover the type theory of personality by identifying Type A and Type B personality traits. Our discussion breaks down as follows:

1. Type A and Type B Personalities
2. Criticism

## 1. Type A and Type B Personalities

Personality type theories try to put people into fixed categories that are based on aspects of personality that group together. This particular theory of **Type A** and **Type B** personalities was first developed in the 1950s. Surprisingly, this theory was not developed by a psychologist, but rather two cardiologists, Meyer Friedman, and Ray Rosenman.

Friedman and Rosenman were looking at what types of people were at higher risk of developing heart disease and having heart attacks. They came up with two categories: those who are the types of people that were at high risk of developing heart disease, and those who were at low risk.

Friedman and Rosenman identified the characteristics and patterns of behavior for each type. Type A personality is:

- Competitive
- Driven to try to achieve things they want to succeed in
- Generally possessed of a sense of urgency and impatience
- Proactive, as opposed to being reactive
- Multitasking and prone to take on more tasks than they might be able to do
- Highly organized and efficient with time management

Research shows that often the driving force behind these Type A personalities is a sort of anger or hostility, which isn't necessarily directed at anyone or anything, but which helps to motivate them to achieve. However, this sort of anger or hostility can also lead to hypertension and high blood pressure, that in turn can lead to an increased risk of heart disease due to the stress that's being caused by this.

Type A personalities were twice as likely to develop heart disease and to have heart attacks. Many Type A

personalities need to learn strategies to deal with stress to help out with these physiological issues.

Type B personality is the exact opposite of a Type A. Type B personalities tend to be:

- Patient, easygoing, and relaxed
- Calm
- Apathetic or unmotivated
- Unorganized



#### TERMS TO KNOW

##### Type A

Group of individuals who are driven, responsible, competitive, timely, ambitious, tough, and hostile if their goals are blocked; run a high risk developing cardiovascular disease

##### Type B

Group of individuals who are relaxed, resilient, adapt well to new situations, and do things at their own speed; run a lower risk of developing cardiovascular disease

## 2. Criticism

It's important to realize that the descriptions here of Type A and Type B personalities are extreme types of personalities. They're on the far end of the spectrum. Ideally, a person could use a little bit of both: a drive to achieve, but not be stressed out.

There is a lot of criticism about type theories like Type A and Type B personality theory. One is that the categories tend to be overly simplistic. It attempts to put people into one category or the other, when sometimes the traits that are being discussed don't necessarily fit into either one of them. Other variables could also have an effect on personalities.

↪ **EXAMPLE** For example, a person's diet might affect the way that they behave.

Another criticism is that these type personalities don't necessarily distinguish between fixed sorts of personality and those that are variable or situational. A person could be a Type A personality in one situation and a Type B personality in the other.

↪ **EXAMPLE** For instance, the type of job an individual has might influence them and make them feel very stressed out in trying to achieve goals or get things done. In general life, however, they might be a very relaxed person.



#### SUMMARY

Two cardiologists, Mayer Friedman and Ray Rosenman, developed their personality theory after looking at what personality traits lead people to be at risk for heart disease. **Type A personalities** have a strong drive to achieve, coupled with anxiety, while **Type B personalities** tend to be more relaxed but apathetic. Therefore, Type A personalities are more prone to heart attacks, though the

theory itself cannot make a sweeping generalization about all individuals classified with Type A personalities.

There has been a lot of **criticism** about this theory as it does not take other factors that can affect personality into account, and doesn't address people who may be a different personality type depending on the situation.

Good luck!

Source: This work is adapted from Sophia Author Erick Taggart.



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