



What's Your Workout Personality?

Chaniga Vorasarun, 06.17.10, 7:55 PM ET

People have long used personality tests to find the perfect job. Anyone scoring as an introvert, for example, might chafe at career in sales or public relations but might find research or library science worth pursuing. And just ask any classic extrovert if she'd rather spend her work day interacting with people or with laboratory test tubes.

If you know your on-the-job personality, you can use that to find your perfect fitness routine. That's right, take a typological approach to your workout.

[Quiz: What's Your Get-Fit Personality?](#)

"In a fitness environment, you need intrinsic motivation, such as are you doing something you find naturally rewarding and matches your personality," says Todd Harris, Ph.D., psychologist and head of research at management consulting firm PI Worldwide. "The more you can design someone's work or their exercise regimen to take advantage of what they do well and how they see and approach the world," says Harris, "that gets you a long way toward where they want to go."

We look at eight main personality types, representing four dichotomies.

Competitor vs. Cooperator

People with dominance as a defining trait are the competitors in the professional world. Independent and self-confident, these types thrive in jobs like commission-based sales or trading stocks, where winning is a key motivation.

Tennis is an ideal workout for competitors. They don't have to rely on others for success, and a steely mental game is often just as important as your serve or backhand. "They can be pushed very hard," says Steve Satin, a personal trainer and owner of Satin Wellness in Boston. But because of their drive to win, he cautions them to be wary of injuring themselves.

On the other end of the dominance spectrum are the cooperators. In the workplace they tend to seek reassurance from the boss and prize harmony. That's why they are well-suited to workouts in which winning isn't the goal. Intramural sports like softball or kickball, where the emphasis is on having fun and encouraging fellow teammates, is a good choice for these types.



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Water Cooler Wag vs. Solitary Workhorse

Extroverts are the social butterflies. You might find them in the company kitchen or near the water cooler, chatting up colleagues. They thrive in interactive careers like public relations where they can engage with others. Satin says extroverts will enjoy a wide variety of exercises and sports--so long as there is someone by their side. Fitness is all about socializing for these types. Running partners, biking groups and basketball leagues best suit extroverts.

Introverts, on the other hand, value solitude. "These are the people who will e-mail you instead of call you," says Michelle Johnston, an organizational psychologist with CPP, publisher of the Myers-Briggs personality assessment test. Introverts will also be more task-oriented rather than relationship-oriented in the workplace. This personality does well with long-distance running, yoga, swimming and activities that don't require other people and where they can concentrate on the movements of the exercise.

Perfectionist vs. Big-Picture Thinker

Detail-oriented workers like the certainty of structure and rules. These are the masters of the Excel spreadsheet. In the gym or on the field, these types "really want to noodle out why I'm doing this exercise instead of another, and what does the research say about this exercise," Harris explains. Which workouts will push their buttons? Think rule-based sports like golf or baseball. The details--What's the right grip? What pitch to throw?--really matter.

Big-picture thinkers, on the other hand, are more tolerant, even welcoming, of risk and uncertainty. They like flexibility and room to experiment. Fitness routines that suit this type involve creativity and intuition. Dance classes, Pilates and power yoga, where each pose can be interpreted to different degrees, work well.

Steady Hand vs. Multi-Tasker

Highly patient people "put a premium on a stable, relatively consistent work environment," says Harris. As far as a fitness routine, steady hands "don't mind knowing it will take time to get to a goal," Satin says, but "they need a specific program and set goals." A good routine might include exercise classes that meet at the same time each day or week and where the routine is fairly consistent.

Low-patience people are exactly that. They tend to be more intense and do everything with a sense of urgency. In the workplace these people are always changing up their tasks and responsibilities. Multi-taskers do well with circuit training, spending five intense minutes on each machine, or training for a triathlon.



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