


**Literature and Coping Skills**  
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**Lecture – 5**  
**Personality - 1**

Hello, everybody, I am Ajit K Mishra, your course instructor for Literature and Coping Skills. I am back again, with another set of lectures for you. This time, we are going to talk about personality. You all know, personality is a very complex area. Because most often people tend to misconceive the idea of personality. So, instead of focusing on the real aspects of personality, people generally focus on the physiological aspects.

As a result of which people think that if somebody is tall, somebody is short, somebody is fatty, obese, or somebody is lean and thin those characteristics, in fact, influence somebody's personality and also present those things. But that is not the case, I am going to walk you through the idea of personality in the next two lectures, including one today.

So, that you finally get to know what personality is all about, how it remains with us as an integral part of our existence, and how it develops over the period of time, and the theories that help us develop an insight into our ideas of personality. So, let us start.

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## Personality

- Definitions of personality
- Characteristics of Personality
- The nature of personality
- The shaping of personality





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<https://thenounproject.com/term/personality/1454293/>

In this lecture, I am going to focus on these important aspects of personality starting with definitions of personality; I have already told you that it is a very complex area. And researchers have been trying to map this area. This therefore, this is an ever evolving area.

So, I have picked a few definitions that will serve our purpose of understanding personality. Then I am going to talk about the characteristics of personality, what personality is, what it is not, how it is defined, how it is developed, and a variety of other things.

I am going to focus on the nature of personality as well, so that we get to know what personality is all about, how it functions, how it affects our existence, and so on. And I am also going to talk about the shaping of personality, which is, in fact, a very important concept for our understanding of the idea of personality.

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## Personality

- According to the American Psychological Association, “**personality** refers to individual differences in characteristic patterns of **thinking, feeling and behaving.**”
- American psychologists Randy Larsen and others say “**personality** is a stable, organized collection of psychological traits and mechanisms in the human being that influences his or her interactions with and modifications to the psychological, social and physical environment surrounding them.”

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So, let us move and start with the definitions first, but before I start with the definitions, I must tell you that personality is all about the differences that we have from one another. Imagine, we come across a variety of people, every day we meet them, we observe them, and we interact with them. And the most important thing that strikes us every time we do so is the differences that we have from one another.

For example, somebody may be talkative, somebody may be very quiet, somebody may be absolutely friendly, somebody may be indifference, and somebody may be careless as well. Somebody may be very active, somebody may be extremely lazy. Now, when we take out these words that we just use to describe people of different kinds, like talkative, active, or lazy. Now, these are the words that in fact present our personality.

So, our personality is the characteristic difference that we have from one another. So, therefore, it is important that we adopt a very careful approach towards our understanding of

personality. And the personality psychologists have been trying to do this, they have been trying to understand and describe these aspects of personality. So, let us start with the definitions first.

I have picked a definition that has been given to us by the American Psychological Association, which says a personality refers to individual differences in characteristic patterns of thinking, feeling and behaving. I have just talked about it, citing the example that we all are different from each other. Because we think differently, we feel differently. And we also behave differently. And these differences, in fact, continue to create our personality.


So, therefore, it is important that we understand these differences in our thinking, in our feeling, and in our behaviours as well. The second definition has been taken from Randy Larsen, who says that a personality is a stable, organized collection of psychological traits and mechanisms in the human being that influences his or her interactions with and modifications to the psychological, social and physical environment surrounding them.

It is a very important definition for our understanding of the idea of personality, because Larson is focusing on personality as a stable concept. That means personality does not change frequently. If we have a certain kind of personality, if we develop a certain kind of personality in ourselves, it means that it is not going to change frequently, it may experience some moderate changes, but will not change drastically.

So, therefore, it is a stable and organized collection of psychological traits. This collection of psychological traits is very very organized. So, this organized collection, in fact, makes our personalities stable. And then these things influence our interactions. And they also lead to the modifications of our psychological, social, and the physical environment surrounding us. So, if we look at this definition, it may appear to be a little technical, and because it comes to us from a psychologist.

But, Larsen, and his friends are also talking about the same things. They are also talking about these characteristic differences in the patterns of our thinking, feeling and behaving the way we think we feel, and we interact with our psychological, social, and physical environment. So, in a way, these two definitions may appear to be different, but they are pointing towards the same elements.

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- According to Carl Jung, “**Personality** is the supreme realization of the innate idiosyncrasy of a living being. It is an act of high courage flung in the face of life, the absolute affirmation of all that constitutes the individual, the most successful adaptation to the universal condition of existence coupled with the greatest possible freedom for self-determination.”
- According to neurologist Paul Roe **personality** is “an individual’s predisposition to think certain patterns of thought, and therefore engage in certain patterns of behaviour”.

Let us take a look at the other definitions. A third definition. It is taken from Carl Jung, the father of American psychology, who was of the view that personality is the supreme realization of the innate idiosyncrasy of a living being. The innate idiosyncrasy, what exactly is that the uniqueness, the differences that are innate, and these are those idiosyncrasies or this uniqueness, or the differences that makes us unique, that differentiate us from others.

Therefore, they are unique, and they are idiosyncratic as well. It is an act of high courage, flung in the face of life. High courage because we have to interact, we have to behave in a certain environment, it may be a psychological environment, maybe a physical environment, maybe a social environment, but we behave that requires a great amount of courage. In the face of life, because it is not an easy thing, because we have to behave, we have to act in a certain manner, so that we can carry our lives forward.

That requires a great deal of courage. The absolute affirmation of all that constitutes the individual is the absolute affirmation of all that constitutes the individual if my individuality is constituted by something; it has to be absolutely performed. So, that I emerge as an individual as a unique individual as an individual that is separate or different from all other individuals around me. So, Jung is also focusing on these differences.

The most successful adaptation to the universal condition of existence, coupled with the greatest possible freedom of self-determination. So, that is how we actually move towards self-determination. And this can happen only when we are successful in adapting to the

universal conditions of existence. So, that requires you to act, behave, think and feel in certain ways.

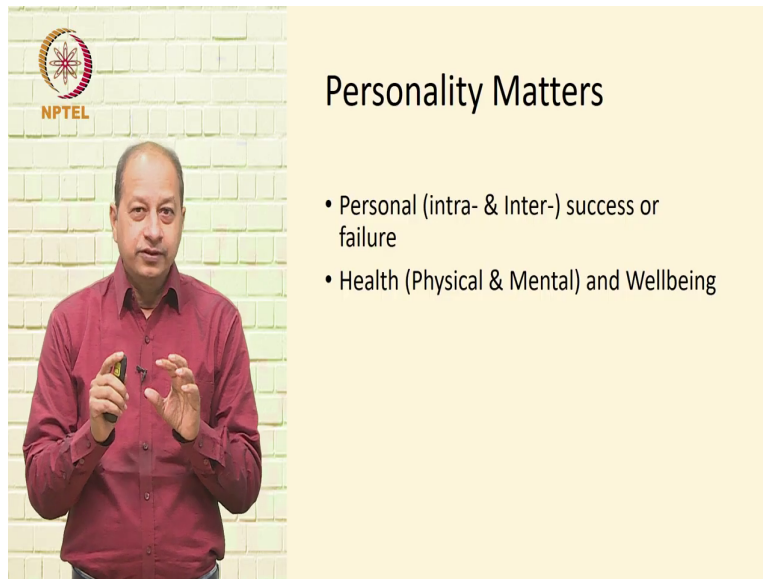

So, in a way, Jung is also focusing on those critical elements of personality that are thinking, feeling and behaving that the other two definitions the earlier definitions have focused on. Let us move to the last, the fourth definition. According to neurologist, Paul Roe, personality is an individual's predisposition to think certain patterns of thought, and therefore, engage in certain patterns of behaviour.

So, of all these definitions that I have picked for our purpose of understanding the idea of personality, this is the simplest and very straight, therefore, it is the shortest in fact, Roe's definition of personality is very clear and straightforward, as it suggests that an individual's predisposition to think certain patterns of thought, as an individual, we have certain unique ways of thinking or developing thought patterns.

And these thought patterns enable us to engage in certain patterns of behaviour. So, in his short definition of personality, Roe has repeated the word pattern in the definition. So, therefore, that word pattern becomes extremely important, because it draws our attention towards certain patterns that are regular and frequent, whether they are about thoughts, or about our behaviour.

So, if we synthesize these four definitions of personality, we come to the idea that personality is all about the differences that individuals have from one another, on the basis of how they think, how they feel, and how they behave. So, that is how we approach the idea of personality. Not in the way people generally think about personality, in terms of somebody's physical appearance, or physical built, that has nothing to do with personality. So, personality is all about these three important elements.

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**Personality Matters**

- Personal (intra- & Inter-) success or failure
- Health (Physical & Mental) and Wellbeing

The question is, does personality matter? The answer will certainly be yes, it matters. If the answer is known, then we need not worry about what personality is whether we have a personality or not, and there is absolutely no need to think about it at all. But that is not the case. The answer most often is yes, personality does matter because it is such an important element of our existence that we cannot afford to ignore it.

It matters because of two very important things. The first is personal success or failure. We all know that we exist. Because we are either successful or we do not exist because we are unsuccessful. We feel like leading this life when we are successful and will feel like putting an end to this life. When we are not successful, we will be thoroughly disappointed with life and therefore would like to put an end to it.

So, personality matters when it comes to personal success or failure because personal success, that includes intrapersonal success and interpersonal success as well, is largely determined by our personality elements. So, therefore, it is important that we know that our personal success or failure is dependent on the type of personality that we have, the type of disposition that we have, and which leads to the type of attitudes and value systems that we create for ourselves.



So, when it comes to interpersonal success or failure, we need to understand ourselves extremely well, so that we emerge as an individual, and we find it easy to interact with people around us, we do not either shy away or we do not enter into conflicts with people around us.

So, we have a healthy interpersonal relationship. Therefore, we also have a healthy interpersonal relationship, if it is not, so that means it will lead to failure.

The second thing that is health and wellbeing, of course, our personality, does determine and influence our health, most physical and mental health and our overall wellbeing. So, if we do not have the right kind of personality, if we do not nurture our personality, well, if we do not take care of our personality, that means we will definitely find ourselves in the grip of certain mental disorders, mental disturbances, and this mental disturbances will definitely multiply compound to lead to our physical deterioration, the deterioration of our physical health.

So, therefore, health and wellbeing are very closely associated ideas very closely allied conditions, our physical and mental wellbeing or health are also influenced to a large extent by the personality types that we have, and how we nurture, how we take care of those personality types. So, therefore, personality matters.

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### Personality is ever present

- Personality is a combination of innate dispositions and inclinations and the influence of environmental factors
- Personality is stable
- Personality has different components and characteristics
- Personality Influences thinking, feelings and behaviour; enables adaptability; and empowers survival skills

Is personality always present? In us? The answer is yes, it is always present, it cannot be separated, it is so integral to our existence, that it cannot be separated. Therefore, it is always present in us. Personality is a combination of the innate and dispositions and inclinations and the influence of environmental factors. Now, there is a very important concept, which will help us understand personality in a better way.

It is a combination, combination of certain innate dispositions and inclinations, that means, we have certain dispositions that are inherent, natural, hereditary, and we have certain

approaches that are also innate and inherent, those are the inclinations. And along with this dispositions and inclinations, that are inherent, we also passed through stages of the environmental influence.

I mean, there are certain environmental factors that influence our disposition as well, it is not that the innate disposition will finally come up and be reflected as our personality it may not be so, it might get into some kind of combination with the environmental influence, and then a combination of both the things will come out as our personality or as our disposition. So, therefore, we need to understand this combination of innate and dispositions and inclinations on one hand and the influence of the environmental factors.

For example, if somebody is born with certain dispositions, certain innate inherent dispositions and inclinations, and if that person is made to be brought up in a certain environment, in a certain cultural condition, the person will definitely acquire certain influences, certain dispositions as a result of the influences of the environmental factors. So, a combination of his or her innate dispositions and the environmental factors will finally determine what kind of personality the person will have. Therefore, it is important.

Personality is stable, we all know that most of the theorists are of the view that personality is stable, it does not change frequently, it does not change substantially. But at the same time, they are also of the view that personality can undergo certain changes, those changes may be minimal, but those changes can happen to the personality.

And those changes can be radical, when the personality or when a person, an individual is suddenly exposed to intense emotional experiences, it may be an accident of an extreme kind. So, that might lead to a sudden change in the personality type, or the disposition of that person. But that apart, personality is generally stable. So, personality has different components and characteristics. There is no doubt about it. It has different components and characteristics; I am going to focus on this in greater detail.



And finally, personality influences thinking, feelings and behaviour, we have already got to know about that, from the definitions that we discussed a while ago. At the same time, personality also enables adaptability. If you have the right kind of personality, if you have an easy going, flexible personality, you can easily adapt to any condition. If you have a very



rigid, difficult personality type, then we will always find it very difficult to adapt to conditions. But personality ultimately enables adaptability.

It makes us adaptable, and finally, personality empowers our survival skills. Because we know we need those skills to survive. I have already discussed safe and survival modes, and the type of skills that we require, in both the modes, especially the survival modes, so that we can come out of the survival mode and return to the Safe Mode. In order to be able to do so we need certain survival skills. And our personality, in fact, empowers those survival skills in us; we will get to know how.

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## Characteristics of Personality



- Consistency
- Psychological and physiological
- Behaviors and actions
- Multiple expressions

So, let us take a quick look at the characteristics of personality. So, that we understand what they are, I have listed four here, it has a certain sense of consistency. That means if I have a certain type of personality, then there is every possibility, every reason that I will behave according to that particular personality type. In a variety of situations, the situations may differ from one another, but I will behave in a similar manner in those different situations.

The second characteristic of personality is that, although it is a psychological construct, it is also influenced by our biological needs and types. So, therefore, it is a combination of psychological and physical elements. The third, behaviours and actions, how we behave, how we act, are largely influenced by our personality types. Whether we get along with people, or we were not comfortable in the company of people. So, everything is determined by how we behave, or how we act by personalities and then multiple expressions.

So, it is not that we express in our singular way. In fact, we express in multiple ways, for example, we do not only behave in a certain manner, we also express ourselves through the kinds of relationships that we have through the kinds of associations that we have with people around us and a variety of other things. So, personality is also characterized by multiple expressions.

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## The Shaping of Personality

- The ongoing interactions of heredity, environment, parenting, and socialization combine and continue to shape personality over time
- **Nature vs Nurture**  
Heredity and environment, Twins research
- **Socialisation and Life Positions**  
Behaviour modifications and consequential outcomes

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And then to the most important of all these things, the shaping of personality, how are personalities, or how is a personality shaped? Is it shaped at all? Yes, it is shaped because there are several factors that influence the personality of a person. Therefore, it is important for us to take a close look at the shaping of personality, and especially those factors that result in the shaping of personality.

The ongoing interactions of heredity, environment, parenting, and socialization. These are the four most important factors that result in the shaping of personality. Because these factors combined, and they also continue to shape personality over time, it is not that they shape personality, for one occasion only, and that is exactly where it stops, it does not continue at all. That is not the case. They continued to shape personality over time, although personality does not change, but it can experience certain changes, it may not change substantially.

So, the first important element is heredity that means our innate dispositions and inclinations. And then environment, the type of environment we are exposed to, we are subjected to also exercises a tremendous amount of influence on the shaping of our personality, and then parenting, that the type of regulations and control mechanisms that we are subjected to, during our early stages of growth, also determine how our personality will finally be.

And then finally, the socialization process. Beyond the parental or the parenting process, we enter the socialization process, and we begin to interact with society. And that is exactly when and where our personality is also influenced. And this, this is a continuous process and

gets influenced over time. Although personality does not change substantially, but it will continue to witness and experience certain minimal changes in it.

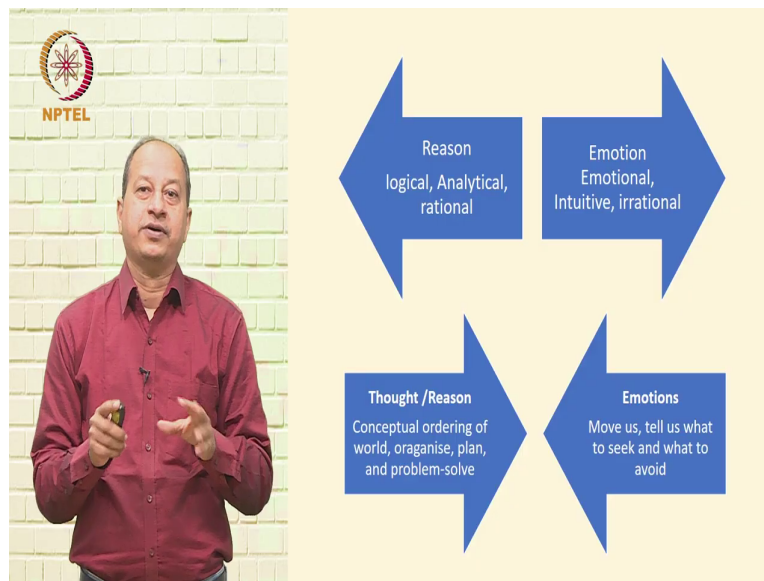
That brings us to the famous, the age old debate between nature and nurture, that also takes up these ideas of heredity and environment, there have been theorists who held strongly that it is all about nature. So, environment does not play any role at all, in the shaping of personality, it is all about one's innate disposition, genetic coding, or genetic designing, or heredity. So, they never thought that environment can play any role in the shaping of personality.

So, that is the reason why those people always believed that it is all about nature. To cite such philosopher. It was Rousseau who very strongly believed that it is all about nature, and the environment does not play any role in the shaping of personality. On the other hand, people like John Locke, who strongly held that the mind is like a clean slate, therefore, it is very popularly called the clean slate-ism concept.

The mind is like a clean slate and the environment will ultimately determine how the personality will turn out to be. But then, to put this debate to rest, we have a few contemporary researchers that have established the fact that both the nature, heredity or biological determinism, and environmental determinism, they are combined to shape our personality. And this was established by the Twins research which was conducted by making the twins live in very different environmental conditions.

As they grew up, it was observed that what the twins showed certain different attitudes and behaviours. So, it was very clearly established that nature and nurture are combined in our personalities and then our socialization and life positions, they also modify our behaviour. And those also result in certain consequential outcomes, the way we are socialized if I have been socialized in a certain manner, so that I come to or treat women with disrespect that will definitely reflect in my personality. And that will also reflect in the kind of life positions that I adopt or take.

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So, the shaping of personality also happens over the debate between reason and emotion. Just imagine, you call a person emotional, and you call the other person rational. Which of these two persons do you think will be treated with respect, of course, the person who has been referred to as a rational, not the person who has been referred to as emotional. So, like the nature nurture debate, the debate between reason and emotion has been raised for a long, long time.



And people have preferred to be rational than emotional, because rationality has been overvalued in our cultures, and emotionality has been undervalued. So, if a person is rational, that means you are logical, you are analytical. And if you are emotional, you are extremely intuitive and irrational, if. So, that is the reason why people do not prefer to be tagged emotional, rather than they prefer to be tagged rational.

But a recent study has, you know, established the fact that both thought and reason on one side and emotions are our guiding factors. They in fact, help us move in one direction, it is not that they are separate things, and we can move properly with either of them, that may not be the case. So, we need both of them are combination of reason and emotions, because they perform very different actions. And they help us in different ways.

And we need both the ways we need to conceptually order our world organize, planned, and solve our problems with the help of our rational self. And with the help of our emotional self, we need to move, we need to determine what to seek and what to avoid, we need to

strengthen our bonding our relationships. So, therefore, both of them are equally important. Both of them play an important role in our personality.

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So, that is how we come to the end of this lecture. These are the references from where I have borrowed the ideas for this lecture. And you might have understood that personality is very, very important. And we need to adopt a cautious approach to our understanding of personality, so that we get to know what it is and how it functions. And finally, we can, determine we can use our personality for the betterment of our existence. So, thank you for joining me. I will meet you again.