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## **GROUP DYNAMICS**

### **Based on OCEAN Big 5 Personality Model**

One of the most complex concepts within discipleship groups is group dynamics. Different personalities react differently in groups. Some people are naturally quiet. Some are extreme talkers. It is helpful to understand the group implications and address when the group is leaning to extremes.

When you strip away the nuances, personality is nothing more than a tendency to behave in a certain way that persists across the lifespan. Think of personality as the building blocks of who you are. As believers, the Holy Spirit can control our personalities, but we still have tendencies to act or react to situations.

The Big 5 personality model can be more easily remembered through the acronym called OCEAN - Openness to Experience, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism. Think about people in your group and identify the traits you see in each.

### **Openness to experience**

Appreciation for art, emotion, adventure, unusual ideas, curiosity, and variety of experience. Openness reflects the degree of intellectual curiosity, creativity and a preference for novelty and variety a person has. It is also described as the extent to which a person is imaginative and depicts a personal preference for a variety of activities over a strict routine. High openness can be perceived as unpredictability or lack of focus. Might be risk-takers such as skydiving, living abroad, gambling, et cetera. Conversely, those with low openness seek to gain fulfillment through perseverance, and are characterized as pragmatic and data-driven—sometimes even perceived to be dogmatic and closed-minded. Some disagreement remains about how to interpret and contextualize the openness factor.

High Openness  
Inventive/curious

vs.

Low Openness  
consistent/cautious

### **Group implications:**

Can get bored

vs.

stays on course /can be  
dogmatic

## Conscientiousness

A tendency to be organized and dependable, show self-discipline, act dutifully, aim for achievement, and prefer planned rather than spontaneous behavior. High conscientiousness can be perceived as stubbornness and obsession. Low conscientiousness is associated with flexibility and spontaneity but can also appear as sloppiness and lack of reliability.

Efficient/organized vs. easy-going/careless

### **Group implications**

Values accountability, self-disciplined vs. go with the flow, might disregard rules

## Extraversion

Energy, positive emotions, assertiveness, sociability, tendency to seek stimulation in the company of others, and talkativeness. High extraversion is associated with attention-seeking, and domineering. Low extraversion causes a reserved, reflective personality, which can be perceived as aloof or self-absorbed.

outgoing/energetic vs. solitary/reserved

### **Group implications**

Discussion catalyst, can be disruptive vs. deep thinker, does not add energy

## Agreeableness

A tendency to be compassionate and cooperative rather than suspicious and antagonistic toward others. It is also a measure of one's trusting and helpful nature. High agreeableness is often seen as naive or submissive. Low agreeableness personalities are often competitive or challenging people, which can be seen as argumentative or untrustworthy.

Friendly/compassionate vs. challenging/detached

### **Group Implications**

Gets along, might lack backbone vs. leadership, can lack empathy, cohesion

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## **Neuroticism**

The tendency to experience unpleasant emotions easily, such as anger, anxiety, depression, and vulnerability. Neuroticism also refers to the degree of emotional stability and impulse control and is sometimes referred to by its low pole, "emotional stability". A high need for stability manifests as a stable and calm personality but can be seen as uninspiring and unconcerned. A low need for stability causes a reactive and excitable personality, often very dynamic individuals, but they can be perceived as unstable or insecure.

Sensitive/nervous vs. secure/confident

## **Group Implications**

Emotionally reactive vs. steadiness, lacks empathy

## **Works Cited**

Richard A Van Haveren, Ph.D. at [Performancephd.com](http://Performancephd.com)