

Like Fine Wine, Personality Improves with Age

Growing older gives us much to grumble about, but new findings may help to offset those woes: personality, scientists say, appears to improve with age. Some experts argue that personality is genetically programmed to stop changing at a certain age. Others assert that some aspects may morph throughout adulthood, but not much. The new work suggests that personality is plastic and that the changes that come with age are generally for the better.

Psychologists divide personality into five major traits: agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, openness and extroversion. According to researchers who subscribe to the notion that our genes dictate when our personalities stop changing, the “big five” are set for life by age 30. Other researchers, however, contend that experiences that occur in adulthood – from beginning a career to having children – can mold personality too.

To begin to understand how personality traits might change through early and middle adulthood, Sanjay Srivastava of Stanford University and his colleagues studied how the average traits varied by age and gender. The study, published today in the Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, compared the personalities of 132,515 adults between the ages of 21 and 60 who completed an Internet “personality test.”

The team found that conscientiousness increased with age, with the biggest jumps occurring among those individuals in their 20s. Agreeableness also climbed with age, largely among thirty-somethings. Men and women differed in their relative neuroticism: as women aged, their neurotic tendencies declined, but this was not the case for men. Openness waned slightly for both sexes, as did extroversion in women.

“The changes in conscientiousness and agreeableness line up with when people increase their work responsibilities and then when they have kids,” Srivastava says. But, he adds, they weren’t studying the reasons why the changes occur, and they collected only basic demographic information. Now that Srivastava and his colleagues have ascertained that personality does indeed change throughout adulthood they plan to look into why it happens. “This is a hopeful message about aging,” he observes. “It’s so often viewed as a process of decline – your hair falls out, your teeth fall out – but we’re seeing aging as a process of development. All the biggest changes were for the better.” – Laura Wright (<http://www.sciam.com/article>)

Glossary

To grumble = to complain

Offset = make up for/ compensate

Woes = problems

Contend = argue

Waned = declined

Read the text and answer the following questions **in English**.

1st QUESTION: (1,0 mark)

Avaliador

Revisor

The following topics are contemplated in the five paragraphs of the text. Write the numbers accordingly.

- | | |
|--|-----------------|
| a) Research purpose. | Paragraph (3) |
| b) Further research. | Paragraph (5) |
| c) Different views regarding personality and age. | Paragraph (1) |
| d) Main features of personality. | Paragraph (2) |
| e) Other research findings. | Paragraph (4) |

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2nd QUESTION: (1,0 mark)

Avaliador

Revisor

The title of the text establishes a metaphorical relationship between wine and personality.
Explain.

Answer

It is common knowledge that wine improves with age. The text contends that age follows the same path.



3rd QUESTION: (1,0 mark)

Avaliador

Revisor

In the words “agreeableness”, “conscientiousness”, “neuroticism”, “openness” and “extroversion”, the suffixes are characteristic of which part of speech / word class?

Answer:

Nouns

4th QUESTION: (1,0 mark)

Avaliador

Revisor

What was the purpose of Sanjay Srivastava and his team's research?

Answer:

To investigate how personality traits change throughout adulthood.

5th QUESTION: (1,0 mark)

Avaliador

Revisor

How were data collected in the research?

Answer:

Via an internet personality test.

6th QUESTION: (1,0 mark)

Avaliador

Revisor

The findings of the research show that personality improvement varies for men and women. Explain.

Answer:

Men and women differ in neuroticism (women's neurotic tendencies tend to decline with age, which is not the case for men). Openness declined slightly for both sexes.

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7th QUESTION: (1,5 mark)

Avaliador

Revisor

Find in the text three (3) linking expression / connectors which are used to contrast ideas. (Provide complete sentences).

Answer:

But (lines 1 and 2)

“Growing older gives us much to grumble about, but new findings may help to offset those woes: personality, scientists say, appears to improve with age.”

others...,but (line 3)

“Others assert that some aspects may morph throughout adulthood, but not much.”

however (lines 8 and 9)

“Other researches, however, contend that experiences that occur in adulthood – from beginning a career to having children – can mold personality too.”

But (lines 16 and 17))

“[...] as women aged, their neurotic tendencies declined, but this was not the case for men.”

but (lines 19 and 20)

But, he adds, they weren't studying the reasons why the changes occur,”

But (line 23)

“ – but we're seeing aging as a process of development.”

8th QUESTION: (2,5 marks)

Avaliador

Revisor

In the 21st century society, where youth is a highly considered human attribute, the findings of Srivastava and his colleagues may force a rethinking of values. Comment.

Answer:

Since research findings suggest that personality improves with age, old people might/should be more valued in the 21st century society.