



Me, Myself, and Us: The Science of Personality and the Art of Well-Being

Brian Little

Download now

Read Online ➞

Me, Myself, and Us: The Science of Personality and the Art of Well-Being

Brian Little

Me, Myself, and Us: The Science of Personality and the Art of Well-Being Brian Little

In the past few decades, personality psychology has made considerable progress in raising new questions about human nature—and providing some provocative answers. New scientific research has transformed old ideas about personality based on the theories of Freud, Jung, and the humanistic psychologies of the nineteen sixties, which gave rise to the simplistic categorizations of the Meyer-Briggs Inventory and the "enneagram." But the general public still knows little about the new science and what it reveals about who we are.

In *Me, Myself, and Us*, Brian Little, Ph.D., one of the psychologists who helped re-shape the field, provides the first in-depth exploration of the new personality science and its provocative findings for general readers. The book explores questions that are rooted in the origins of human consciousness but are as commonplace as yesterday's breakfast conversation. Are our first impressions of other people's personalities usually fallacious? Are creative individuals essentially maladjusted? Are our personality traits, as William James put it, "set like plaster" by the age of thirty? Is a belief that we are in control of our lives an unmitigated good? Do our singular personalities comprise one unified self or a confederacy of selves, and if the latter, which of our mini-mes do we offer up in marriage or mergers? Are some individuals genetically hard-wired for happiness? Which is the more viable path toward human flourishing, the pursuit of happiness or the happiness of pursuit?

Little provides a resource for answering such questions, and a framework through which readers can explore the personal implications of the new science of personality. Questionnaires and interactive assessments throughout the book facilitate self-exploration, and clarify some of the stranger aspects of our own conduct and that of others. Brian Little helps us see ourselves, and other selves, as somewhat less perplexing and definitely more intriguing.

This is not a self-help book, but students at Harvard who took the lecture course on which it is based claim that it changed their lives.

Me, Myself, and Us: The Science of Personality and the Art of Well-Being Details

Date : Published October 14th 2014 by Brilliance Audio (first published April 1st 2012)

ISBN : 9781491551813

Author : Brian Little

Format : Audio CD 288 pages

Genre : Psychology, Nonfiction, Science, Self Help



[Download Me, Myself, and Us: The Science of Personality and the ...pdf](#)



[Read Online Me, Myself, and Us: The Science of Personality and th ...pdf](#)



Download and Read Free Online Me, Myself, and Us: The Science of Personality and the Art of Well-Being Brian Little

From Reader Review Me, Myself, and Us: The Science of Personality and the Art of Well-Being for online ebook

Joshua Davidson says

This book contains a ton of excellent insight into the world of personality psychology. Outside of just debunking silly personality quizzes and famous tests such as "Myers-Briggs" it gave me a new and deeper understanding of the different variables that make each person unique and the ideas presented within the book opened my mind to how those differently tuned variables can affect my own personal/work relationships and the well being of myself and those around me. It's one of those 'must reads' to me because it can give us a solid framework to helping and understanding others as well as themselves. Great read. Really enjoyable.

Andrea says

+1 would read and recommend and I am even more glad I got to meet this guy.

With an even hand of psychological science and personal observation, Brian Little wrote a book to bring modern streams of psychology to an easily accessible level. This book looks at personality psychology from many angles and invites reflection and introspection into what makes you tick.

Wanda says

I heard the author interviewed on the radio and decided I definitely wanted to read his book. Unfortunately, I think I heard the best bits in the interview. Or it may be that I shouldn't attempt psychology books in the summer time. I wasn't as impressed as I expected to be, although I still appreciate the book.

I think by now that the vast majority of introverts have read Susan Cain's *Quiet : the Power of Introverts in a World that Can't Stop Talking*. It's our manifesto, reminding us that introverts are necessary and important to our society (which seems to value extraverts over us).

And yet, like most introverts, I know that I can push myself to act extraverted. I got going on that in my twenties and I'm just ramping down from that effort in my fifties. But, as Brian Little states in *Me, Myself, and Us*, there is a price for that. I've spent decades pushing myself to go out into the world and do things, attend events, make acquaintances. My schedule was often so full that I when I actually got a day to myself, I wouldn't even bother to get dressed. Pajama days, I called them, when I didn't have to go anywhere or be anybody. I just collapsed in a heap. I also treasured the occasional evenings at home, doing my own thing, like the exemplary introvert that I am.

Recently, my financial advisor was holding an appreciation evening for all of his clients and he was pressing me to attend. I asked, "Is this one of those evenings where we juggle wine glasses and little plates and have to make conversation with complete strangers?" He got an odd look on his face (he's an extravert) and replied, "Yes." I told him that I'd been forcing myself to do stuff like that for decades and now that I was well over 50, I was no longer willing to suffer in that fashion. I believe my exact words were, "I'd rather

stick needles in my eyes.” He & his partner eventually laughed about it, but it was obvious that they had no idea how much discomfort such situations cause for us introverts.

So I have some sympathy for extraverted folks who are made to try to sit still & quiet in classrooms, expected to study quietly in libraries, and not be disruptive in offices. They are having to stifle their essential selves and it is not easy. It takes a lot of energy and good coping strategies.

I appreciated the reminder from Little that we have our essential nature, but we also have the ability to choose other behaviours, that we must plan to recover from such efforts, and that others are making similar efforts. I also enjoyed the chapters on personal projects—and the advice to help with those projects that have been foisted upon you (by your family, your spouse, your boss) and find time for the self-chosen projects that actually make life meaningful.

A good book to choose if you frequently feel like your life is being pushed off course by forces beyond your control.

Alex O'Brien says

Brian Little presents his personality theory of personal projects with the perfect mix of scientific research, personal and professional anecdotes, and good humour. I was fortunate to have had Professor Little for a Social Psychology course at Carleton University thirty years ago, and three degrees and over thirty MOOCs later, he's still the best prof I ever had. His lectures were a mix of profound insight and tears of laughter, and in this book he finds a similar balance. In clear simple prose Little describes the concepts of traits, mutable selves, control, and creativity and relates them all to his theory that we are our core personal projects. I was delighted to hear again his fascinating and hilarious portraits of introversion and extraversion, and the book is filled with illuminating personality tests. This book is not only a good read and good science, it's also a lot of fun and an opportunity for enlightenment and self-reflection.

After teaching at Carleton, Professor Little went on to lecture at Harvard where he was voted the students' favourite prof three years running. He is now at Cambridge and has also taught at McGill.

Miaozi YU says

I've learned many interesting knowledges about Personality.
but the book is longer than it should be

Rick Stuckwisch says

I enjoyed and appreciated this book. It is cleverly written, but also presents and deals with matters of substance and significance. I took a chance on making this my read-while-I'm-riding-my-exercise-bike book, which doesn't always work as well with non-fiction, but this one managed to hold my attention and keep me interested even while sweating away at my pedals. Interesting, thought-provoking, insightful, and helpful. The author explains developments in the understanding of personality and the way it impacts life, relationships, personal projects, and overall well-being. Worthwhile, and a fairly fast read.

Andy Johnson says

Dr. Little's book was a great discussion of three key aspects of becoming who we are becoming. He blends conversations about stable personality traits, free traits and core projects into a very well written book giving us hope for becoming who we want to be. Our personality, in its multi-faceted reality, is not determinative of our destiny. This book will prove helpful to everyone interested in better understanding themselves and finding their core purpose in the world. Highly recommend.

Thomas Jackson says

great book I'll give you a quote from the end of the book that I enjoyed.

Darling self, it is inevitable, but it is also my wish, that you save the last dance for me. Never mind the clumsiness, we know each other well by now. And let's hope that this seems both romantic and reasonable that value is detected as we embrace.

But it should be more than mere infatuation. It shouldn't really matter. It, this life, that is, should really mean something. Respect, even self-referential respect, should be warranted. It will be good to feel peace of mind, to be comfortable, to since integrity, and effort, to recognize that we have had some fun. Remember, if anyone knows you really remembers and knows you especially how you dance, it is me. Me myself and I...
By Owen Flanagan

Paige P says

I listened to this book on Audible and I enjoyed the research review so much that I am going to take a second listen. Professor Brian Little is a Harvard "Personality" Psychologist and one of the World's experts on the subject of personality. I am intrigued and wonder about how much of our personalities are "hard-wired" and genetic versus how much flexibility we have to alter them. (My clients know how much I believe FLEXIBILITY in our lives is so important.) Dr. Little educates us on why the Myers Briggs is an unreliable and invalid test (I just heard your collective sigh), and really blows up what is so misunderstood about our understanding of personalities. I learned that I am an "ambivert" (I am actually right in the middle between extrovert and introvert). I do recommend this book to everyone, if for no other reason than food for thought and great conversation.

Jennifer says

I'm not sure how to rate this yet. My psych-major self was interested in a lot of the material... but it was also somewhat heavy, and I found myself nodding off at parts.... It was almost like reading a psych textbook or long article.

Kayle Barnes says

This is easily one of my favorite books that I read this year, and I think the most important. Dr. Brian R. Little's conversational writing style makes the important concepts he introduces digestible without being elementary. I'd highly recommend this book to anyone wanting to do some self-reflection at the end of this year or beginning or next and/or looking to understand those they interact with every day.

Morgan Blackledge says

I'm a reluctant convert to personality theory. This book won me over.

I began this book rather skeptical that personality was still relevant as a psychological construct. And for good reason. The personality construct (as we traditionally understand it) has been under assault from all directions for the past several decades or more.

Social psychology demonstrates that people's thoughts, feelings, behavior and even perceptions are largely mutable depending on the social and cultural context.

Environmental psychology demonstrates that environmental factors such as the organization and design of public spaces exert analogous effects on our thoughts, feelings, perceptions and behavior.

Neuroscience indicates that the "mind" is an emergent property of the brain, and that brain structure and function is subject to ongoing use dependent change (neuroplasticity) occurring throughout the lifespan.

These (and many other) findings, taken as a whole erode the notion of personality as fixed "thing" originating exclusively from within the individual and alternatively engender a view of the self as a context dependent, dynamic process.

I hardly ever refer to personality in my clinical work or personal life. In fact I steer as clear of characterological explanations for behavior as possible.

I prefer instead to explain behavior as an outcome of species typical evolutionarily conditioned biological factors, shaped by the individual's learning history and occurring within a particular social, cultural and environmental context.

So where does that leave the idea that people have these (ghost in the machine) immutable qualities we call personality. The very notion seems rather antiquated and naïve. Is it time to trash the whole notion of personality and start over. Or is there anything in there that we can salvage.

Me Myself and Us does a more than respectable job of plucking personality from the dumpster by hippping the reader to what's happening now in the world of contemporary personality psychology.

Additionally Me Myself and Us is chock-a-block full of groovy as hell shorthand abstractions (cognitive tools) useful for deciphering the otherwise mysterious dealings of persons of the human variety.

Contemporary personality psychology abandons the Jungian notion of fixed personality types, in favor a

system of dynamic personality traits.

These traits tend to be fairly stable (on average) across the life span, but they are also quite flexible and can be adapted to the demands of the situation.

THREE SOURCES OF PERSONALITY:

The author cites three sources of personality traits: 1. biogenic, referring to the aspects of our personality best accounted for by (innate) biological factors, 2. sociogenic, referring to the aspects of our personality best accounted for by (learned) social and cultural factors, and 3. idojenic, referring to the aspects of our personality best accounted for by (idiosyncratic) individual factors such as personal values, goals, projects and commitments.

Number 3 (idojenic) is not as self explanatory as 1 and 2, so I will take a moment to explain.

An example of an idojenic (free) personality trait would be an introvert who projects an extroverted self image as an aspect of a job requirement e.g. an actor or club promoter.

For instance, I'm an introvert and a university lecturer, this means that I have to get in front of large crowds of easily board young people and talk about psychology. If I were monotone and cerebral, it would put my students to sleep. I have had to learn how to be lively and even (at times) entertaining. According to Dr. Little, I'm a pseudo extrovert when I am in front of my students.

My students are often surprised to hear that I'm an introvert. But I am. I have simply adapted my personality to meet the demands of the situation. People do it all the time. Think nerdy, cerebral Al Gore. Not exactly a natural public speaker, yet he rocks a slide show like it ain't no ones business.

The term counterdispositional behavior, refers to times when people behave "out of character" or counter to their typical disposition. My idojenic pseudo extroversion behavior is an example of counterdispositional behavior.

Of course there is more to contemporary personality theory than introversion/extraversion.

THE BIG FIVE:

The five-factor model (FFM) divides personality into the following five broad domains; 1. openness to novelty 2. conscientiousness regarding personal commitments and the feelings and welfare of others 3. extraversion referring to an individual's level of gregariousness 4. agreeableness referring to an individual's level of assholishness and 5. neuroticism referring to an individual's baseline anxiety, worry, fear ect.

SELF MONITORING:

High Self Monitoring (HSM) vs Low Self Monitoring (LSM) refers to the individual's trait sensitivity and responsiveness to social factors.

HSM and often behave in a manner that is highly responsive to social cues and their situational context. Conversely LSM tend to exhibit behavior that is congruent with their own beliefs, attitudes, and dispositions regardless of social circumstance.

Each self monitoring style has its up and down side: LSM's can be unconscious and boorish, while HSM's are more likely to be all sensitive (in the good way) to the needs and perspectives of others. However, LSM's are not afraid of healthy conflict, while HSM's are apt to avoid conflict at all costs.

LOCUS OF CONTROL:

locus of control refers to the extent to which individuals believe are in control of the events affecting them. A persons locus (location) of control is conceptualized as either internal (the person believes they are primarily in control of their life course) or external (meaning they believe their life course is primarily controlled by external factors which they cannot influence).

Individuals with an internal locus of control believe events in their life derive primarily from their own actions: for example, when receiving test results, people with an internal locus of control tend to praise or blame themselves and their abilities. People with an external locus of control tend to praise or blame external factors such as the teacher or the test.

White conservative American men tend to have internal locus of control, viewing the mythical rugged individual as the lone architects of their own destiny (e.g. Tea Party). Where as white liberal American men tend to have an external locus of control blaming everyone and everything (except themselves) for their (patchouly stinkin, drum circling, pot smelling) lot in life (e.g. Occupy Wall Street).

TYPE A and B PERSONALITY:

Of course no book on personality would be complete without reviewing type A and B personality theory. The theory describes two contrasting personality types (type A and B) and their relationship to the likelihood of developing coronary heart disease.

Type A

The theory describes "Type A" individuals as ambitious, rigidly organized, highly status-conscious, sensitive, impatient, take on more than they can handle, want other people to get to the point, anxious, proactive, and concerned with time management. People with Type A personalities are often high-achieving "workaholics" who multi-task, push themselves with deadlines, and hate both delays and ambivalence.

Type B

The theory describes "Type B" individuals generally live at a lower stress level and typically work steadily, enjoying achievement but not becoming stressed when they do not achieve. They may be creative and enjoy exploring ideas and concepts. They are often reflective.

As most of us are aware, type A run the higher risk of coronary heart disease. But few people understand precisely why this is the case.

High stress is often assumed to be the important factor. But it's not.

As it turns out, Type A behavior is expressed in three major symptoms: 1. free-floating hostility, 2. time urgency and impatience and (3) a competitive drive, which causes stress and an achievement-driven mentality.

Out of the three, hostility turns out to be the killer. And the reason why is absolutely fascinating.

Apparently there are two types of high blood pressure. Type 1 is brought about by increased heart rate. This type is not necessarily damaging. Type 2 is brought about by contraction of blood vessel diameter.

It turns out that the hormone oxytocin (the cuddle hormone), associated with bonding and relational connection, dilates the vascular system, decreasing the damaging effects of stress.

This lends credence to what we all already knew. That being in the company of supportive loved ones reduces the feelings of distress experienced in high stress situations.

High hostility folks tend to have lowered ability to reach out and feel connected with others and subsequently run a bit lower in the oxytocin department and are therefore high in the tic tic tic kaboom department too.

THE PERSON IN THE ENVIRONMENT:

One of the really fun and surprising parts of the book is the section on the intersection of personality psychology and environmental psychology. The interaction between environmental and personality factors is only lightly touched on. But it is so dang fascinating I wish Dr. Little would write another book devoted to the subject.

There's much much more. But I don't want to spoil the whole book. So I strongly encourage you to get this thing if you're feeling even remotely sparked. I doubt you'll regret it.

WHY GIRLS LIKE FLOWERS:

About ten or so years ago I was working a blue color job. My boss picked a half rotten flower arrangement out of the trash, stuffed them in a cheesy vase that he stole from the job site, and sent me in a truck to give them to a girl he was wooing. On my way out he said "ask her not to chuck the vase when she's done with it, I want it back". What a douche right? He's actually a wonderful guy but that wasn't his best stuff.

Anyway.

On my way there I was feeling positively mortified. I had met the girl before and not only was she a knockout, she was classy to boot. I was sure she would recognize that the flowers were junk and toss them right back in my face in a kind of Cleopatra kills the messenger type of scene.

When I showed up with the trash flowers she absolutely light up. She loved them. And her girlfriends at work were swooning over them too. Wow. Really? That shit worked. Unbelievable.

When I returned, I asked my bros why they thought girls liked to get flowers so much. They all got really irritated. One of them angrily barked "they just do". Another impatiently added "it's because the flowers are like them". I got confused. "They like to get things that are like them" I retorted, "why in the world do they want that". I wasn't intentionally being difficult, it's just that the explanation didn't make sense to me. Another guy chimed in with the classic, "flowers just say I care". I said I already knew what 1-800-flowers had to say about the situation. But I wanted to know why girls actually liked getting flowers.

I never did figure out why girls like flowers so much. But I did realize that I had vastly different needs than my work buddies when it came to explaining and understanding human behavior. So I quit my job and began my formal studies in psychology. It was a really good move.

This book reminds me why I wanted to study psychology. It's just so darned satisfying when you finally get

good explanations for human behavior, and as I mentioned earlier, this book is chockablock full of them.

I found that all of the shorthand abstractions in the book contributed quite a bit to my understanding of people and (more importantly) why (exactly) they do the crazy shit they do, and why they are the crazy way they are.

Five stars!!!!

Jenny says

Loved this book! Fascinating look at what drives us, an exploration of the five core personality scales (resilience, conscientiousness, intelligence, etc) and I found the part about personal projects particularly compelling: Little believes that the way we answer the question "How are you?" depends on if we have a personal project that we care about (could be work related or not). Highly recommend for self-assessment junkies in particular :)

K says

This book made me wish I had taken more personality courses in grad school. Or at least better ones, preferably taught by a professor like Brian Little. Smart, articulate, engaging, but not at the expense of providing solid content -- and sometimes, surprisingly funny.

The book begins with a discussion of personal constructs, ways that we judge and characterize other people as well as ourselves. We see people behaving in certain ways and create entire narratives around this limited information, thinking we're incredibly perceptive. Sometimes we're right. Sometimes we're way off. People who tend to do this a lot are "person specialists," fascinated by people's intentions and motives. People who tend to do this less may be "thing specialists," focusing on the concrete things they actually see and not inferring more than meets the eye.

It was validating for me to read this, because I know a couple where the wife fancies herself highly perceptive and her husband a doltishly poor judge of character. People around them, including the husband, tend to believe this narrative which was largely created by the wife. I was more skeptical, especially since I noticed that on many occasions, the wife's assessments tended to be pretty speculative. Her husband, in contrast, was sometimes the better judge because there are times when what you see is what you get, and creating a whole elaborate narrative could actually mislead you. Of course, I don't think either of them noticed those instances because of the confirmation bias and all that (see *Mistakes Were Made (But Not by Me): Why We Justify Foolish Beliefs, Bad Decisions, and Hurtful Acts*). But I digress. Anyway, one of the points the book makes with regard to well-being is that being flexible about your personal constructs gives you room to tolerate information that takes you out of your comfort zone.

The book then discusses "The Big Five" dimensions of personality -- conscientiousness, agreeableness, neuroticism, openness to experience, and extraversion. Where people fall out on these different continua are defining features of their personality. The book also notes that we sometimes have the capacity to act out of character occasionally on any of these dimensions in accordance with situational demands -- an introvert may turn on their inner extrovert when they need to, for instance. Is that being fake? Not necessarily.

Choosing to act contrary to one's innate character as a means of pursuing a value or goal is arguably just as authentic as doing what comes naturally, even if it requires more effort. Acting out of character over a long period, though, can be stressful as I'm sure most of us know. There are people who do this more, called high self-monitors, who try hard to conform to situational demands in the moment. People who do this less are called low self-monitors, insisting on being themselves no matter where they are or who they're with. The former might be called pragmatic, the latter, principled. Is one innately superior? The answer, of course, is that it depends on the situation.

The book then discusses locus of control, or the perception that one has control over events and how things will turn out. Some people really and truly believe that they have the power to affect change; others are more fatalistic. One question the book discusses is whether it's better to have a high or low locus of control, which is not as clear-cut as one might think. Another question is whether it's good or bad to be deluded about the level of control you actually have.

The book then discusses stress and health, leading into the ever-popular "Type A" and "Type B" personalities. The relationship between being a "Type A" personality and health is not nearly as clear-cut as was once believed. Some other surprises in this book include the traits of creative people (not always what you would think), a look at person-environment fit (there are, in fact, "country people" and "city people" but the traits differentiating them are not simple), and a discussion of our personal projects and what they say about us. Though not a self-help or pop psych book, the book wraps up with a discussion of what all of this means in terms of our well-being.

Maybe I just liked this because I'm a psychologist and have a preexisting interest in the topic. But this book wasn't written for psychologists, and that wasn't the only thing I liked about it. What I really admired was Brian Little's ability to be informative, engaging, and funny -- exactly what I look for in a good non-fiction read.

Caroline says

How often have you found yourself thinking someone you thought you knew very well was acting out of character? Is one's personality fixed or can we make changes to our personality to fit the situations we find ourselves in? If we can make changes, is there a cost to our health in doing so? Are we more susceptible to being persuaded by our peers or are we less open to suggestions? Is there a difference between eccentricity and creativity?

The study of personality science is an interesting one, and the author delivers his research in addition to some great personal and anecdotal stories. Perhaps the understanding of what makes us and those close to us tick and why we behave the way we do will enable us to communicate better with them, lower stress and increase our sense of well-being.
