



## NEWS RELEASE

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# PERSONALITY STYLES; HOW THEY INFLUENCE PEOPLE'S SUSCEPTIBILITY TO DEPRESSION

Researchers are trying to find out more about how people's different personality styles influence their risk of suffering from depression.

The Black Dog Institute has taken the unique step of offering people the opportunity to assess their personality on a web-based Personality and Treatment Response Survey ([www.blackdoginstitute.org.au](http://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au)).

Executive Director of the Institute, Professor Gordon Parker, who is behind the Institute's decision to introduce the Personality Tests, has just released a new edition of "Dealing with Depression; A Common Sense Guide to Mood Disorders".

In the book he gives emphasis to the topic of personality traits and the way in which they can contribute to many of the depressive disorders.

Personality profiling, according to Professor Parker, is particularly useful in identifying why a particular person has become depressed in response to certain stressful life events.

Professor Parker says that, while we all know what 'personality' is, it remains difficult to define. One definition is that personality is the unique combination of qualities and traits (whether inherited or acquired) that characterises individuals in their social interactions.

He said that, over recent times, the Black Dog Institute has tried to determine the contribution each personality dimension makes to the onset and course of depressive disorders.

"Our current model suggests eight dimensions of relevance to depression," he said.

They comprise:

1. *Anxious worrying* – reflecting high levels of internalised, ongoing anxiety.
2. *Irritability* – reflecting high levels of externalised, ongoing anxiety.
3. *Social avoidance* – individuals avoid socialising.
4. *Personal reserve* – individuals are uncomfortable sharing their feelings or opening up to others.
5. *Self-criticism* – reflecting ongoing low self-esteem and self-worth.

6. *Perfectionism* – reflecting self-imposed high standards.
7. *Interpersonal sensitivity* – individuals’ sense of self-worth is highly dependent on how they see other people reacting to them.
8. A *self focused* dimension, where individuals are focused more on their own needs than on the needs of others.

“Our Personality and Treatment Response Survey is accessed on our website ([www.blackdoginstitute.org.au](http://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au)), takes approximately 30 minutes to complete and involves participants answering 109 questions,” Professor Parker said.

“This is a confidential survey and after completing the questionnaire participants are provided with a personality profile. Our feedback has been very positive with many participants remarking how they enjoyed doing the survey ”

Because the feedback is based on self-reported information it is, therefore, influenced by the capacity of people to know themselves. The dimensions also are not entirely precise and scores on each scale are capable of being very much influenced by a range of personality characteristics and current mood.

Professor Parker said the survey was undoubtedly helping increase the data available and learning about how personality might influence the extent to which various treatments work for depression.

“Learning about this can help mental health professionals know more about how to ‘match’ people with differing treatments,” he said.

#### FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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