

Negativity Linked to Heart Ailments

[Rachel Howell Stockton](#)

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The term “Type A” personality has been around for several decades – it’s a moniker used to describe those who are constantly driven to high standards that may ultimately be next to impossible to achieve. For a good many years, researchers have known that people with that kind of adrenalin drive are at risk of cardiovascular ailments.

But there’s new research that suggests that there is another personality “type” that is susceptible to such cardiovascular events, and that is the Type D [personality](#).

This particular term hasn’t been around quite as long as “Type A”; it refers to those who experience a wide range of negative moods, depression, anxiety, pessimism and irritability (think “D” for depression). They also tend to be “closed off”, keeping emotions to themselves because of their fear of disapproval.

Research Details

The study was conducted by Viola Spek and her colleagues from Tiburg University in the Netherlands. Her team analyzed 49 studies derived of 6,121 people with cardiovascular problems, including heart attack, a need for angioplasty, bypass surgery or heart transplant.

The team concluded that Type D patients were three times more likely to suffer from cardiovascular problems than their counterparts. They were also three times more likely to suffer from [clinical depression](#), anxiety and other emotional/mental health problems.

According to the Washington Post, the reason for this elevated risk is that Type D heart patients may have higher levels of the [stress](#) hormone cortisol, which can increase blood pressure and may have an association to with greater inflammation. Additionally, they may be less likely to ask for help or to undergo routine checkups.

Although it's relatively impossible to change the core of our personalities, we can all implement certain habits that will help us try to maintain emotional stasis, which in turn can ultimately affect our physical health, regardless of whether we're Type As, Bs, Cs, or Ds. Following are some suggestions from a [mental health professional](#) that can assist us in keep our stress hormone levels in check.

Maintaining Balance

It's lot easier to keep ourselves "up" when circumstances are going well; that's not particularly a challenge unless we're clinically depressed. Where the attitude-rubber meets the road is when life throws us curve balls.

Since the beginning of the recession, statistics have shown that physician visits directly attributed to [stress and anxiety](#) have increased dramatically, among adults AND children. Stressors which occur outside of us (in other words, we can do nothing about them) leave us feeling a lack of control over our own lives and situations.

When we find ourselves feeling victimized by such forces, it's important to turn our attention to those things that we CAN control, those things that can nurture us emotionally: turning our attention to others and making sure we take care of those aspects of our lives we have control over, according to Sandra Tester, a licensed therapist practicing in Northwest Arkansas.

When we are feeling out-of-control, it's easy to develop myopia; all we can really focus on is ourselves and how circumstances are affecting US and those we love. This is a catch-22 of unparalleled proportion; the more we fixate on issues we can do nothing about, the more out of control we feel. We may tell ourselves that dwelling on what's wrong will help us solve things, but it doesn't really work that way. We have to get out of ourselves, move beyond the restrictive four walls of our minds, and look somewhere else. We may just find that our problems simply die of neglect when we don't give them as much credence.

Maintain a Simple Routine

Just as important as turning our attention toward our fellows is focusing on those things that we can do something about, those things that come up on a daily basis that need to be dealt with. It's tempting to become so overwhelmed with anxiety and stress that we end of "chucking it all" emotionally by neglecting to tend to those things we actually have the power to affect. For example, I may not know how long I may be jobless, but I can at least do something about the pile of dirty laundry in my dining room. Leaving the dishes or neglecting to take out the trash will add to our negativity exponentially.

When traumatic circumstances encroach up on us, it's tempting to let everything else go; this type of all-or-nothing-thinking can keep us digging ourselves deeper and deeper into a depressing hole. The "Tide Loads of Hope" ad campaign emphasizes this point beautifully; we may not be able to prevent or undo natural disasters, but we can have clean clothes. That particular ad sums up what it means to maintain a positive attitude amidst the detritus of our busy lives.

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