

# IS IT MY PERSONALITY OR A TRAUMA RESPONSE?

## A Self-Discovery Quiz

### INTRODUCTION

Many behaviors we consider "just part of who we are" might actually be adaptive responses to past experiences. This quiz will help you explore whether certain patterns in your life stem from your authentic personality or from trauma responses that developed as protective mechanisms.

**Important Note:** This quiz is for educational purposes only and is not a substitute for professional mental health care. If you're struggling with trauma or mental health concerns, please consider speaking with a qualified therapist.

### HOW TO TAKE THIS QUIZ

For each statement below, rate how often it applies to you:

- **Never** (0 points)
- **Rarely** (1 point)
- **Sometimes** (2 points)
- **Often** (3 points)
- **Always** (4 points)

Be honest with yourself. There are no right or wrong answers.

## Quiz Questions

### SECTION A: RELATIONSHIPS & BOUNDARIES

**Questions 1-5 assess "Fawning"** - the people-pleasing trauma response where you prioritize others' needs to stay safe. This is especially common in sexual abuse where saying "no" felt dangerous.

	Never	Rarely	Some times	Often	Always
<b>1.</b> I have difficulty saying "no" to requests, even when I'm overwhelmed.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
<b>2.</b> I feel responsible for other people's emotions and try to fix their problems.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
<b>3.</b> I avoid conflict at all costs, even when it means sacrificing my own needs.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
<b>4.</b> I struggle to trust people even when they've proven themselves trustworthy, or I swing between trusting too quickly and not at all.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
<b>5.</b> I feel like I need to earn love and acceptance through what I do for others.	<input type="checkbox"/>				

## SECTION B: THREAT DETECTION & HYPERVIGILANCE

	Never	Rarely	Some times	Often	Always
<b>6.</b> I'm constantly scanning my environment for threats or monitoring other people's moods.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
<b>7.</b> I have a strong startle response or jump easily at unexpected noises or movements.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
<b>8.</b> I have difficulty relaxing because I feel like I need to stay alert.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
<b>9.</b> When faced with conflict or stress, I freeze up, go blank, or feel unable to speak or move.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
<b>10.</b> I feel anxious or unsafe even in situations that are objectively safe.	<input type="checkbox"/>				

## SECTION C: CONTROL & PERFECTIONISM

	Never	Rarely	Some times	Often	Always
<b>11.</b> I need to control my environment and get anxious when things are unpredictable.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
<b>12.</b> I set unrealistically high standards for myself and feel like a failure when I don't meet them.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
<b>13.</b> I have trouble delegating tasks because I don't trust others to do them correctly.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
<b>14.</b> I replay conversations and situations over and over, worrying about what I said or did.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
<b>15.</b> I feel like I always need to be "on" and productive; relaxing feels uncomfortable or wrong.	<input type="checkbox"/>				

## SECTION D: EMOTIONAL REGULATION

	Never	Rarely	Some times	Often	Always
<b>16.</b> I often feel emotionally numb or disconnected from my feelings, especially when I "should" feel something.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
<b>17.</b> Small criticisms or rejections feel devastating to me.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
<b>18.</b> I have intense emotional reactions that seem disproportionate to the situation.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
<b>19.</b> I regularly use substances, work, food, shopping, or other behaviors to avoid feeling difficult emotions.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
<b>20.</b> I have trouble being alone with my thoughts and need constant distraction.	<input type="checkbox"/>				

## SECTION E: PHYSICAL & SOMATIC RESPONSES

	Never	Rarely	Some times	Often	Always
<b>21.</b> I experience unexplained physical pain, tension, or health issues doctors can't fully explain.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
<b>22.</b> I feel disconnected from my body or like I'm watching myself from outside.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
<b>23.</b> I hold chronic tension in specific areas (jaw, shoulders, neck, stomach) without realizing it.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
<b>24.</b> I have difficulty sensing physical feelings or knowing when I'm hungry, tired, or in pain.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
<b>25.</b> My body reacts (racing heart, shallow breathing, tension) before my mind registers danger.	<input type="checkbox"/>				

## SECTION F: SELF-WORTH & IDENTITY

	Never	Rarely	Some times	Often	Always
<b>26.</b> I have a hard time identifying my own wants and needs.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
<b>27.</b> I minimize my accomplishments and focus on my mistakes.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
<b>28.</b> I feel fundamentally broken or damaged in ways other people aren't.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
<b>29.</b> I have difficulty receiving compliments or praise.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
<b>30.</b> I carry deep shame about myself that I hide from others, feeling fundamentally flawed or "dirty."	<input type="checkbox"/>				

### SCORING YOUR RESULTS

**Never** (0 points) **Rarely** (1 point) **Sometimes** (2 points) **Often** (3 points) **Always** (4 points)

**Add up your total points:** \_\_\_\_\_

## 0-15 POINTS: MINIMAL TRAUMA RESPONSE INDICATORS

Your responses suggest that most of your behaviors likely stem from your natural personality traits rather than trauma responses. You seem to have a relatively healthy relationship with yourself and others, with good emotional regulation and clear boundaries.

**What this means:** The patterns you experience are likely authentic expressions of who you are. Continue nurturing your self-awareness and personal growth.

## 16-35 POINTS: MILD TO MODERATE PATTERNS

Your results indicate a combination of personality traits and possible trauma responses. Some of your behaviors may be adaptive responses to past experiences, while others reflect your authentic self.

**What this means:** Self-awareness and gentle exploration would be beneficial. Notice which patterns serve you well and which might be protective responses that no longer serve your highest good. "Healing What Hides in the Shadows" offers tools for private exploration of these patterns.

## 36-55 POINTS: MODERATE TO SIGNIFICANT TRAUMA INDICATORS

Many of your responses suggest patterns that commonly develop as protective mechanisms following difficult experiences. These responses likely helped you survive challenging situations but may now be limiting your growth and relationships.

**What this means:** Consider exploring these patterns with support. A trauma-informed therapist or coach can help you understand your responses and develop new, healthier coping strategies. "Healing What Hides in the Shadows" provides body-based practices and exercises specifically designed to work with these patterns.

## 56-80 POINTS: SIGNIFICANT TRAUMA RESPONSE PATTERNS

Your responses indicate significant patterns that are commonly associated with trauma responses. These deeply ingrained protective mechanisms may be significantly impacting your daily life, relationships, and overall well-being.

**What this means:** Professional support from a trauma specialist would likely be very beneficial in helping you process your experiences and develop healthier patterns. You don't have to heal alone—support is available and effective.

## 81-120 POINTS: STRONG TRAUMA RESPONSE PATTERNS

Your results suggest pervasive trauma-based coping mechanisms that are likely affecting multiple areas of your life. These protective responses developed to keep you safe but may now be creating significant challenges in relationships, work, and personal well-being.

**What this means:** Professional therapeutic support is strongly recommended. A trauma-informed therapist specializing in approaches like EMDR, somatic therapy, or Internal Family Systems can help you process these experiences and develop new patterns. You deserve support, and healing is absolutely possible.

## SPECIAL NOTE ON THE FREEZE RESPONSE

**If you scored high on question 9** (feeling frozen, going blank, or unable to speak/move), this is often specific to sexual trauma. The freeze response is:

- **NOT** weakness or compliance
- An involuntary nervous system response
- Extremely common in sexual abuse
- Often misunderstood as "not fighting back"
- A survival mechanism that kept you safe

This response deserves specialized attention in your healing journey. Chapter 4 of "Healing What Hides in the Shadows" addresses this specifically and offers tools for working with freeze responses.

## UNDERSTANDING THE DIFFERENCE

### PERSONALITY TRAITS:

- ✓ Feel authentic and aligned with your values
- ✓ Are flexible and can be adjusted based on the situation
- ✓ Generally serve you well in most areas of life
- ✓ Don't cause significant distress or interfere with relationships
- ✓ Developed gradually as part of your natural growth
- ✓ Present consistently across different contexts and relationships
- ✓ You can explain WHY you prefer or do something
- ✓ **Feel like choices you're making consciously**
- ✓ Others might describe these traits about you accurately

## **TRAUMA RESPONSES:**

- ✓ Often feel rigid or compulsive
- ✓ May have served you in the past but now limit your growth
- ✓ Can interfere with relationships and daily functioning
- ✓ Often accompanied by anxiety, shame, or other difficult emotions
- ✓ Developed as protective mechanisms during difficult experiences
- ✓ May vary dramatically depending on feeling safe vs. threatened
- ✓ Often operate automatically before you realize what's happening
- ✓ **Feel compulsive or like "I can't help it"**
- ✓ You might hide these responses from others
- ✓ **Accompanied by physical sensations (tight chest, shallow breathing, tension)**

## **IMPORTANT REMINDER**

**You can have a healthy personality AND trauma responses. They coexist.** Healing trauma responses doesn't change who you fundamentally are—it reveals who you've always been underneath the protection.

## **YOUR NEXT STEPS**

### **IMMEDIATE ACTIONS:**

#### **1. Practice Self-Compassion**

Remember that trauma responses developed to protect you. Thank these parts of yourself for keeping you safe. They worked when you needed them.

#### **2. Increase Self-Awareness**

Start noticing when these patterns show up in your daily life without judging yourself. Simply observe: "Oh, that's my freeze response" or "That's my people-pleasing pattern."

#### **3. Journal About Your Patterns**

Write about specific situations when you notice these responses and what might have triggered them. Notice if physical sensations came first.

## SHORT-TERM STEPS

### 1. Learn About Trauma

Read books like "The Body Keeps the Score" by Bessel van der Kolk or "Complex PTSD" by Pete Walker. **"Healing What Hides in the Shadows"** includes specific exercises for working with trauma responses and offers tools designed for private healing.

### 2. Try Grounding Techniques

Practice deep breathing, mindfulness, or other techniques that help you stay present in your body. Chapter 13 of "Healing What Hides in the Shadows" offers detailed grounding practices.

### 3. Connect with Supportive People

Reach out to trusted friends or family members who can provide emotional support. You don't have to share details—just connection helps.

## LONG-TERM HEALING

### IMMEDIATE SELF-HELP:

- **"Healing What Hides in the "Shadows"—Includes** private healing tools that don't require disclosure. Offers body-based practices, somatic exercises, and trauma-informed guidance you can use alone.

### GUIDED SUPPORT:

- **Coaching with Agenna Mathley** - For personalized trauma-informed guidance on understanding your patterns and developing healthier responses. Visit [www.CoachAgenna.com](http://www.CoachAgenna.com) to learn more about working together.

### CLINICAL TREATMENT:

- **Licensed Therapist**—For complex trauma, PTSD, or when you need clinical intervention. Look for therapists who specialize in trauma, particularly those trained in:
  - EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing)
  - Somatic Experiencing
  - Internal Family Systems (IFS)
  - Sensorimotor Psychotherapy
  - Trauma-Focused CBT

### BODY-BASED HEALING:

- Explore practices like trauma-informed yoga, massage, acupuncture, or other somatic therapies that help process trauma stored in the body.

### BUILD NEW NEURAL PATHWAYS:

- Consistently practice new, healthier responses to gradually retrain your nervous system. Small, repeated actions create lasting change.

## RESOURCES FOR FURTHER SUPPORT

### BOOKS:

- **"Healing What Hides in the Shadows"** by Agenna Mathley—Practical exercises for transforming trauma responses, designed for private healing
- "The Body Keeps the Score" by Bessel van der Kolk
- "Complex PTSD" by Pete Walker
- "Trauma and Recovery" by Judith Herman
- "Waking the Tiger" by Peter Levine
- "What Happened to You?" by Bruce Perry and Oprah Winfrey

### PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT:

#### Find a Therapist:

- Psychology Today Therapist Directory: [www.psychologytoday.com](http://www.psychologytoday.com)
- EMDR International Association: [www.emdria.org](http://www.emdria.org)
- Somatic Experiencing Directory: [traumahealing.org](http://traumahealing.org)

#### Coaching Services:

- For personalized guidance on understanding your patterns and developing healthier responses, visit [www.CoachAgenna.com](http://www.CoachAgenna.com)

## CRISIS RESOURCES:

- **RAINN National Sexual Assault Hotline:** 1-800-656-4673 (24/7)
- **Crisis Text Line:** Text HOME to 741741
- **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline:** 988
- **SAMHSA National Helpline:** 1-800-662-4357

## REMEMBER

Healing is not linear, and there's no shame in having trauma responses. These patterns developed as intelligent adaptations to help you survive difficult experiences. With awareness, support, and often professional help, you can develop new patterns that serve your authentic self and highest good.

**You deserve to live a life where you feel safe, connected, and free to be yourself.**

Your body remembers how to heal. It's designed for it. And with the right tools and support, you can release what's been trapped and reclaim the life that's been waiting for you.

**"Healing What Hides in the Shadows"** provides comprehensive guidance and practical exercises for transforming trauma responses into authentic self-expression. Whether you're healing privately or with support, this book offers:

- 30 comprehensive chapters covering every aspect of trauma recovery
- Body-based practices that release trapped trauma
- Tools for managing triggers, flashbacks, and daily challenges
- Guidance for boundary-setting and relationship navigation
- Special sections on sibling abuse, religious trauma, and complex issues
- Complete trauma recovery toolkit

**For personalized support,** I also offer coaching services to help you navigate this process with guidance tailored to your specific situation.

**Visit [www.coachAgenna.com](http://www.coachAgenna.com) to learn more.**

**Disclaimer:** This quiz is for educational purposes only. It is not intended to diagnose or treat any mental health condition. If you're experiencing significant distress or mental health symptoms, please consult with a qualified mental health professional.

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