

# Introduction

**Y**ou'd recognize them as people who are generally more competitive, restless, and quick to anger. Their counterparts show behaviors that are low key, calmer, and less rushed by the day's events. These two distinct personality types have been labeled Type A and Type B and considerable research has been focused on them over the past several decades.



Why so much attention to these two kinds of behaviors? Dr. Ray Rosenman and Dr. Meyer Friedman, two cardiologists, many years ago established a link between personality and coronary heart disease. They analyzed data from thousands of people between the ages of 31 and 59 years and placed them into one of two categories, either Type A or Type B. They then observed which people became coronary heart disease patients and which were heart attack free. The biggest difference between the two groups was that the Type A person was 70% more likely to suffer from coronary heart disease, even if they had no prior history of the disease.

They suggested that the roots of Type A behaviors are insecurity and low self-esteem. In a society that is basically competitive, insecurity takes root easily. Goals may be unrealistic and expectations overwhelming. The outcome can be low self-esteem.

To increase achievements, a person might try to work harder and faster. They may become more time urgent, aggressive, or hostile. These are some of the characteristics which typify Type A behavior. The outcome may be a sense of free-floating anxiety because of the inability to meet all these expectations.

$$\text{Self-Esteem} = \frac{\text{Achievements}}{\text{Expectations}}$$

These potentially hazardous behavior patterns can be altered by learning to think and plan differently. The goal of this chapter is to teach skills that can modify stressful Type A patterns and convert them into relaxed Type B patterns.

More recent research conducted at Duke University in 1989 has suggested that not all Type A behaviors are unhealthy. Their studies have isolated the following four personality characteristics as being the ones most closely associated with heart disease:

- Hostility
- Cynical mistrust of people's motives
- Frequent anger
- Open expression of anger

Concentrate on minimizing these aspects of your behavior for the sake of a healthier heart. Other aspects of Type A behavior, such as impatience or time urgency, should be neutralized to reduce the uncomfortable stress caused by these behaviors, but not necessarily to prevent a heart attack.