

## THE HOSTILITY QUESTIONNAIRE

Redford Williams

Taking a written test is the first and easiest way to evaluate your hostility level. Your answers, taken all together, should provide a reasonably accurate profile of your attitudes and behaviors, if you take care to answer accurately.

It's always tempting to answer such questions as though a parent, fifth-grade teacher, or someone we want to impress were looking over our shoulder! Try to get rid of your chaperone before you begin. Avoid the temptation to choose the response you think you ought to pick, or the one you think would sound right to other people. Answer as spontaneously as you can.. Unlike the tests you took in school, there are no right or wrong answers here. What feels right to you is the correct answer.

Each question describes a specific or general situation that you have probably encountered. If you haven't encountered it, imagine as vividly as you can how you would react in the situation. After each description you are presented with two responses, A or B, describing how that situation might affect you, or how you might behave under those circumstances. In some instances, neither response may seem to fit, or both may appear equally desirable. This is normal; go ahead and answer anyway, choosing as best you can the single response that is more likely for you in that situation.

Write an "A" or "B" beside each number, to indicate your choice for the corresponding question. Remember, choose only one response for each situation described. Take as much time as you need to make your choice for each item, but remember that what seems right at first glance—your "gut" reaction—usually presents your true position. On average it should take about fifteen minutes to answer all questions.

1. A teenager drives by my yard with the car stereo blaring acid rock.
  - A. I begin to understand why teenagers can't hear.
  - B. I can feel my blood pressure starting to rise.
  
2. The person who cuts my hair trims off more than I wanted.
  - A. I tell him or her what a lousy job he or she did.
  - B. I figure it'll grow back, and I resolve to give my instructions more forcefully next time.
  
3. I am in the express checkout line at the supermarket, where a sign reads: "No more than 10 items, please!"
  - A. I pick up a magazine to pass the time.
  - B. I glance ahead to see if anyone has more than ten items.
  
4. Many large cities have a visible number of homeless people.
  - A. I believe that the homeless are down and out because they lack ambition.
  - B. The homeless are victims of illness or some other misfortune.
  
5. There have been times when I was very angry with someone.
  - A. I was always able to stop short of hitting them.
  - B. I have, on occasion, hit or shoved them.

6. The newspaper contains a prominent news story about drug- related crime.
  - A. I wish the government had better educational/drug pro-grams, even for pushers.
  - B. I wish we could put every drug pusher away for good.
  
7. The prevalence of AIDS has reached epidemic proportions.
  - A. This is largely the result of irresponsible behavior on the part of a small proportion of the population.
  - B. AIDS is a major tragedy.
  
8. I sometimes argue with a friend or relative.
  - A. I find profanity an effective tool.
  - B. I hardly ever use profanity.
  
9. I am stuck in a traffic jam.
  - A. I usually am not particularly upset.
  - B. I quickly start to feel irritated and annoyed.
  
10. There is a really important job to be done.
  - A. I prefer to do it myself.
  - B. I am apt to call on my friends or coworkers to help.
  
11. Sometimes I keep my angry feelings to myself.
  - A. Doing so can often prevent me from making a mountain out of a molehill.
  - B. Doing so is usually a bad idea.
  
12. Another driver butts ahead of me in traffic.
  - A. I usually flash my lights or honk my horn.
  - B. I stay farther back behind such a driver.
  
13. Someone treats me unfairly.
  - A. I usually forget it rather quickly.
  - B. I am apt to keep thinking about it for hours.
  
14. The cars ahead of me on an unfamiliar road start to slow and stop as they approach a curve.
  - A. I assume that there is a construction site ahead.
  - B. I assume someone ahead had a fender bender.

15. Someone expresses an ignorant belief.
- A. I try to correct him or her.
  - B. I am likely to let it pass.
16. I am caught in a slow-moving bank or supermarket line.
- A. I usually start to fume at people who dawdle ahead of me.
  - B. I seldom notice the wait.
17. Someone is being rude or annoying.
- A. I am apt to avoid him or her in the future.
  - B. I might have to get rough with him or her.
18. An election year rolls around.
- A. I learn anew that politicians are not to be trusted.
  - B. I am caught up in the excitement of pulling for my candidate.
19. An elevator stops too long on a floor above where I am waiting
- A. I soon start to feel irritated and annoyed.
  - B. I start planning the rest of my day.
20. I am around someone I don't like.
- A. I try to end the encounter as soon as possible.
  - B. I find it hard not to be rude to him or her.
21. I see a very overweight person walking down the street.
- A. I wonder why this person has such little self-control.
  - B. I think that he or she might have a metabolic defect or a psychological problem.
22. I am riding as a passenger in the front seat of a car.
- A. I take the opportunity to enjoy the scenery.
  - B. I try to stay alert for obstacles ahead.
23. Someone criticizes something I have done.
- A. I feel annoyed.
  - B. I try to decide whether the criticism is justified.

- 24.** I am involved in an argument.
- A.** I concentrate hard so that I can get my point across.
  - B.** I can feel my heart pounding, and I breathe harder.
- 25.** A friend or co-worker disagrees with me.
- A.** I try to explain my position more clearly.
  - B.** I am apt to get into an argument with him or her.
- 26.** Someone is speaking very slowly during a conversation.
- A.** I am apt to finish his or her sentences.
  - B.** I am apt to listen until he or she finishes.
- 27.** If they were put on the honor system, most people wouldn't sneak into a movie without paying.
- A.** That's because they are afraid of being caught.
  - B.** It's because it would be wrong.
- 28.** I have strong beliefs about rearing children.
- A.** I try to reward mine when they behave well.
  - B.** I make sure that they know what the rules are.
- 29.** I hear news of another terrorist attack.
- A.** I feel like lashing out.
  - B.** I wonder how people can be so cruel.
- 30.** I am talking with my spouse, boyfriend, or girlfriend.
- A.** I often find my thoughts racing ahead to what I plan to say next.
  - B.** I find it easy to pay close attention to what he or she is saying.
- 31.** There have been times in the past when I was really angry.
- A.** I have never thrown things or slammed a door.
  - B.** At times I have thrown something or slammed a door.
- 32.** Life is full of little annoyances.
- A.** They often seem to get under my skin.
  - B.** They seem to roll off my back unnoticed.

33. I disapprove of something a friend has done.
- A. I usually keep such disapproval to myself.
  - B. I usually let him or her know about it.
34. I am requesting a seat assignment for an airline flight.
- A. I usually request a seat in a specific area of the plane.
  - B. I generally leave the choice to the agent.
35. I feel a certain way nearly every day of the week.
- A. I feel grouchy some of the time.
  - B. I usually stay on an even keel.
36. Someone bumps into me in a store.
- A. I pass it off as an accident.
  - B. I feel irritated at the person's clumsiness.
37. My spouse, boyfriend, or girlfriend is preparing a meal.
- A. I keep an eye out to make sure nothing burns or cooks too long.
  - B. I either talk about my day or read the paper.
38. A boyfriend or girlfriend calls at the last minute to say that he or she is "too tired to go out tonight," and I am stuck with a pair of fifteen-dollar tickets.
- A. I try to find someone else to go with.
  - B. I tell my friend how inconsiderate he or she is.
39. I recall something that angered me previously.
- A. I feel angry all over again.
  - B. The memory doesn't bother me nearly as much as the actual event did.
40. I see people walking-around in shopping malls.
- A. Many of them are either shopping or exercising.
  - B. Many are wasting time.
41. Someone is hogging the conversation at a party.
- A. I look for an opportunity to put him or her down.
  - B. I soon move to another group.

- 42.** At times, I have to work with incompetent people. .
- A.** I concentrate on my part of the job.
  - B.** Having to put up with them ticks me off.
- 43.** My spouse, boyfriend, or girlfriend is going to get me a birthday present.
- A.** I prefer to pick it out myself.
  - B.** I prefer to be surprised.
- 44.** I hold a poor opinion of someone.
- A.** I keep it to myself.
  - B.** I let him or her know about it.
- 45.** In most arguments I have, the roles are consistent.
- A.** I am the angrier one.
  - B.** The other person is angrier than I am.
- 46.** Slow-moving lines can often be found in banks and supermarkets.
- A.** They are an unavoidable part of modern life.
  - B.** They are often due to someone's incompetence.

## SCORING KEY: CYNICISM, ANGER, AGGRESSION, TOTAL HOSTILITY

Cynicism, anger, and aggression are three aspects of hostility that are especially harmful to health. **Cynicism:** a mistrusting attitude regarding the motives of people in general, leading one to be constantly on guard against the "misbehavior" of others. **Anger:** the emotion so often engendered by the cynical person's expectation of unacceptable behavior on the part of others. **Aggression:** the behavior to which many hostile people are driven by the unpleasant negative emotions of anger, irritation, and the like. The test you just took is designed to reveal where you stand on these three dimensions of hostility.

To score your **Cynicism** level, turn back to the test and look at the following items and responses:

**3(B), 4(A), 7(A), 10(A), 14(B), 18(A), 21(A), 22(B), 27(A), 30(A), 34(A), 37(A), 40(B), 43(A), and 46(B).** Give yourself 1 point every time your answer agrees with the letter in parentheses after each item number. Thus, if your answers matched the letters for 8 out of the 15 questions, your Cynicism score would be 8.

These 15 questions tested the degree to which you believe that people in general are selfish and out mainly for themselves, that you cannot trust them to do the right thing most of the time, and that you are the only one you can really depend on. For example, your having chosen "I glance ahead to see if anyone has more than ten items" instead of "I pick up a magazine to pass the time" when in the express line at the supermarket (item 3), indicates that your level of trust in other people is so low that you expect them to try to sneak through with more than ten items. If your score is 0 to 3, your Cynicism level is very low. If your score is 4 to 6, your cynicism level is probably high enough to be of some concern. If your score is 7 or more, your Cynicism level is very high.

To score your **Anger** level, give yourself one point for each of the following answers:

**1(B), 6(B), 9(B), 13(B), 16(A), 19(A), 23(A), 24(B), 29(A), 32(A), 35(A), 36(B), 39(A), 42(B), and 45(A).**

As you probably noticed, these items asked whether you most likely responded with anger, irritation, or annoyance when faced with life's frustrations, such as being stuck in a traffic jam (item 9). If your score is 0 to 3, your Anger level is very low. If your score is 4 to 6, your Anger level is probably high enough to deserve your attention. If your score is 7 or higher, your Anger level is very high.

To score your **Aggression** level, give yourself one point for each of the following answers: **2(A), 5(B), 8(A), 11(B), 12(A), 15(A), 17(B), 20(B), 25(B), 26(A), 28(B), 31(B), 33(B), 38(B), 41(A), and 44(B).**

These items gauge your tendency to express your anger or irritation overtly toward other people, whether physically (e.g., item 5 -- when angry with someone, "I have, on occasion, hit or shoved them.") or verbally (item 33 -- when disapproving of something a friend has done, "I usually let him or her know about it").

If your score is 0 to 3, your Aggression level is very low. If your score is 4 to 6, your Aggression level is borderline, and you may want to consider ways to reduce it. If your score is 7 or more, you probably need to take serious steps to reduce your Aggression level.

Your Total Hostility score is simply the sum of the 3 aspects of hostility you have just scored. Add your Cynicism, Anger, and Aggression scores. If your Total Hostility score is 10 or less, our research suggests that your hostility level is below the range where it is likely to place you at risk of developing health problems. Any score higher than 10 may place you in the group whose hostility level is high enough to increase your risk of health problems. Your scores on the Cynicism, Anger, and Aggression dimensions of hostility will provide some clues regarding those aspects of your hostility that need changing. For example, if your Cynicism score is 9 but your Anger and Aggression scores are both only 4, this might suggest that you need to focus most on your attitudes toward others.

There is another way you might wish to use this hostility test, especially if you were unsure of many answers or if your scores were borderline or inconclusive. If you trust the judgment of someone close to you (a friend or spouse), you might want to ask that person to profile you with the test. Instruct this person to choose the responses to each question as he or she believes you would answer. If the score from this person's rating of you agrees closely with yours—within 2 to 3 points for the Total Hostility score—then it's likely that your own self-ratings are accurate. If the two scores differ by more than 5 or 6 points, and especially if your friend's score is higher than yours, you may be underestimating your hostility level.