

PERSONALITY  
ISN'T  
PERMANENT

**BREAK FREE  
FROM SELF-LIMITING BELIEFS  
AND REWRITE YOUR STORY**

*Benjamin Hardy, Ph.D.*

## ADVANCED PRAISE

"This is a generous, empowering and purposeful book. If you're ready, it will help you unlock a future that you may have been brainwashed into believing wasn't possible. Worth sharing a copy with someone you care about."

—**Seth Godin**, Author of *This Is Marketing*

"*Personality Isn't Permanent* is possibly the best self-help book I've ever read, and a book that will redefine the genre. After this book, it's no longer good enough to talk about untested theory—Ben backs everything up with both amazing stories and cutting edge, tested science, while still making it actionable to anyone. Best part: this is the book that destroys all the useless personality test peddlers that infect the world."

—**Tucker Max**, 4X *New York Times* Bestselling Author

"In *Personality Isn't Permanent*, Dr. Hardy crushes an outdated paradigm and gives you the process to create a bigger, bolder future."

—**JJ Virgin**, 4X *New York Times* Bestselling Author

"Ben Hardy is proof of what he writes about. He keeps getting better and better--and so can you."

—**Ryan Holiday**, Bestselling Author of *Stillness is the Key*

"For those looking to up their game, *Personality isn't Permanent* is more than a hopeful and fascinating read, it is utterly applicable. In the crowded genre of self-help/business, Benjamin Hardy's book is a game changer."

—**Richard Paul Evans**, 39X *New York Times* Bestselling Author

"*Personality Isn't Permanent* beautifully illustrates why people get stuck and provides a science-based process to help you transform yourself and your life. This is required reading for anyone who wants to improve their self-awareness and success!"

—**Dr. Tasha Eurich**, *New York Times* Bestselling Author of *Insight* and *Bankable Leadership*

"*Personality Isn't Permanent* is a supremely brilliant work and a must read. You can rewrite your story."

—**Glenn Morshower**, Award winning actor, producer and director

*For Lauren,*

*Thank you for betting on me when it made no sense and for continuing to bet on me.*

*It still doesn't make much sense.*

*I love you forever.*

*May our future always be brighter than our past.*

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*“A painting is never finished—it simply stops in interesting places.”*

*—Paul Gardner*

# Introduction

My wife—the woman I love the most in the world and have five wonderful children with—almost didn't marry me... *because of a personality test.*

A very popular personality test while I was in college was called "The Color Code," which categorizes people into one of four colors. Reds are your type-A go getters driven by ambition and self-interest. Blues are more heart centered and relationship based. Whites are introspective and often passive. Yellows seek fun and are the life of the party<sup>ii</sup>.

The purpose of personality tests is to categorize people. They create a snap judgement about how you view a person, if you could be friends with them, and what their potential is.

Lauren was a Red. So, when her family found out that I was a White, they were *very concerned*. Lauren had previously been married to an abusive and self-absorbed guy, who was also a Red. Her parents thought, given her interest in me, that she may be going too far the opposite direction to compensate. Or that she was being overly cautious to avoid the perils of her prior marriage.

Like many others who put stock into personality tests, Lauren's family considered the Color Code to have some validity and truth.

"If this guy is a White, and she's a Red, she's going to walk all over him," were the genuine concerns of her parents.

*“She needs a real man, not a White.”*

She was wondering the same thing. Could a Red and a White really work together? Whites rarely get promoted at work. Whites are pushovers. Whites are dreamers but don't stick to long-term goals. Luckily for me, Lauren gave me a chance. She got to know me and after a while together in a great relationship, she took the leap of faith against her prejudgment of Whites and her parent's initial concerns.

Lauren and I laugh about this now, happily married with five kids and 14 years of combined formal psychology education later. But the fact remains: *a personality test almost ruined our life together.*

I'm not the only one who's been misdiagnosed or unfairly limited by a personality test. In fact, you likely have also fallen prey to this epidemic. The Color Code is just one of *countless* popular “personality” frameworks sweeping modern culture. Some of the major culprits include: The Myer-Briggs Type Indicator, the DISC assessment, the Winslow Personality Profile, Neo, Hexaco, Birkman, Enneagram, Inkblots, quizzes, tasks.

The list goes on and it doesn't stop. It won't stop. It seems like hundreds of new tests are devised every single day.

The obsession with “personality” is so ridiculous that in 2019 Facebook had to ban personality quizzes and other apps with “minimal utility”<sup>iii</sup>. Over 87 million people had given away their personal information in exchange for the answer to a personality quiz.

Personality tests are entertaining and playful, yes. But there's a dark reality about personality tests, and the entire notion of "personality" in general, which limits—and in some cases *ruins*—the lives of countless people.

The mainstream perspective is that your personality is the *real* and authentic you. Your personality is "innate" and for the most part, *unchangeable*. As a result, your job as a human being is to gather enough information and experience—or, to find the right personality test—in order to adequately "discover" your "hidden" personality.

Once you make this all-important discovery, you are then enabled to build your entire life *around that personality*. This life you build may not be the one you'd have chosen for yourself. But it's the life you were *born to live*. It's the hand you were dealt. To do anything otherwise would be disastrous, painful, and delusional.

Through all of this is the underlying assumption: *You were born the person you are, and you cannot change that.*

The truth is, though, that virtually everyone *wants* to change their personality. Recent research at the University of Illinois proves this. Over 90 percent of people report being dissatisfied with at least some aspects of their personality, which they hope to improve for the better<sup>iv</sup>.

Despite wanting to change, people have been led to believe they can't. Many popular schools of psychology argue that personality is innate and immutable.

Fixed.

The reason personality is viewed as fixed is because, as a rule, psychologists place extreme emphasis and value *on the past*. A core tenant of many personality



theories is that *the past is the greatest predictor of the future*. As Dr. Joseph Rychlak, a psychologist who wrote many foundational textbooks on personality, said, “All scientists believe that behavior is caused by previous events.”<sup>v</sup>

The word “*cause*” is extreme. Being “caused” by the past means you have no choice or possibility in the matter of who you are and what you can do. Instead, you’re forced to accept whatever personality you have. Who you are right now is simply a domino being toppled over by your past experiences. You can’t change the past. You can only *discover* and better understand who you *really* are and why.

This is why people seek to discover or “find” themselves. They are looking for who “they” are. The notion that you can imagine and create yourself and your own personality almost sounds ridiculous, like magical thinking.

But does it have to be this way?

Is your personality actually fixed and unchangeable?

I don’t believe it is. And there is a lot of data, especially newly unearthed data<sup>vi</sup>, suggesting I’m right. If you’re someone who’s tried making big changes in your life but feel stuck or discouraged, then this book is for you.

The argument of this book is that your “personality” *doesn’t matter*. Even more, your personality is *not* the most fundamental aspect of who you are. Instead, your personality is *surface-level*, transitory, and a byproduct of something much deeper.

The most fundamental aspect of your humanity is your ability to make choices and stand by those choices, what Viktor Frankl called the last of human freedoms, “*To choose one’s own way.*”<sup>vii</sup> Take this away and you are no longer human.

There are multiple layers and explanations as to why you are the way you are. The layer above your ability to choose—which heavily influence and constrain the choices you make—is the combination of your social and cultural environments, as well as your emotional development as a human being. The more emotionally evolved you become, the less defined you will be by your past and the less constrained you'll be by your circumstances<sup>viii</sup>.

Instead of being fixed, *you will be flexible*. Instead of avoiding or suppressing emotions, you'll embrace and be transformed through them.

You'll courageously pursue the life you *truly* want—regardless of how “impossible” or difficult it may currently seem to you or those around you. You'll deal with whatever emotions, learning, or struggles come along the way. Through your learning and experience, you'll transform as a person. Your circumstances will change.

From this moment forward, you can forget about silly personality tests and “types.” Instead, you can decide who you're committed to being and becoming.

Who you become is your choice—which *only you* can make. Albus Dumbledore, the wise and fictional wizard, understood this. When Harry Potter was seeking guidance, trying to understand why the Sorting Hat advised him to become a Slytherin. "It is our choices, Harry, that show what we truly are, far more than our abilities,"<sup>ix</sup> Dumbledore explained.

Harry Potter wasn't “born” to be a Gryffindor. He didn't have an innate personality of a Gryffindor. He chose to be one, and that choice and the subsequent experiences which followed shaped his personality.

Although fictional, Dumbledore's lesson is fundamental to understanding the truth of personality. You become who you choose to be. Yet, *fully choosing* who you are and will become is rare. We've been brainwashed into believing we don't have such a choice. Facing the responsibility and freedom of choice can feel like standing at the base of a cliff—like you're leaving solid ground and entering a free-fall.

Hence, many people would prefer the Sorting Hat to simply make the call for them, as to what their destiny is. Or in this case, they defer their potential and identity to external measures. It's much easier, emotionally, to have a box to orient yourself by, even if that box limits your freedom, vision, and courage.

Creativity is risky. It involves making choices and seeking to connect with others on an emotional level. Creativity requires vulnerability and courage—with a high probability of mistakes and failures along the way. There is no guaranteed outcome with creativity and courage. Moreover, creativity can be unpredictable and take you places you didn't initially expect to go. It's not surprising, then, that most people view themselves as increasingly *less creative* as they age. It's not surprising that they prefer being told what they can (*and can't*) do, rather than face the risks of *creating themselves* and their own experience.

When you decide who you'll be and the life you'll live, then you can have anything you *truly* want. You don't have to be limited by what other people say you can have or achieve. If you want to be more confident and creative, or more extraverted and organized, you can become any or all of those things. If you're timid but want to become a powerful, bold, and inspirational leader, you can become that as well.

Stacy Salmon learned this truth during a Sunday school class when she was 13 years old. Up to that point, Stacy was shy, timid, and awkward. Her teacher explained to the students that they could all become who they wanted to be. They could develop attributes they admired in others.

This idea sunk-in for Stacy, and from that moment forward, *she stopped acting shy around others*. Stopped hiding behind her parents in social situations. Stopped awkwardly yawning to avoid attention when someone asked her a question. And over the past 20+ years since that experience, she has continually sought to develop skills, learn from others, and grow as a person. Now in her late 30's, she still seeks growth and learning, and to develop attributes and characteristics she wants or admires in others. She's no longer that shy girl. She's confident and intentional.

That's the truth of personality. It's not innate, but trained. It can and does change. It can and should be chosen and designed.

Anyone who's ever done something great with their life had to transform themselves from who they were to who they became. They had to see something new in their mind and convince themselves it was possible. They had to act courageously beyond their current personality and circumstances to eventually do what they did and become who they became.

Outsiders may view the hyper-successful or influential as "different" or "unique,"<sup>x</sup> but if you asked those who actually did it, they will always tell you the life they created *was their choice*.

The only thing “special” about those who transform themselves and their lives is their view of their own future. They refuse to be defined by the past. They see something bigger and better and they never stop fueling that vision. Every single day, they maintain their vision of faith and hope and take courageous steps in that direction, accompanied by much failure and pain. With each step forward, their confidence increases and their identity becomes more flexible and less constrained by what was.

You can be the narrator of your life’s story. You don’t have to be defined by your past. It doesn’t matter what your past identity or outcomes were.

“What’s past is prologue.”<sup>xi</sup> That’s a line from Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*, uttered by the character Antonio, a power-hungry, manipulative character, to argue all that has happened previously—the “past”—has led Sebastian and himself to do what they were about to do, which was commit murder. They had no other choice, it seems.

People use the past as the excuse to remain stuck in habits and attitudes that keep them from growing. But as you will find over and over in this book, your past is *not* prologue. Your past is not the defining feature of who you are. You are not “caused” by your past. Your personality is not fixed.

The most successful people in the world base their identity and internal narrative on their future, *not their past*. For example, Elon Musk has often talked about wanting to live out the end of his life on Mars.<sup>xii</sup>

Human travel to Mars is not a possibility yet.

But dying on Mars is Musk’s story—that he will.

That's where Elon Musk is *going* as a person, and it's entirely in his future, not his past. His attention, energy, and narrative are based on the future he's creating. You don't hear him talking about "The PayPal days." You don't see him limited by what he's previously done or failed at. You don't see him taking a break and resting on his laurels. You don't even hear him mention the past unless he's explicitly asked about it.

This is how successful people live: *They become who they want to be by living their life in the direction of their goals, not as a repeat of the past.* By acting bravely as their future selves. Not by perpetuating who they formerly were.

This book will show you how to become who you want to be, regardless of who you've been. It will teach you everything you need to know about why people get stuck in unhealthy patterns, and provide you with science-based and actionable strategies for getting clear on what you want, and then creating it in your life.

In *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*, Robert Pirsig wrote, "Steel can be any shape you want if you are skilled enough, and any shape but the one you want if you are not."<sup>xiii</sup>

In this book, you're going to learn how personality is shaped, and how you yourself can and should be the shaper. You will learn to be the architect and blacksmith of your personality, and thus be enabled to forge yourself into whoever you want to be. Specifically, *Personality Isn't Permanent* will help you:

- Transform and heal from traumatic experiences that have limited your imagination and trapped you in the past

- Become emotionally flexible so that traumatic or challenging future-experiences don't create unnecessary plateaus in your development
- Shift your identity narrative from past-based to future-based
- Become more courageous and successful
- Build genuine confidence so you can progressively advance toward goals above your current personality and circumstances
- Enhance your imagination for creating vision and goals for your future
- Upgrade your brain so you can learn without being blocked by your fight-or-flight response
- Design your environment to make achieving your goals inevitable
- Become the person you truly want to be, and then, to upgrade yourself and evolve again and again

In short, this book provides you the science and strategy for never getting stuck in an identity or pattern again. Although personal transformation is certainly not a cakewalk, this book provides you with the most direct, simple, and effective path to change and growth. There is a proven, science-based process which you can learn and apply to your life to ensure you are never trapped or defined by your past again. Instead, you can continuously imagine a bigger future and then create the personality to live that future.

Changing your life isn't wishful thinking. You literally have buried trauma keeping you trapped in your past and shutting down your confidence and imagination. This can't be ignored. It must be addressed. Moreover, you have a social environment supporting

your current or past-based identity, rather than pushing you to become someone different and better.

This book will challenge you to take responsibility for yourself. The fact is, basing your life off personality tests, or any other form of external measure is *elementary and childish*. Sure, it's helpful when growing up to get guidance and direction, but fundamental to maturity is making your own decisions and standing by those decisions.

If you take the personality craze seriously, then you have forfeited your ability to choose. You've granted responsibility of both your past and future to something outside of yourself. Instead of seeking change, you've limited your potential for change. Instead of focusing on what you can do to change your life, you're trying to discover or understand why you're disabled or limited. Instead of changing yourself, you're convinced to merely accept yourself.

Deep down, you know this is all nonsense. Deep down, you want more for yourself. You want to believe you can make changes in your life—even radical changes. Perhaps you've given up hope that it's possible for you.

But if you truly want to change your life in powerful and chosen ways, then this book will teach you how.

### [Why Listen to Dr. Benjamin Hardy?](#)

The fact that I was a “White” according to the Color Code isn't the only thing I had working against me when I was trying to court my wife. It just so happened Lauren's



best friend married a guy who went to high school with me. He strongly advised her against dating me. And for good reason.

The person I was in high school was not someone I'd recommend dating or marrying either. But I wasn't at all the same person I was back in high school. I didn't even feel like I was in the same universe.

Back in high school, I was a highly traumatized and confused young man. My parents divorced when I was 11 and the pain it created led my father into a deep drug addiction. Over a few years, his home became a dark and strange place, filled with drug addicts. My mom was busy trying to run a company with her sister.

I was the oldest of three boys and our lives became unstructured and uncertain following my parent's divorce. Naturally, I began surrounding myself with kids who were going through similar trauma and confusion. Although we weren't bad kids, we often bullied and teased others. We got in quite a bit of harmless trouble. More than anything, we had no stability or foundation. We played online video games all day, skateboarded, snowboarded, and did nothing productive.

I barely graduated from high school. I missed so much school that I was required to plant a tree on the school's property and do community service to make up for absences. The year following high school, I was living at my cousin's house sleeping on his Love Sac and doing nothing with my life. I had no job and had dropped-out of community college. It was way too much for me to handle. World of Warcraft was my escape.

Around age 20, I decided to leave my home town and serve a church mission. I was fed up with how my life was going and wanted a fresh start. This two-year experience changed everything for me. I came back a different person with enhanced capabilities.

It was the first time in my life when I felt free to be whoever I wanted to be. I wasn't constrained by my past or my environment. My identity, behavior, and future were all in my hands. It was the perfect situation to reinvent myself.

And that's exactly what I did.

I learned how to process and transform my trauma into growth and service. I read over 100 books, filled stacks of journals, and got intimate mentoring from very successful leaders. I spent two years helping other people overcome their problems and saw and experienced stuff that completely changed how I viewed the world and life in general. I came to grasp just how finite life is, and how coddled many are from the realities of life.

This woke me up.

When I got home, I knew how much I had changed and also sensed that my friends and family couldn't comprehend that change. I decided to go to a different college from my high school friends, one where no one knew my backstory and would be blinded by their perceptions of my former self.

I flew through college from start to finish in three years, married my dream girl, and got accepted into a high-tier PhD program in Organizational Psychology. I started

the program in Fall of 2014, and during the first year made \$13,000 as a graduate administrative assistant.

In January of 2015, Lauren and I became foster parents of three children—Kaleb, Jordan, and Logan. Also in early 2015, I started blogging online and sharing my insights about psychology and personal change. My work immediately took off, reaching millions of people within the first few months. Over the next three years, from 2015-2018, I was the #1 writer in the entire world on Medium.com, one of the largest online platforms.

In February of 2018, after years of fighting the foster system in court, we were able to adopt Kaleb, Jordan, and Logan. Less than a month after the adoption, Lauren became pregnant with twins who were born in December of that same year. Yes, we officially went from zero to five kids in a single calendar year. It was insane. We're still adapting to this. But such is the life we chose and continue to choose.

In early 2019, I completed my PhD and my writing continues to be read by millions of people online every month. I'm now running a successful 7-figure business and am the father of five kids. I went from a derelict sleeping on someone else's sofa to PhD and successful entrepreneur doing exactly what I'm about to explain to you in this book.

Despite the fact that my work and education have shown me people can and do change, the biggest evidence of the ideas in this book *is my own life*. I'm not trying to be a guru on a stage. I'm an ordinary person experiencing a humbling and transformative life. I want to help you do the same—whatever that means or looks like for you.

It truly doesn't matter what your past is. It doesn't matter what some stupid personality test says or what people from your high school think about you.

What matters is *who you want to be*.

What matters is *the choices you make*.

If you've ever questioned if you can really change, the answer is *yes*.

Regardless of who you've been, you no longer have to be *that person*. As you'll soon discover, you actually aren't that person now, and you won't be that person in the future. Your personality will change regardless of intention. But once intentional, your level of change will be dramatic and directed, not random.

This book will show you the most effective way for intentionally and strategically becoming the person you want to be.

Are you ready to learn the truth about personality?

Buckle your seatbelts. You're bound to hear something you've never heard before.

If you start to experience some emotional resistance as you read this book, take heart. You're on the brink of facing the truth of who you are.

You're on the precipice of examining your life, and thus making it more worthwhile to live.

You're on the edge of the cliff, about to leap beyond your point of no return, where living a quiet life of mediocrity is no longer possible and where dreams become realities.

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