

63:307

Health stra

Test Which Sports Match Your Personality *Gavin*

The toughest part of exercise can be staying with it. One big reason we slack off is that we pick sports that fit our bodies but not necessarily our minds. Since research shows that a good match between your personality and your exercise sharply increases the chances you'll stay with it, finding this match is important to your fitness program.

But how do you know which sport fits you best? I've developed a test that defines fitness personality in terms of seven Psychosocial Activity Dimensions (PADs). To work up your own fitness profile, read the description of each dimension and then rate yourself on the scorecard below.

Sociability: Do you prefer doing things on your own or with other people? Do you make friends easily? Do you enjoy parties?

Spontaneity: Do you make spur-of-the-moment decisions or do you plan in great detail? Can you change direction easily or do you get locked in once you make your mind?

Discipline: Do you have trouble sticking with things you find unpleasant or trying? Or do you persist regardless of the obstacles? Do you need a lot of support or do you just push on alone?

Aggressiveness: Do you try to control situations by being forceful? Do you like pitting yourself against obstacles or do you shy away when you must assert yourself physically or emotionally?

Competitiveness: Are you bothered by situations that produce winners and losers? Does your adrenaline flow when you're challenged or do you back off?

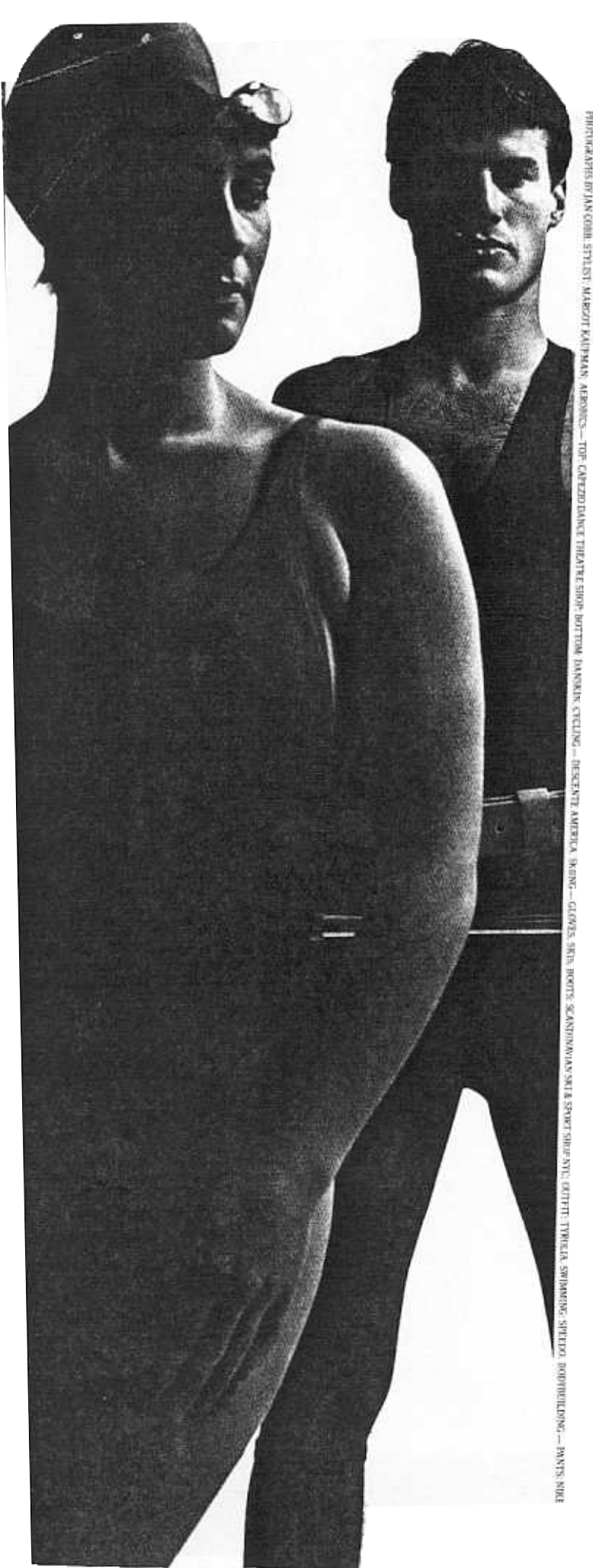
Mental Focus: Do you find it easy to concentrate or do you have a short attention span? Can you be single-minded? How good are you at clearing your mind of distractions?

Risk-Taking: Are you generally adventurous, physically and emotionally? Or do you prefer to stick to what you know?

Scorecard

Fill in the appropriate circles and connect them with a line.

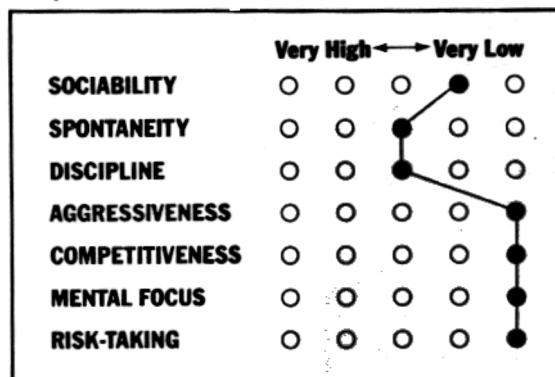
	Very High							Very Low
SOCIABILITY	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
SPONTANEITY	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
DISCIPLINE	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
AGGRESSIVENESS	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
COMPETITIVENESS	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
MENTAL FOCUS	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
RISK-TAKING	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



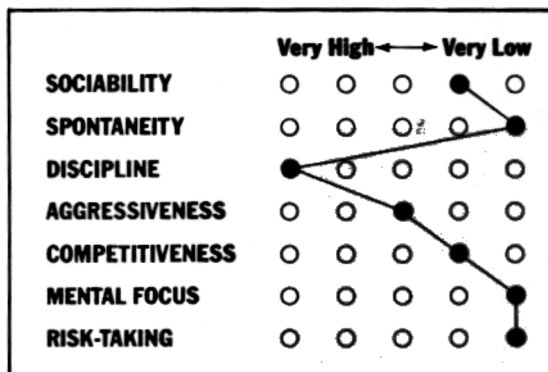
PHOTOGRAPHS BY JAM COOK. STYLIST: MARCOT KAHNMAN. AEROBICS—TOP: CAPTAIN DANCE THEATRE SHOP. BOTTOM: JAMCOCK CYCLING—DISNEY'S AMERICA. JUMPING—GLOVES. SITS. BIKES. SCANDINAVIAN. SILENT. SPORT SHOP. NYC. GUTTUS. SPRINGING. SPECTOR. BOOTHILLING—PANTS. NINE



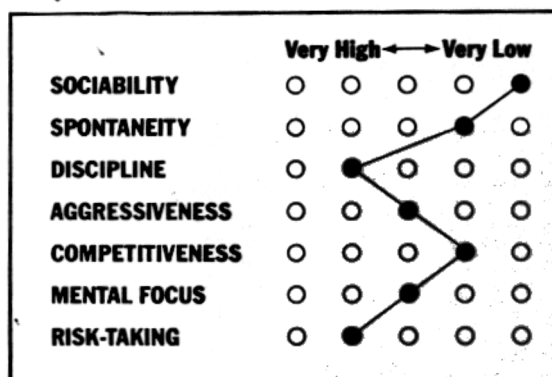
WALKING PADs Profile



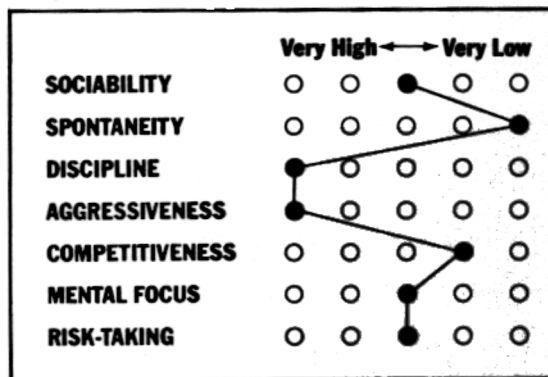
RUNNING PADs Profile



CYCLING PADs Profile



BODYBUILDING PADs Profile



Understanding Your Score

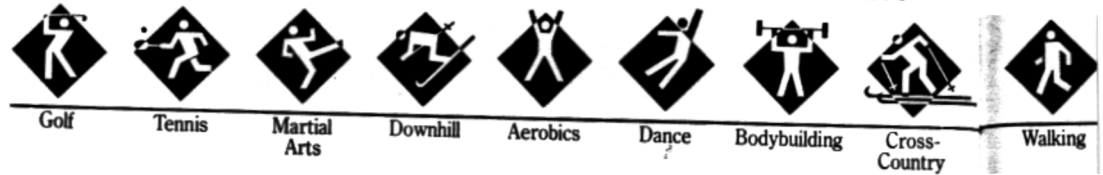
To see how well your PADs profile matches your sport or exercise activity, look at the four sample profiles above and at the chart on pages 56 and 57. If you have the typical personality of a runner, walker, cyclist or bodybuilder, your PADs profile should look similar to one of these profiles. If your athletic preference lies elsewhere, turn to the "Your Personality/Your Sport" chart to see where your activities rank on each PADs characteristic. Then compare these rankings with how you scored yourself.

Compared to running, for example, walking is more spontaneous and less aggressive. (It is also safer, in terms of physical stress.) Racquet sports are high in sociability, spontaneity, competitiveness and focus but low in discipline. Swimming is fairly high in discipline and low in sociability, spontaneity and aggressiveness.

If you've been having trouble sticking to a fitness program, these charts may help explain why. If you're still looking for a sport, use your findings as a guide.

YOUR PERSONALITY/YOUR SPORT

Very High



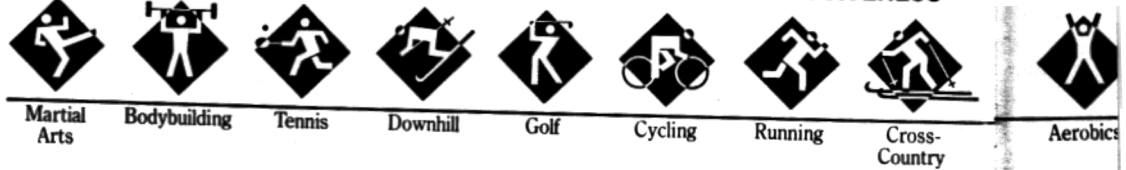
Very High



Very High



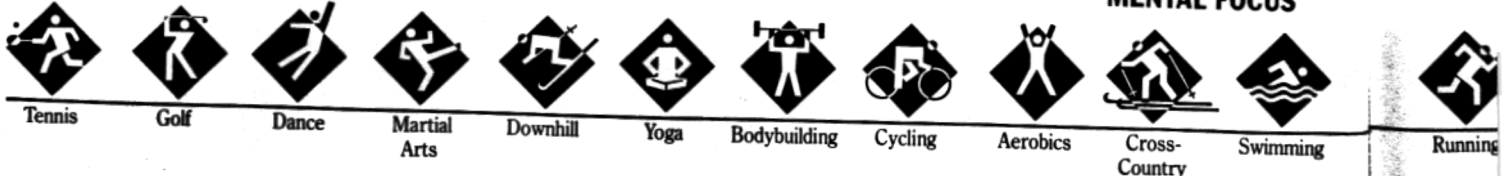
Very High



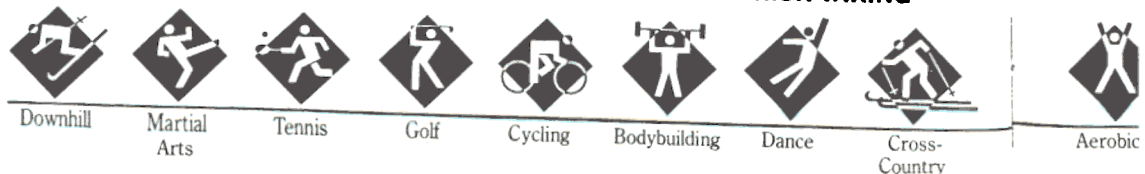
Very High



Very High



Very High



How Sports Can Help You Change

Simply defining your fitness personality accurately is fine as long as you are satisfied with the way you are — sociable or quiet, disciplined or easygoing. But if you'd like to make a change (be more outgoing, say, or less competitive), you can choose a sport that helps you accomplish this by balancing what you are with what you want to be. A driven businessman, for example, may take yoga classes to relax his tensions.

It can even be worth taking up an activity that doesn't initially appeal to you in order to alter your life. A woman I'll call Susan is a good example. Recently divorced, she was still hurting when she re-entered the singles scene, with disastrous results. She felt used and abused and her sense of self-worth plummeted. When she went for help, the therapist surprised her by prescribing exercise — and not just any exercise, but bodybuilding.

Before Susan started working out, her slumped shoulders accentuated her feelings of powerlessness. She looked and felt like a victim. But as her body began to shape up through weight training, people treated her differently. She told me, smiling slightly, how a business friend winced when she shook his hand.

If you decide to try this kind of mismatched activity to help you change, be sure to build in enough support to keep you on track until the change becomes its own incentive. In Susan's case, weight-lifting was far from her first choice: Her therapist and trainer worked hard to keep her going. But once she saw how much she gained in self-respect and the respect of others, self-motivation took over.

Fortunately, exercise of all kinds offers something you don't often find in personal development programs — built-in help in managing tension and anxiety. If you feel uptight doing some new kind of exercise, the exercise itself brings relief.

Two final thoughts: Jumping from one extreme to another isn't likely to work very well. Picking a risky sport to overcome fearfulness, for example, may be too dramatic. Better to use small changes to move gradually from your present program to one that's more psychologically helpful.

And finally, picking a particular activity simply for its psychological effects isn't enough and may even backfire. How you do what you do makes a big difference. If you are a meditating runner, you will help focus your mind as you train your body. If you are an undisciplined bodybuilder, this characteristic will be reinforced even by that disciplined sport. To make a change, you may not need to adjust your activity as much as your way of going about it. □

James Gavin, Ph.D., is a professor of applied social science at Concordia University in Montreal. His book, Body Moves: The Psychology of Exercise, was published by Stackpole Books last year.

Very Low



Very Low



Very Low



Very Low



Very Low



Very Low



Very Low

