

World War I gave us our first personality test—to assess soldiers for risk of shell shock

Shell shock ultimately sent [15 percent](#) of British soldiers home. Their symptoms included uncontrollable weeping, amnesia, tics, paralysis, nightmares, insomnia, heart palpitations, anxiety attacks, muteness—the list ticked on. Across the Atlantic, the National Committee for Mental Hygiene took note.

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“The most important recommendation to be made,” [committee director Thomas] Salmon [wrote](#), “is that of rigidly excluding insane, feeble-minded, psychopathic and neuropathic individuals from the forces which are to be sent to France and exposed to the terrific stress of modern war.” While his suggestion to identify and exclude soldiers who might be more vulnerable to “war neuroses” seems today like an archaic approach to mental health, it resulted in a lasting contribution to popular psychology: the first personality test.

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Some of the roughly 100 questions that made the final cut: Can you sit still without fidgeting? Do you often have the feeling of suffocating? Do you like outdoor life? Have you ever been afraid of going insane? The test would be scored, and if the score passed a certain threshold, a potential soldier would undergo an in-person psychological evaluation.

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“World War I was actually a watershed moment” in terms of psychological testing, says [psychology professor] Michael Zickar.

Read full, original post: [The first personality test was developed during World War 1](#)