

How Full is Your Life? (The Orientations to Happiness Measure)

Instructions

What’s the difference between a full life, and an empty one? This measure assesses your life satisfaction and general happiness by taking into account the three ways in which most people derive a happiness: pleasure, engagement, and meaning. State the extent to which each of the statements below reflects who you are.

	Very much unlike me	Somewhat unlike me	Neither like or unlike me	Somewhat like me	Very much like me
1. Regardless of what I am doing, time passes very quickly.					
2. My life serves a higher purpose.					
3. Life is too short to postpone the pleasures it can provide.					
4. I seek out situations that challenge my skills and abilities.					
5. In choosing what to do, I always take into account whether it will benefit other people.					
6. Whether at work or play, I am usually “in a zone” and not conscious of myself.					
7. I am always very absorbed in what I do.					
8. I go out of my way to feel euphoric.					
9. In choosing what to do, I always take into account either I can lose myself in it.					
10. I am rarely distracted by what is going on around me.					
11. I have a responsibility to make the world a better place.					
12. My life has a lasting meaning.					
13. In choosing what to do, I always take into account whether it will be pleasurable.					
14. What I do matters to society.					
15. I agree with this statement: “Life is short – eat dessert first.”					
16. I love to do things that excite my senses.					
17. I have spent a lot of time thinking about what life means and how I fit into its big picture.					

18. For me, the good life is the pleasurable life.					
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Scoring

Very much unlike me = 1, Somewhat like me = 2, Neither like nor unlike me = 3, Somewhat like me = 4, Very much like me = 5

Results

Total life of pleasure = Average items 3, 8, 13, 15, 16 and 18

Total life of engagement = Average items 1, 4, 6, 7, 9 and 10

Total life of meaning = Average items 2, 5, 11, 12, 14 and 17

Interpretation

Scores on each of the three subscales indicate which pathway towards happiness you tend to orientate yourself towards. Psychologists sometimes refer to the orientation towards pleasure as hedonism (“Don’t worry, be happy”; and seek pleasurable experiences), while the orientation towards meaning is referred to as eudemonia (“Be all that you can be”). The engagement relates to a concept called ‘flow’, where individuals experience a sense of being fully, attentively absorbed into their work. A sample of 845 American adults indicates an average score of 3.20 for Pleasure, 3.05 for Engagement and 3.42 for Meaning.

Reference

Peterson, C., Park, N., & Seligman, M. E. (2005). Orientations to happiness and life satisfaction: The full life versus the empty life. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 6(1), 25-41.