

# Measuring Psychological Wealth: Your Well-Being Balance Sheet

## Measuring Your Satisfaction With Life

Below are five statements with which you may agree or disagree. Using the scale below, indicate your agreement with each item by placing the appropriate number on the line preceding that item. Please be open and honest in your response.

- 7 Strongly agree
- 6 Agree
- 5 Slightly agree
- 4 Neither agree nor disagree
- 3 Slightly disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly disagree

\_\_\_\_\_ In most ways, my life is close to my ideal.

\_\_\_\_\_ The conditions of my life are excellent.

\_\_\_\_\_ I am satisfied with my life.

\_\_\_\_\_ So far, I have gotten the important things I want in life.

\_\_\_\_\_ If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing.

Now simply add up your total score for the five items: \_\_\_\_\_

## Interpretation

31–35 Extremely satisfied

26–30 Satisfied

- 21–25 Slightly satisfied
- 20 Neutral; an equal mix of satisfaction and dissatisfaction
- 15–19 Slightly dissatisfied
- 10–14 Dissatisfied
- 5–9 Extremely dissatisfied

*Extremely satisfied*

You feel that your life has gone very well, and the circumstances of your life are excellent. Most people who score in this range feel that the major areas of their lives are positive – work, leisure, relationships, and health. They don't feel that their lives are perfect, but that their lives are very rewarding.

*Satisfied*

Your life is rewarding, but you would like to see improvement in some areas. People in this range are happy and feel very good about their lives.

*Slightly satisfied*

You feel that generally your life is going well, although you would like to see improvement in some domains. Some areas of your life need improvement, or most areas are going modestly well, but you have not yet achieved the level you would like to attain in many areas.

*Neutral*

There is a mix of good and bad in your life. There are about as many things going well as things you would like to improve. Things are not terrible, but neither are they as rewarding as you would like.

*Slightly dissatisfied*

If your score on life satisfaction has dropped recently due to specific bad events, then a score in this range is not of concern. However, if your score is chronically in this somewhat low range, you might want to ask why, and what you can do to increase your satisfaction. Perhaps there are things in your life that cannot be changed at this point, but in this case, should you change your expectations? Perhaps there are conditions that you can change? If your life is on an upward

trajectory and you are optimistic about the future, there is probably no concern.

*Dissatisfied*

Life satisfaction scores in this low range can be a matter of concern, and you should think about how to improve things. Would seeing a clergyperson or mental health professional help? Perhaps you are just going through a temporary bad time or have not achieved many of the things you hope to, in which case your score might not be of concern. However, in other cases, scores in this range point to some areas of your life needing strong improvement.

*Extremely dissatisfied*

Perhaps some recent extremely bad event has influenced your current life satisfaction. However, if your life satisfaction has been in this low range for some time, some things in your life are in need of change, and you might need the help of others, including professionals, to improve your situation. A number of things may be drastically wrong, and it is time to make very serious efforts to turn your life around.

## **The Causes of Life Satisfaction**

For most people, life satisfaction depends on doing well in major areas of life, such as relationships, health, work, income, spirituality, and leisure. When a person is doing badly in one of these areas, it can color his or her overall life satisfaction. People who score high on life satisfaction usually have close and supportive family and friends, often have a close romantic partner (although this is not absolutely necessary), have rewarding work or retirement activities, enjoy their leisure, and have good health. They feel that life is meaningful, and have goals and values that are important to them. People who score high in life satisfaction usually do not have problems with addictions, such as gambling, drugs, or alcoholism.

The first three items of the SWLS focus primarily on a person's current life, whereas the last two items ask how one's life has been previously, up until the present. Some people score high on the first three items of the life satisfaction scale, but score lower on the last

two items. This suggests that their lives are going well now, but that they are not entirely satisfied with their pasts. Other individuals might score low on the first three items, but higher on the last two items. This pattern suggests the respondent sees his or her past as more desirable than the present. Thus, a discrepancy in the scores between the first three items and the last two items can reveal whether people view their lives as improving or declining.

## Measuring Your Emotional Well-Being

Please think about what you have been doing and experiencing during the past four weeks. Then report how much you experienced each of the following feelings, using the scale below. For each item, select a number from 1 to 5, and write that number on the line next to the feeling:

- 1 Very rarely or never
- 2 Rarely
- 3 Sometimes
- 4 Often
- 5 Very often or always

- \_\_\_\_\_ Positive (1)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Negative (2)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Good (3)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Bad (4)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Pleasant (5)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Contented (6)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Interested (7)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Stressed (8)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Unpleasant (9)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Happy (10)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Sad (11)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Angry (12)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Afraid (13)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Loving (14)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Depressed (15)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Joyful (16)

## Putting It All Together

- A Pleasant feelings: Add up your scores on items 1, 3, 5, 6, 7, 10, 14, and 16 (8 items), and place your score here: \_\_\_\_\_
- B Unpleasant feelings: Add up your scores on items 2, 4, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, and 15 (8 items), and place your score here: \_\_\_\_\_

### *Pleasant feelings*

- 8–13 Extremely low pleasant feelings  
14–18 Very low  
19–23 Low  
24–27 Moderate  
28–30 High  
31–35 Very high  
36–40 Extremely high pleasant feelings

### *Unpleasant feelings*

- 8–11 Extremely low unpleasant feelings  
12–16 Very low  
17–20 Low  
21–25 Moderate  
26–28 High  
29–31 Very high  
32–40 Extremely high unpleasant feelings

### *Your happiness balance*

Besides your overall pleasant and unpleasant scores, we can also examine the relation between the two, in what we call “hedonic balance,” or the amount of pleasant feelings you experience minus the frequency of your unpleasant feelings.

Subtract your Unpleasant Feelings Score from your Pleasant Feelings Score and put your answer here:

### *Balance scores*

- 24 to 32 Very happy  
16 to 23 Happy  
5 to 15 Slightly happy  
4 to –3 Neutral, mixed  
–4 to –12 Somewhat unhappy  
–13 to –23 Very unhappy  
–24 to –32 Extremely unhappy

*Individual emotion items*

Besides the summed scores and their balance score, you can also examine individual items.

You ought to be feeling general positive feelings, such as “good” or “positive,” the majority of the time, unless some bad event has just occurred in your life. If you are not feeling positive, good, or pleasant most of the time, and only experience these feelings rarely, you should examine why.

You should be feeling negative feelings only rarely. If you feel stressed sometimes, but not often, you may feel that this is not too much. But for some feelings, such as “depressed” and “angry,” feeling these emotions only rarely or very rarely is usually most beneficial.

Do any of your individual emotions stand out? That is, which of the positive feelings do you have less often? If you are interested and positive most of the time, this is a very good sign. When you examine your negative feelings, are there any that you feel substantially more often? If you are frequently afraid, angry, sad, depressed, or stressed, are there steps you can take to reduce these emotions, which can interfere with your happiness and with your effective functioning?

## **The Causes of Emotional Well-Being**

To some degree our levels of pleasant and unpleasant feelings are due to our inborn temperaments. Some people don’t feel that positive simply because they are “low-key” individuals. This might not be a matter of concern as long as the amount of positive emotions you are feeling does not bother you. But remember that there are ways of thinking and living that can also influence our emotional lives, and that we can probably increase our pleasant feelings if we take efforts to do so. Low levels of pleasant feelings are of most concern when levels of unpleasant feelings are equal to or exceed the pleasant feelings. When a person is low in pleasant feelings and high in unpleasant feelings, this is a true matter of concern. However, if a person scores only in the middle on pleasant feelings, but is extremely low in unpleasant feelings, this might mean that she or he is just not an emotional individual, but might still be very happy. When a person scores high on both pleasant feelings and unpleasant feelings, this

means he or she is intense-but hopefully still higher on the pleasant feelings than the unpleasant ones.

## Psychological Flourishing Scale

Below are twelve statements with which you may agree or disagree. Using the scale below, indicate your agreement with each item by placing the appropriate number on the line preceding that item.

- 7 Strongly agree
- 6 Agree
- 5 Slightly agree
- 4 Mixed, or neither agree nor disagree
- 3 Slightly disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly disagree

- \_\_\_\_\_ I lead a purposeful and meaningful life.
- \_\_\_\_\_ My social relationships are supportive and rewarding.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I am engaged and interested in my daily activities.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I actively contribute to the happiness and well-being of others.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I am competent and capable in the activities that are important to me.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I am a good person and live a good life.
- \_\_\_\_\_ My material life (income, housing, etc.) is sufficient for my needs.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I generally trust others and feel part of my community.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I am satisfied with my religious or spiritual life.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I am optimistic about the future.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I have no addictions, such as to alcohol, illicit drugs, or gambling.
- \_\_\_\_\_ People respect me.

Add up your scores on the twelve items of the psychological flourishing scale and place your answer here: \_\_\_\_\_

Possible scores range from 12 to 84:

80–84	Extremely high flourishing
74–79	Very high flourishing
68–73	High flourishing
60–67	Flourishing
48–59	Slight lack of flourishing
32–47	Lack of flourishing
12–31	Extremely low flourishing

In this flourishing scale, we assess aspects of psychological wealth that go beyond positive emotions and life satisfaction to also measure how you are doing in other essential areas of your life. This scale measures not only that you generally feel good about your life, but also whether key aspects of psychological wealth, such as strong social relationships, self-respect, competence, engaging work, and spirituality, are in place, and whether your life has purpose and meaning. Flourishing indicates aspects of your life that psychologists such as Carol Ryff, Corey Keyes, Ed Deci, and Richard Ryan believe are missing from pleasure and simple emotional feelings of happiness. Flourishing goes beyond an individual's pursuit of her own happiness to include her contributions to society and the happiness of others. At times you might be flourishing despite having emotional troubles, and at other times you might be having a fun time without truly flourishing. It is, of course, best when the various elements of psychological wealth all come together.

## Your Happiness Profile

Place an "X" in each row to denote the box where your scores fall on each of the four scales.

Although psychological wealth requires all four elements above, a degree of it can often be experienced by those who score well in only two or three of them. A very low positive feelings score or a very high negative feelings score is likely to make life less rewarding even if the person has a high degree of flourishing. Indeed, it will be difficult to be high on flourishing or life satisfaction if you are depressed. You need not aim for ecstasy to be happy, but achieving some success in each type of well-being is an eminently reasonable goal.



**Table 14.1** Your happiness profile

<i>Components of psychological wealth</i>	<i>Extremely unhappy</i>	<i>Very low</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>Very high</i>	<i>Extremely high</i>
Life satisfaction	(5–9)	(10–14)	(15–19)	(20)	(21–25)	(26–30)	(31–35)
Positive feelings	(8–13)	(14–18)	(19–23)	(24–27)	(28–30)	(31–35)	(36–40)
Low negative feelings	(32–40)	(29–32)	(26–28)	(21–25)	(17–20)	(12–16)	(8–11)
Flourishing	(12–31)	(32–47)	(48–59)	(60–67)	(68–73)	(74–79)	(80–84)

## Your Overall True Wealth

You probably did not make the Forbes list of billionaires, but are you a billionaire when it comes to psychological wealth? Here is how to interpret your score:

All Extremely High	A billionaire – Psychological Wealth Top 400 List
All Very High and Extremely High	You are rich
High to Very High	Upper middle class
Average or Mix of High and Low	Middle class
Low and Average	Working class
Low and Very Low	Poor
Low to Extremely Unhappy	Abject poverty

If you are high in psychological wealth, congratulations on a life that is well-lived. If you are impoverished, or poorer than you would like to be, now is the time to increase your wealth, and hopefully this book has given you knowledge to help you get started.