

SUBJECTIVE HAPPINESS SCALE (also known as General Happiness Scale)

Reference:

Lyubomirsky, S. & Lepper, H. S. (1999). A measure of subjective happiness: Preliminary reliability and construct validation. *Social Indicators Research*, 46, 137-155.

Description of Measure:

A 4-item scale designed to measure subjective happiness. Each of item is completed by choosing one of 7 options that finish a given sentence fragment. The options are different for each of the four questions (see below for actual items).

Abstracts of Selected Related Articles:

Lyubomirsky, S. & Tucker, K. L. (1998). Implications of Individual Differences in Subjective Happiness for Perceiving, Interpreting, and Thinking About Life Events. *Motivation and Emotion*, 22, 155-186.

Both anecdotal and empirical evidence suggest that characteristically happy and daily situations. This paper reports two questionnaire studies and a laboratory study testing the hypothesis that happy people perceive, interpret, and think about the same events in more positive ways than do unhappy ones. The results of Study 1 showed that students nominated by their peers as "very happy" reported experiencing similar types of both positive and negative life events, as did peer-nominated "unhappy" students. However, self-rated happy students tended to think about both types of events more favorably and adaptively—e.g., by seeing humor in adversity and emphasizing recent improvement in their lives. This pattern of results was conceptually replicated in Study 2 using hypothetical events. In Study 3, self-rated happy students interacted with a female confederate in the laboratory, then watched a series of videotapes depicting a fellow (but unfamiliar) student in three different situations. Happy individuals liked the person they met, and recalled her in more favorable terms, more than did unhappy ones. The same pattern of results, albeit weaker, was found for liking of the videotaped target. Implications of our findings for the question of how happiness (or unhappiness) is maintained are discussed.

Seligman, M. E. P., Steen, T. A., Park, N., & Peterson, C. (2005). Positive psychology progress: Empirical validation of interventions. *American Psychologist*, 60, 410-421.

Positive psychology has flourished in the last 5 years. The authors review recent developments in the field, including books, meetings, courses, and conferences. They also discuss the newly created classification of character strengths and virtues, a positive complement to the various editions of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (e. g., American Psychiatric Association, 1994), and present some cross-cultural findings that suggest a surprising ubiquity of strengths and virtues. Finally, the authors focus on psychological interventions that increase individual happiness. In a 6-group, random-assignment, placebo controlled Internet

study, the authors tested 5 purported happiness interventions and 1 plausible control exercise. They found that 3 of the interventions lastingly increased happiness and decreased depressive symptoms. Positive interventions can supplement traditional interventions that relieve suffering and may someday be the practical legacy of positive psychology.

Schwartz, B., Ward, A., Monterosso, J., Lyubomirsky, S., White, K., & Lehman, D. R. (2002). Maximizing versus satisficing: Happiness is a matter of choice. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 83, 1178-1197.

Can people feel worse off as the options they face increase? The present studies suggest that some people—maximizers—can. Study 1 reported a Maximization Scale, which measures individual differences in desire to maximize. Seven samples revealed negative correlations between maximization and happiness, optimism, self-esteem, and life satisfaction, and positive correlations between maximization and depression, perfectionism, and regret. Study 2 found maximizers less satisfied than nonmaximizers (satisficers) with consumer decisions, and more likely to engage in social comparison. Study 3 found maximizers more adversely affected by upward social comparison. Study 4 found maximizers more sensitive to regret and less satisfied in an ultimatum bargaining game. The interaction between maximizing and choice is discussed in terms of regret, adaptation, and self-blame.

Scale:

Instructions: For each of the following statements and/or questions, please circle the point on the scale that you feel is most appropriate in describing you.

1. In general, I consider myself:

not a very happy person 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 a very happy person

2. Compared to most of my peers, I consider myself:

less happy 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 more happy

3. Some people are generally very happy. They enjoy life regardless of what is going on, getting the most out of everything. To what extent does this characterization describe you?

not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 a great deal

4. Some people are generally not very happy. Although they are not depressed, they never seem as happy as they might be. To what extent does this characterization describe you?

not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 a great deal

Scoring:

Sum the scores for each item together. Keep scores continuous.