

The Pleasure Planner

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IMPORTANT

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DAILY PLEASURE MEASURE:

Assessing Your “PQ”—Pleasure Quotient

- 1. Do you try to “look and act” happy?**
Going through the motions alters the emotions.

“If we wish to conquer undesirable emotional tendencies in ourselves, we must assiduously and the first instance cold bloodily go through the outward movements of those contrary dispositions which we prefer to cultivate. The reward of persistence will infallibly come in real cheerfulness and kindliness in their stead. Smooth the brow, brighten the eye, speak in a major key, pass the genial compliment and your heart must be frigid indeed if it does not eventually thaw.” —Psychologist, William James

- 2. Do you avoid the “3 P’s of Displeasure”—a Personal, Pervasive, and Permanent view of negative events?**
“Things seem to turn out best for those who make the best of the way things turn out.”
—*Art Linkletter*

Remember the “Law of Impermanence.” Everything changes and nothing lasts, including you.

- 3. Do you engage in joyful life rituals every day?**
Rituals are ceremonies of infinite loving.

Rituals give your life a sense of rhythm and reason. Pray, sing, chant, recall past holidays, dance, or simply repeat meaningful words, dates, or the names of your family. Set the alarm on your wristwatch to signal a “connection celebration time” twice a day.

- 4. Are you happy at work?**
Freud said the key to health is “Lieben and Arbeiten”—to love and work.
Loving your work is one of the healthiest things you can do.

Avoid “Black Monday Syndrome.” More people die on Monday mornings at around 9 a.m. than any other time. If you are not looking forward to work on Monday morning, you may be working yourself to death.

- 5. Do you laugh every day?**
“Laughter is jogging for the intestines.” —Norman Cousins

Go for a “laugh lap” at least twice a day. You do not “have a sense of humor.” Humor and laughing are skills requiring practice. Remember that every tear of laughter is joy juice that cleanses your body of toxins and stabilizes your immune system.

6. Do you stifle your anger rather than vent it?
“If you are patient in one moment of anger, you will escape a hundred days of sorrow.”
— Chinese Proverb

Expressing anger is revenge against yourself for the mistakes of others. The heat of anger burns only the angry. Dissipate your anger by counting ten deep breaths every time you feel anger.

7. Do you delude yourself a little every day?
In the absence of certainty, there is nothing wrong with hope.

One reason people get depressed is that they face reality all the time. We must accept the few “facts of life” that do exist, but we never have to accept interpretations or “automatic consequences.” Enlightened denial is facing facts but denying implications.

8. Do you develop your invisible means of support?
“The need to desacralize the world is a defense against being flooded by emotions of humility, reverence, mystery, wonder and awe.”
— Willis W. Harman

Nurture and develop your life explanatory and belief system. Read inspirational material, drop your cynicism, pray, and go to religious services.

9. Do you have plenty of time?
“Be here now.” — Emerson

We create our anxiety with our fears of tomorrow and our sadness with our regrets for yesterday. Indian poet Kalidasa advised that we look well to this day, for it is the true source of our hopes of tomorrow and our dreams of yesterday.

10. Are you “sensuous?”
“Own less, do less, say no.” — Geoffrey Godbey

Don’t let life lead you. Say no often enough to allow several “pleasure pauses” every day. Take time to feel the warmth of your bed, linger in your morning shower, savor the taste of your breakfast orange juice, reflect a few moments on the setting sun, listen for the evening birds’ songs, and hold someone close at the end of your day.

NORMALCY HEALTH RISK TEST

Assessing Your “Sapience SAAD - ness”
(SELFISH, ANXIOUS, ANGRY, DEPRESSED)

Has your dogma run over your karma?

We have evolved from “Homo Sapien” to “Homo Dysphorous” and have forgotten how to enjoy life. Our new (50 million years old) big brain—our sapience—has crowded out our older (300 million years old) smaller inner brain where our pleasure centers are located. “Normal” now means to lead our lives working more and enjoying life less—a state of dysphoria instead of euphoria. Being “normal” is a health risk because it blocks the joy response. Here is a test for the presence of ten “Sapience SAAD-ness” factors that have become “normal” ways our new big brain has overwhelmed the old little pleasure brain experience of our lifetime.

1. **Are you cynical?** The joy response requires trust.
2. **Are you rushed?** The joy response requires patience.
3. **Are you angry?** The joy response requires tolerance.
4. **Are you “displaced and depressed?”** (Do you live unhappily where you do not want to live?)
The joy response requires being “centered” and loving where and how you live.
5. **Are you competitive?** The joy response requires cooperation.
6. **Are you seeking self-fulfillment?** The joy response requires altruism.
7. **Are you “pleasure paranoid?”** (Do you feel guilt for having pleasure instead of pursuing the latest health program?) The joy response requires “ESP”—Enjoying Simple Pleasures.
8. **Are you future oriented?** The joy response requires living in the present.
9. **Are you resentful?** (Do you complain about others’ insensitivity, rudeness, and incompetence?)
The joy response requires forgiveness.
10. **Are you a hypocrite?** (Do you fail to “walk your talk?”) The joy response requires integrity and being what you pretend to be.

“NORMAL” THINKING

vs.

“PLEASURE” THINKING

1. What do you want to be when you grow up?
2. Doing well at something must mean you enjoy it.
3. Being productive is a good personality trait.
4. One should always work to improve oneself.
5. Wasting time is wasting life.
6. Winning is not everything. It is the only thing.
7. If you're going to do something, do it right.
8. Joy is a form of luck for the fortunate few.
9. I'll enjoy life when I retire.
10. Joy is being independent.
11. You can thrive on stress.
12. We have no right to joy when others are suffering.

1. How do you want to be when you grow up? (i.e. “happy” or “in love”)
2. Underachievement can be very good for you.
3. Process is more important than product. Pay more attention to the “how” than to the “what.”
4. Self-acceptance is more important than self-improvement.
5. Time is not flying, we are.
6. Learn to appreciate the joy of losing.
7. In our eagerness to do things right, we are forgetting to have fun.
8. All true growth comes from crisis.
9. We should not wait for some arbitrary cut-off date to enjoy life to the fullest.
10. Interdependence is more important than independence. We tend to overvalue the “me” at the expense of the “us.”
11. We can mistake being high or being depressed as the only intense emotional states. Being joyful is being intensely peaceful.
12. Joy is as contagious as stress and depression. Our own joy is healing to others.

THE PLEASURABLE THINKING TEST

Take the following test on joyful thinking to assess the degree to which you think about daily life in a joyful way. This test will help you understand whether or not you are living the Pleasure Principle.

Use the following scale to score yourself on this test:

5 - Strongly Agree

2 - Mildly Disagree

4 - Agree

1 - Disagree

3 - Mildly Agree

0 - Strongly Disagree

- ___ 1. People should work and play to their full potential.
- ___ 2. Underachievement is a waste of your natural skills and capabilities.
- ___ 3. You should get the most out of everything you do.
- ___ 4. Being very productive is a good personality trait.
- ___ 5. You should constantly work to improve yourself.
- ___ 6. Wasting time is wasting life.
- ___ 7. Winning is not everything. It is the only thing.
- ___ 8. If you are going to do something, do it right.
- ___ 9. When you can do several things at once, you are getting the most out of every moment.
- ___ 10. Being happy is a result of hard work and sacrifice.
- ___ 11. You should set your priorities clearly and work on the top priorities first.
- ___ 12. You can't be really happy until you have solved most of your problems.
- ___ 13. Being healthy means being free of physical symptoms, eating wisely and exercising regularly.
- ___ 14. Joyful people are usually lucky people who have few problems in their life.
- ___ 15. Enjoy life while you can. You are only young once.
- ___ 16. Work now and enjoy the fruits of your labor later.
- ___ 17. You can't be totally happy unless you are totally independent.
- ___ 18. It is childish and unrealistic to think or act as if you can be happy all of the time.
- ___ 19. You can thrive on stress.
- ___ 20. The world can be a very unhappy place. We have no right to be joyful when others are suffering.

Now total your points. If you came out with more than 50 points on this pleasurable thinking test, it is likely that you have learned to think in a joyless fashion and have accepted a set of assumptions about life that block your potential for pleasure. Your addiction to the stress and addiction pattern is determined by your theory of life.

Sources of Pleasure: A SELECTED READING LIST

Unraveling the Mystery of Health: How People Manage Stress and Stay Well,
A. Antonovsky. San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 1987.

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L. Burns. New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1993.

Belonging to the Universe,
F. Capra. San Francisco: Harper, 1991.

The Rise of Selfishness in America,
J. L. Collier. New York: Oxford University Press, 1991.

Healing Words: The Power of Prayer and the Practice of Medicine,
L. Dossey. San Francisco: Harper, 1993.

Is It Worth Dying For?,
R. Eliot, D. Breo. New York: Bantam Books, 1984.

No Contest: The Case Against Competition,
A. Kohn. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1986.

The Pursuit of Happiness: Who Is Happy and Why,
D. G. Meyers. New York: William Morrow and Company, 1992.

Healthy Pleasures,
R. Ornstein and D. Sobel. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1989.

What You Can Change and What You Can't,
M. E. P. Seligman. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1994.

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