

Name _____ Date _____

Are You An Optimist or a Pessimist?

Purpose: The following scale, a version of the Life Orientation Test, can help raise your awareness about whether you are the type of person who tends to see the proverbial glass as half full or half empty.

Instructions: Using numbers 0 to 4, indicate your responses to the following items in the spaces provided. Then check the scoring key.

4 = strongly agree

3 = agree

2 = neutral

1 = disagree

0 = strongly disagree

- ___ 1. In the uncertain times, I usually expect the best.
- ___ 2. It's easy for me to relax.
- ___ 3. If something can go wrong for me, it will.
- ___ 4. I'm always optimistic about my future.
- ___ 5. I enjoy my friends a lot.
- ___ 6. It's important for me to keep busy.
- ___ 7. I hardly ever expect things to go my way.
- ___ 8. I don't get upset too easily.
- ___ 9. I rarely count on good things happening to me.
- ___ 10. Overall, I expect more good things to happen to me than bad.

Scoring Key: The first step is to reverse the scoring for items 3, 7, and 9. In other words, change a 4 to a 0, a 3 to a 1, a 1 to a 3, and a 0 to a 4. A 2 remains a 2. Next, add your score for items 1, 3, 4, 7, 9, and 10 to obtain an overall score. (Do not score items 2, 5, 6, and 8. These items are considered "fillers" and are not scored as part of the test). Total scores can range from **0 to 24**.

Now, you can compare your score to those of a sample of 2,055 college students. Higher scores indicate greater optimism while lower scores indicate greater pessimism. The average (mean) score in the college sample was **14.33**. About two-thirds of the sample scored from **10 to 19**. Scores greater than **14** reflect relatively higher levels of optimism. Psychologists believe that people can change their attitudes—that optimism can be learned.

Discussion

- 1. Do you agree with your score? Why or why not?
- 2. If you scored low on optimism, what do you think you need to do to change your attitudes?