

Carol Ryff

University of Wisconsin
Institute on Aging
2245 Medical Science Center
1300 University Avenue
Madison, WI 53706
Phone: (608) 262-1818
Fax: (608) 263-6211
Email: cryff@wisc.edu

This document provides definitions and items for six scales of psychological well-being. A list of references for studies that have used the measures is also provided at the end of this file.

There is no charge for using the scales, although users are requested to send copies of any publications generated with the scales to Dr. Ryff (contact info above).

Scales of Psychological Well-Being

Psychometric Properties. Attached are items for six 14-item scales of psychological well-being constructed to measure the dimensions of **autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance**. Internal consistency (alpha) coefficients are indicated on each scale. Correlations of each scale with its own 20-item parent scale are also provided. Reliability and validity assessments of the 20-item parent scales are detailed in Ryff (1989) -- Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, *57*, 1069-1081. Psychometric properties of the 3-item scales are detailed in Ryff & Keyes (1995) -- Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, *69*, 719-727. The 3-item scales were developed for national telephone surveys. They have low internal consistency and are not recommended for high quality assessment of well-being.

Presentation Format/Scoring. Items from the separate scales are **mixed** (by taking one item from each scale successively into one continuous self-report instrument). Participants respond using a six-point format: strongly disagree (1), moderately disagree (2), slightly disagree (3), slightly agree (4), moderately agree (5), strongly agree (6). Responses to negatively scored items (-) are reversed in the final scoring procedures so that high scores indicate high self-ratings on the dimension assessed.

Please note, there are no specific scores or cut-points for defining high or low well-being. Those distinctions are best derived from distributional information from the data collected. For example, high well-being (for short or long versions of the scales) could be defined as scores that are in the top 25% (quartile) of the distribution, whereas low well-being could be defined as scores that are in the bottom 25% (quartile) of the distribution. Another alternative would be to define high well-being as scores that are 1.5 standard deviations above the mean, whereas low well-being is scores that are 1.5 standard deviations below the mean.

Length Options. The **14-item scales**, shown on the attached pages are what we currently employ in our own studies (see Reference List).

The **9-item scales**, indicated by brackets around the item number [#], are currently in use in the Wisconsin Longitudinal Study. The specific items for the 9-item scales include Autonomy 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11, 14; Environmental Mastery 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 9, 13, 14; Personal Growth 1, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14; Positive Relations With Others 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9, 10, 12; Purpose In Life 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11; Self-Acceptance 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 10, 12, 13.

The **3-item scales**, shown in *bold and italics*, are currently in use in various large-scale national and international surveys. The specific items for the 3-item scales include Autonomy 6, 9, 14; Environmental Mastery 1, 2, 4; Personal Growth 5, 11, 13; Positive Relations With Others 2, 9, 10; Purpose In Life 2, 10, 11; Self-Acceptance 1, 5, 7

AUTONOMY

Definition: High Scorer: Is self-determining and independent; able to resist social pressures to think and act in certain ways; regulates behavior from within; evaluates self by personal standards.

Low Scorer: Is concerned about the expectations and evaluations of others; relies on judgments of others to make important decisions; conforms to social pressures to think and act in certain ways.

- (-) 1. Sometimes I change the way I act or think to be more like those around me.
- (+) [2.] I am not afraid to voice my opinions, even when they are in opposition to the opinions of most people.
- (+) [3.] My decisions are not usually influenced by what everyone else is doing.
- (-) [4.] I tend to worry about what other people think of me.
- (+) [5.] Being happy with myself is more important to me than having others approve of me.
- (-) [6.] *I tend to be influenced by people with strong opinions.*
- (+) 7. People rarely talk me into doing things I don't want to do.
- (-) 8. It is more important to me to "fit in" with others than to stand alone on my principles.
- (+) [9.] *I have confidence in my opinions, even if they are contrary to the general consensus.*
- (-) [10.] It's difficult for me to voice my own opinions on controversial matters.
- (-) [11.] I often change my mind about decisions if my friends or family disagree.
- (+) 12. I am not the kind of person who gives in to social pressures to think or act in certain ways.
- (-) 13. I am concerned about how other people evaluate the choices I have made in my life.
- (+) [14.] *I judge myself by what I think is important, not by the values of what others think is important.*

(+) indicates positively scored items

(-) indicates negatively scored items

Internal consistency (coefficient alpha) = .83

Correlation with 20-item parent scale = .97

ENVIRONMENTAL MASTERY

Definition: High Scorer: Has a sense of mastery and competence in managing the environment; controls complex array of external activities; makes effective use of surrounding opportunities; able to choose or create contexts suitable to personal needs and values.

Low Scorer: Has difficulty managing everyday affairs; feels unable to change or improve surrounding context; is unaware of surrounding opportunities; lacks sense of control over external world.

- (+) [1.] *In general, I feel I am in charge of the situation in which I live.*
- (-) [2.] *The demands of everyday life often get me down.*
- (-) [3.] I do not fit very well with the people and the community around me.
- (+) [4.] *I am quite good at managing the many responsibilities of my daily life.*
- (-) [5.] I often feel overwhelmed by my responsibilities.
- (+) 6. If I were unhappy with my living situation, I would take effective steps to change it.
- (+) [7.] I generally do a good job of taking care of my personal finances and affairs.
- (-) 8. I find it stressful that I can't keep up with all of the things I have to do each day.
- (+) [9.] I am good at juggling my time so that I can fit everything in that needs to get done.
- (+) 10. My daily life is busy, but I derive a sense of satisfaction from keeping up with everything.
- (-) 11. I get frustrated when trying to plan my daily activities because I never accomplish the things I set out to do.
- (+) 12. My efforts to find the kinds of activities and relationships that I need have been quite successful.
- (-) [13.] I have difficulty arranging my life in a way that is satisfying to me.
- (+) [14.] I have been able to build a home and a lifestyle for myself that is much to my liking.

(+) indicates positively scored items

(-) indicates negatively scored items

Internal consistency (coefficient alpha) = .86

Correlation with 20-item parent scale = .98

PERSONAL GROWTH

Definition: High Scorer: Has a feeling of continued development; sees self as growing and expanding; is open to new experiences; has sense of realizing his or her potential; sees improvement in self and behavior over time; is changing in ways that reflect more self knowledge and effectiveness.

Low Scorer: Has a sense of personal stagnation; lacks sense of improvement or expansion over time; feels bored and uninterested with life; feels unable to develop new attitudes or behaviors.

- (-) [1.] I am not interested in activities that will expand my horizons.
- (+) 2. In general, I feel that I continue to learn more about myself as time goes by.
- (+) 3. I am the kind of person who likes to give new things a try.
- (-) [4.] I don't want to try new ways of doing things--my life is fine the way it is.
- (+) [5.] ***I think it is important to have new experiences that challenge how you think about yourself and the world.***
- (-) [6.] When I think about it, I haven't really improved much as a person over the years.
- (+) 7. In my view, people of every age are able to continue growing and developing.
- (+) 8. With time, I have gained a lot of insight about life that has made me a stronger, more capable person.
- (+) [9.] I have the sense that I have developed a lot as a person over time.
- (-) [10.] I do not enjoy being in new situations that require me to change my old familiar ways of doing things.
- (+) [11.] ***For me, life has been a continuous process of learning, changing, and growth.***
- (+) 12. I enjoy seeing how my views have changed and matured over the years.
- (-) [13.] ***I gave up trying to make big improvements or changes in my life a long time ago.***
- (-) [14.] There is truth to the saying you can't teach an old dog new tricks.

(+) indicates positively scored items

(-) indicates negatively scored items

Internal consistency (coefficient alpha) = .85

Correlation with 20-item parent scale = .97

POSITIVE RELATIONS WITH OTHERS

Definition: High Scorer: Has warm satisfying, trusting relationships with others; is concerned about the welfare of others; capable of strong empathy, affection, and intimacy; understands give and take of human relationships.

Low Scorer: Has few close, trusting relationships with others; finds it difficult to be warm, open, and concerned about others; is isolated and frustrated in interpersonal relationships; not willing to make compromises to sustain important ties with others.

- (+) [1.] Most people see me as loving and affectionate.
- (-) [2.] *Maintaining close relationships has been difficult and frustrating for me*
- (-) [3.] I often feel lonely because I have few close friends with whom to share my concerns.
- (+) [4.] I enjoy personal and mutual conversations with family members or friends.
- (+) 5. It is important to me to be a good listener when close friends talk to me about their problems.
- (-) [6.] I don't have many people who want to listen when I need to talk.
- (+) 7. I feel like I get a lot out of my friendships.
- (-) [8.] It seems to me that most other people have more friends than I do.
- (+) [9.] *People would describe me as a giving person, willing to share my time with others.*
- (-) [10.] *I have not experienced many warm and trusting relationships with others.*
- (-) 11. I often feel like I'm on the outside looking in when it comes to friendships.
- (+) [12.] I know that I can trust my friends, and they know they can trust me.
- (-) 13. I find it difficult to really open up when I talk with others.
- (+) 14. My friends and I sympathize with each other's problems.

(+) indicates positively scored items

(-) indicates negatively scored items

Internal consistency (coefficient alpha) = .88

Correlation with 20-item parent scale = .98

PURPOSE IN LIFE

Definition: High Scorer: Has goals in life and a sense of directedness; feels there is meaning to present and past life; holds beliefs that give life purpose; has aims and objectives for living. Low Scorer: Lacks a sense of meaning in life; has few goals or aims, lacks sense of direction; does not see purpose of past life; has no outlook or beliefs that give life meaning.

- (+) 1. I feel good when I think of what I've done in the past and what I hope to do in the future.
- (-) [2.] *I live life one day at a time and don't really think about the future.*
- (-) [3.] I tend to focus on the present, because the future nearly always brings me problems.
- (+) 4. I have a sense of direction and purpose in life.
- (-) [5.] My daily activities often seem trivial and unimportant to me.
- (-) [6.] I don't have a good sense of what it is I'm trying to accomplish in life.
- (-) [7.] I used to set goals for myself, but that now seems like a waste of time.
- (+) [8.] I enjoy making plans for the future and working to make them a reality.
- (+) [9.] I am an active person in carrying out the plans I set for myself.
- (+) [10.] *Some people wander aimlessly through life, but I am not one of them.*
- (-) [11.] *I sometimes feel as if I've done all there is to do in life.*
- (+) 12. My aims in life have been more a source of satisfaction than frustration to me.
- (+) 13. I find it satisfying to think about what I have accomplished in life.
- (-) 14. In the final analysis, I'm not so sure that my life adds up to much.
- (+) indicates positively scored items
(-) indicates negatively scored items

Internal consistency (coefficient alpha) = .88
Correlation with 20-item parent scale = .98

SELF-ACCEPTANCE

Definition: High Scorer: Possesses a positive attitude toward the self; acknowledges and accepts multiple aspects of self including good and bad qualities; feels positive about past life.

Low Scorer: Feels dissatisfied with self; is disappointed with what has occurred in past life; is troubled about certain personal qualities; wishes to be different than what he or she is.

- (+) [1.] *When I look at the story of my life, I am pleased with how things have turned out.*
- (+) [2.] In general, I feel confident and positive about myself.
- (-) [3.] I feel like many of the people I know have gotten more out of life than I have.
- (-) 4. Given the opportunity, there are many things about myself that I would change.
- (+) [5.] *I like most aspects of my personality.*
- (+) [6.] I made some mistakes in the past, but I feel that all in all everything has worked out for the best.
- (-) [7.] *In many ways, I feel disappointed about my achievements in life.*
- (+) 8. For the most part, I am proud of who I am and the life I lead.
- (-) 9. I envy many people for the lives they lead.
- (-) [10.] My attitude about myself is probably not as positive as most people feel about themselves.
- (-) 11. Many days I wake up feeling discouraged about how I have lived my life.
- (+) [12.] The past had its ups and downs, but in general, I wouldn't want to change it.
- (+) [13.] When I compare myself to friends and acquaintances, it makes me feel good about who I am.
- (-) 14. Everyone has their weaknesses, but I seem to have more than my share.

(+) indicates positively scored items

(-) indicates negatively scored items

Internal consistency (coefficient alpha) = .91

Correlation with 20-item parent scale = .99