

Guide for using the Positivity Scale

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Purpose of the Positivity Scale

The Positivity Scale (PS) is a 15-item, 2-factor scale measuring optimistic attitude toward the future. It was devised to look at the relationship between Positivity and risk factors.

Construction of the Positivity Scale

Fifteen items were generated based on considerations of the importance of optimism (Seligman, 1990) and the appearance that when youth are less optimistic about their futures (Conchas & Clark, 2002), they are more likely to engage in risky behavior. The items reflect a sense of physical security, a sense of a safety net now and in the future, and self-efficacy in being able to succeed in life. Respondents complete a 5-point Likert-type scale for each item (always agree to never agree).

On a sample of primarily middle class, white, Midwestern high school (n=84, average age=15.57, SD=.52) and community college students (n=38, average age= 20.89, SD= 4.40), a principal components factor analysis was performed on the Positivity scale. The scree criterion suggested 2 factors, as did the parallel analysis method (Lautenschlager, 1989) yet there were several items that fit in more than one factor. A second factor analysis, with Varimax rotation, extracted 2 clean factors, accounting for 44% of the variance. The first factor (alpha = .89, 11 items) appeared to represent *personal optimism*. The second factor (alpha = .82, 4 items) appeared to represent a sense of *external security*.

Positivity Scale—Short Form (PSSF)

A short form of the Positivity Scale (PSSF) was created with five items (alpha = .79).

Average Scores

The average mean scores (and standard deviations) for the sample above were the following.

	High School (n=84)	Community College (n=38)
Age	15.57(.52)	20.89 (4.40)
Factor 1: Personal Optimism	4.10 (.66)	4.33 (.45)
Factor 2: External Security	2.86 (.91)	2.82 (.58)
PSSF-Short Form	3.93 (.77)	4.22 (.57)

Relation to Other Variables

The same sample of students took a battery of scales that included questions on risk factors and ethical behavior and attitudes.

Risk Factors

Personal Optimism was negatively related to plans to try smoking ($r=-.32$, $p<.001$), current smoking ($-.23$, $p<.01$), and plans to drink ($r=-.29$, $p<.004$). It was also negatively related to disapproval of peer smoking ($r=-.37$, $p<.001$), disapproval of peer drinking ($r=-.31$, $p<.001$), disapproval of adult drinking ($r=-.20$, $p<.02$) and disapproval of adult smoking ($r=-.22$, $p<.01$).

External Security was negatively related to plans to try smoking ($r=-.19$, $p<.029$), current smoking ($-.29$, $p<.001$), and plans to drink ($r=-.23$, $p<.03$). It was also negatively related to disapproval of peer smoking ($r=.28$, $p<.001$) and disapproval of peer drinking ($r=.21$, $p<.015$).

The PSSF was negatively related to these *risk factors*: plans to try smoking ($r=-.32$, $p<.001$), current smoking ($-.20$, $p<.03$), and plans to drink ($r=-.29$, $p<.005$). It was also negatively related to disapproval of peer smoking ($r=.34$, $p<.001$), disapproval of peer drinking ($r=.31$, $p<.001$), disapproval of adult drinking ($r=.24$, $p<.006$) and disapproval of adult smoking ($r=.18$, $p<.04$).

Ethical Factors

Personal Optimism was related to Community Bonding Scale ($r=.57$, $p<.001$), Ethical Identity Scale ($r=.50$, $p<.001$), 12-item Citizenship Scale ($r=.52$, $p<.001$).

External Security was related to Community Bonding Scale ($r=.52$, $p<.001$), Ethical Identity Scale ($r=.31$, $p<.001$), Citizenship ($r=.31$, $p<.001$)

The PSSF was related to these *ethical factors*: Community Bonding Scale ($r=.55$, $p<.001$), Ethical Identity Scale ($r=.51$, $p<.001$), Citizenship Scale ($r=.51$, $p<.001$).

Additional Samples

More coming...

Permission and Publishing

NOTE: When you publish any reference to this scale, please cite this guide.

Before publishing test items, you must have a permission letter from us describing your study and where it will be published.

So we can collect a database of the scale, we would appreciate a copy of your data, whether or not you publish it. We will credit you with your work in this guide.

References

Conchas, G. Q., and Clark, P. A. Career Academies and Urban Minority Schooling: Forging Optimism despite Limited Opportunity. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk* 7, no. 3 (2002): 287-311.

Seligman, M.E.P. (1990). *Learned Optimism*. New York: Knopf

Positivity Scale

Subscale 1: PERSONAL OPTIMISM

I have important goals for my life.

I believe I can reach my goals.

I believe I have what it takes to succeed in my life.

I believe that somebody will take care of me when I am old.

America is a good place to live.

I believe that my future will work out.

I believe that if you work hard enough, you can accomplish anything.

I have people in my life I can turn to for advice or help.

I believe that I will always have a home.

I believe that I will always have food to eat.

How likely do you think it is that you will find the opportunities you need to meet your life goals?

Subscale 2: EXTERNAL SECURITY

I believe that the world is getting better.

I believe that the government will protect me.

I believe that the laws will protect me.

I believe that I will be safe from injury.

POSITIVITY SCALE--SHORT FORM

I have important goals for my life.

I believe I have what it takes to succeed in my life.

I believe that somebody will take care of me when I am old.

I believe that my future will work out.

I believe that if you work hard enough, you can accomplish anything.

PSSF

I have important goals for my life.

Always agree	Usually agree	Agree half the time	Rarely agree	Never agree
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I believe I can reach my goals.

Always agree	Usually agree	Agree half the time	Rarely agree	Never agree
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I believe I have what it takes to succeed in my life.

Always agree	Usually agree	Agree half the time	Rarely agree	Never agree
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I believe that the government will protect me.

Always agree	Usually agree	Agree half the time	Rarely agree	Never agree
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I believe that the laws will protect me.

Always agree	Usually agree	Agree half the time	Rarely agree	Never agree
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I believe that somebody will take care of me when I am old.

Always agree	Usually agree	Agree half the time	Rarely agree	Never agree
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America is a good place to live.

Always agree	Usually agree	Agree half the time	Rarely agree	Never agree
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I believe that my future will work out.

Always agree	Usually agree	Agree half the time	Rarely agree	Never agree
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I believe that if you work hard enough, you can accomplish anything.

Always agree	Usually agree	Agree half the time	Rarely agree	Never agree
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I believe that the world is getting better.

Always agree	Usually agree	Agree half the time	Rarely agree	Never agree
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I have people in my life I can turn to for advice or help.

Always agree	Usually agree	Agree half the time	Rarely agree	Never agree
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I believe that I will always have a home.

Always agree	Usually agree	Agree half the time	Rarely agree	Never agree
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I believe that I will always have food to eat.

Always agree	Usually agree	Agree half the time	Rarely agree	Never agree
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I believe that I will be safe from injury.

Always agree	Usually agree	Agree half the time	Rarely agree	Never agree
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How likely do you think it is that you will find the opportunities you need to meet your life goals?

Certain to happen	Pretty likely	Don't know	Pretty unlikely	Certain not to happen
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PSSF

I have important goals for my life.

Always agree	Usually agree	Agree half the time	Rarely agree	Never agree
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I believe I have what it takes to succeed in my life.

Always agree	Usually agree	Agree half the time	Rarely agree	Never agree
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I believe that somebody will take care of me when I am old.

Always agree	Usually agree	Agree half the time	Rarely agree	Never agree
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I believe that my future will work out.

Always agree	Usually agree	Agree half the time	Rarely agree	Never agree
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I believe that if you work hard enough, you can accomplish anything.

Always agree	Usually agree	Agree half the time	Rarely agree	Never agree
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OTHER TOOLS FOR Researchers, Educators and Parents

Most of these you can download from:

<http://www.nd.edu/~dnarvaez/> Or from <http://cee.nd.edu>

TOOLS FOR TEACHERS: ETHICAL SKILL INSTRUCTION

Free from cee.nd.edu/curriculum

Narvaez, D. with Endicott, L., Bock, T., & Mitchell, C. (2001). *Nurturing character in the middle school classroom: Ethical Action*. St. Paul: Minnesota Department of Children, Families and Learning.

Narvaez, D. & Bock, T., with Endicott, L., & Mitchell, C. (2001). *Nurturing character in the middle school classroom: Ethical Judgment*. St. Paul: Minnesota Department of Children, Families and Learning.

Narvaez, D., & Endicott, L., with Bock, T., & Mitchell, C. (2001). *Nurturing character in the middle school classroom: Ethical Sensitivity*. St. Paul: Minnesota Department of Children, Families & Learning.

Narvaez, D. & Lies, J. with Endicott, L., Bock, T., & Mitchell, C. (2001). *Nurturing character in the middle school classroom: Ethical Motivation*. St. Paul: Minnesota Department of Children, Families and Learning.

Updated versions for purchase (each \$10 or all four for \$30):

Nurturing character in the classroom, EthEx Series, Book 4: Ethical Action. (Narvaez) Notre Dame, IN: ACE Press.

Nurturing character in the classroom, EthEx Series, Book 2: Ethical Judgment. (Narvaez & Bock) Notre Dame, IN: ACE Press.

Nurturing character in the classroom, EthEx Series, Book 1: Ethical Sensitivity. (Narvaez & Endicott) Notre Dame, IN: ACE Press.

Nurturing character in the classroom, EthEx Series, Book 3: Ethical Motivation. (Narvaez & Lies) Notre Dame, IN: ACE Press.

Integrative Ethical Education: Guide (Narvaez)

TOOLS FOR RESEARCH AND ASSESSMENT

Citizenship Scale *For Elementary and Secondary School Students: Guide*. Laboratory for Ethical Development and Education, University of Notre Dame

Ethical Goodness Scale *For Elementary and Secondary School Students: Guide*. (Narvaez, Bock & Vaydich) Laboratory for Ethical Development and Education, University of Notre Dame

Community Bonding Scale: Guide. (Narvaez) University of Notre Dame: Center for Ethical Education.

Attitudes Towards Human Rights Inventory: Guide. (Narvaez, Thoma, Getz) University of Notre Dame: Center for Ethical Education.

Positivity Scale: Guide. (Narvaez) University of Notre Dame: Center for Ethical Education.

Moral Theme Inventory (MTI): Guide. (Narvaez & Bock) South Bend, IN: Notre Dame University.

Assessing Ethical Skills: Guide (Narvaez)

Checklist for an Ethical Classroom: Guide (Narvaez)

Checklist for an Achieving and Ethical Classroom: Guide (Narvaez)

Tuning into Ethical Behavior: Guide (Narvaez)

Multicultural Experiences Questionnaire (MEQ) (Narvaez, Endicott, & Hill)

Rating Ethical Content System (RECS) for children's media (Narvaez)

TOOLS FOR PARENTS

Tuning into Ethical Behavior: Guide (Narvaez)

Nurturing a Peaceable Child (Warren, Vaydich & Narvaez)