

GOT OPTIMISM?

Take this Quiz and Find Out...

For each numbered item below, score a 1 if you *agree* with the statement – and a 0 if you *disagree*. Total your numbers for all ten statements to come up with a final score ranging from 0 to 10.

- ___ People make their own luck.
- ___ Hard work pays off.
- ___ Honesty really is the best policy.
- ___ Tough times are temporary.
- ___ Challenges bring out the best in people.
- ___ There is much to be grateful for.
- ___ The world is generally a friendly place.
- ___ My co-workers are capable people.
- ___ I have control over my future.
- ___ My best days are ahead of me.

If you score a perfect 10, set up shop as an optimism coach. You've got what it takes! If you score between 7 and 9, you're a strong optimist as well, and it's likely you strengthen the attitudes of people around you. Keep it up.

If you end up with a score ranging from 4 to 6, you're on the fence, tipping between optimism and pessimism. But you have enough of a positive perspective to make further progress. Be more conscious of your response to daily situations. Avoid generalizing situations as "all bad" or personalizing them as "my fault." See the article on the right for important advice.

If you rate from 0 to 3, well, there's work to be done. Read the article on the right for positive ideas, and start taking action right away.

READY TO TAKE ACTION?

7 Ways to Optimize Your Optimism

Some people seem wired for optimism, but most of us have to work at it. Here are seven ways to be realistically positive no matter what comes your way:

Appreciate and activate your strengths. You have real skills, rich life experiences, and a reservoir of good intention. Put all of it to work every day.

Opt for a partial solution when perfection is out of reach. It is always better to make some progress than to endure life as a chronically frustrated perfectionist.

Imagine success before it unfolds. Follow the lead of successful athletes. Before you take on a challenging situation, picture yourself dealing with it in a winning way.

Act yourself into a new way of thinking. It sounds a bit backward, but it works. Pretend to be positive, carry yourself with confidence, communicate an upbeat message – and those behaviors will start shaping your attitude.

Talk about what's going right. Even in the most dysfunctional environments, good things happen. Start spotting those success stories, and make them the focus of your conversations.

Put problems in perspective. Too much thinking can drag us down, especially when we generalize ("I'm no good with numbers"), catastrophize ("If I don't make this next sale, I'm going to lose my job"), or personalize ("It was all my fault"). Learn to recognize these distorted interpretations, and replace them with a view of the situation that's scaled down to fit reality.

Do what you can instead of dwelling on what you can't. There's so much to be concerned about these days. Try to accept what you can't change, but work like heck in those many situations where you can make a difference.

Change Agent Self-Assessment



INSTRUCTIONS: Check a box (1 to 5) to indicate how well each statement describes you. Use this scale: **1 = never 2 = rarely 3 = sometimes 4 = usually 5 = always**

COMMUNICATION

1. I am good at getting people excited about future possibilities.

1	2	3	4	5
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2. I am able to translate a compelling vision into specific intended outcomes.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---
3. I convey genuine enthusiasm when talking about plans and possibilities.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

RESOLVE

4. I have an unwavering belief that positive change is possible at work.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---
5. I press ahead with change in the face of obstacles and opposition.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---
6. I willingly take risks in order to learn and make progress.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

7. I am good at reading and responding to people's emotional signals.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---
8. I am able to guide team members to consensus.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---
9. I look for and leverage people's strengths.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

PERSONAL POTENTIAL

10. I make the most of my own strengths.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---
11. I exert my creativity to come up with new approaches.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---
12. I show flexibility when circumstances call for smart adaptation.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

ORGANIZATION

13. I honor and learn from the past when pursuing improvement.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---
14. I build allies at various levels throughout the organization.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---
15. I negotiate with key people as needed to bring about change.

1	2	3	4	5
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Change Readiness

QUICK-CHECK ASSESSMENT



BACKGROUND:

Are you effective when it comes to bringing about positive change in your workplace? Do you go about the change process with an understanding of your own change-management strengths and potential liabilities? Are you in tune with your organization's readiness and willingness to accept new ways of doing things?

INSTRUCTIONS:

This quick-check assessment helps you explore these questions. Simply go from item to item reading each of the two statements. Circle a number on the 1-to-5 continuum that most accurately reflects the current situation. For example, in the first assessment item: If you *always* work alone when developing ideas, circle 1 on the continuum. If you *usually* do, circle 2...and so on.

You can complete this assessment on your own and gain important insights. But it works best when used with colleagues. One approach is to complete all ten assessment items individually, then to get together, share responses, and engage in dialogue to turn the information into useful insights. Whenever practically possible, use these insights to develop specific action ideas.

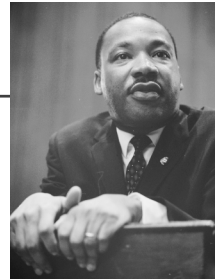
ABOUT YOU

- | | | | |
|----------|---|-----------|--|
| 1 | I work alone when developing ideas. | 1 2 3 4 5 | I get others involved when developing ideas. |
| 2 | I operate under the assumption that the ideas will sell themselves. | 1 2 3 4 5 | I work hard to sell people on my ideas. |
| 3 | I develop a financial analysis to show the bottom-line impact of my ideas. | 1 2 3 4 5 | For ideas that require a fairly significant investment, I run the numbers to determine costs, benefits, and likely return. |
| 4 | I skip any sort of "test phase," and instead, implement on a full-scale basis from the very beginning. | 1 2 3 4 5 | Whenever possible, I test my ideas on a small scale, then review the results and improve the idea as necessary. |
| 5 | When an idea takes long to gain support and move toward implementation, I get impatient and often abandon the idea. | 1 2 3 4 5 | I'm persistent when promoting ideas. No matter how long it takes, I continue my efforts to gain supporters and see the idea through to implementation. |

ABOUT YOUR WORKPLACE

- | | | | |
|-----------|--|-----------|---|
| 6 | My colleagues reject new approaches, opting instead for the status quo. | 1 2 3 4 5 | My colleagues are receptive to new ideas. |
| 7 | My boss clings to the old way of doing things. | 1 2 3 4 5 | My boss supports new ideas and their implementation. |
| 8 | Employees are expected to take the safest course and make the fewest waves. | 1 2 3 4 5 | Risk-taking in the name of improvement is encouraged. |
| 9 | Internal bureaucracy makes it difficult to move ideas from concept to implementation. | 1 2 3 4 5 | Ideas meet a minimum of bureaucratic roadblocks on their way to implementation. |
| 10 | The budget is so tight that even the best ideas have little chance of gaining support. | 1 2 3 4 5 | Even with a tight budget, good ideas can still advance to implementation. |

Making the most of your inner Dr. King



We all have the potential, if not the obligation, to do great things in great ways. Use this page to check your progress while reflecting on the words of Martin Luther King, Jr.

► INSTRUCTIONS: Read each item, then check the box (1 to 5) that best indicates how often your actions match the words. Use this scale: 1 = never 2 = rarely 3 = sometimes 4 = usually 5 = always

1 EXCELLENCE No matter what I'm doing at work, I strive to do my best.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

In Dr. King's words: *If a man is called to be a streetsweeper, he should sweep streets even as Michelangelo painted, or Beethoven composed music, or Shakespeare wrote poetry.*

2 COURAGE When important issues are being talked about, I take a stand and speak up.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter.

3 REFLECTION When facing difficult situations, I learn the facts and think through all options.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Rarely do we find men who willingly engage in hard, solid thinking. There is an almost universal quest for easy answers and half-baked solutions.

4 HOPE When I run into roadblocks, I deal with them and move on, knowing better days are ahead.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

We must accept finite disappointment, but never lose infinite hope.

5 INTERDEPENDENCE When making decisions, I consider how my actions will affect other people.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

An individual has not started living until he can rise above the narrow confines of his individualistic concerns to the broader concerns of all humanity.

6 SERVICE I make an effort every day to help other people be successful.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Life's most urgent question is: What are you doing for others?

7 HUMILITY I graciously accept help from others.

1	2	3	4	5
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The art of acceptance is the art of making someone who has just done you a small favor wish that he might have done you a greater one.

8 VISION In my life, I have a big vision for positive change that gives me inspiration.

1	2	3	4	5
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I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character.

9 MISSION My life is guided by a meaningful mission that shapes what I do on a daily basis.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

If a man hasn't discovered something he will die for, he isn't fit to live.

10 LEGACY I live each day with such passion that if today were my last day on earth, I would be satisfied that I had made the most of my time and talents.

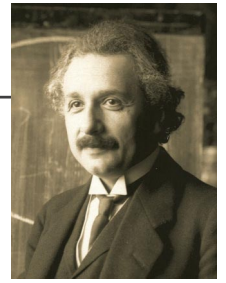
1	2	3	4	5
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I want you to know tonight that we as a people will get to the promised land. So I'm happy tonight. I'm not worried about anything. I'm not fearing any man.

Add the numbers in all the boxes you checked, and put the total here:

- 10-30 = You can do more to tap your potential. Set goals and take action now.
- 31-40 = You're making progress, but there's room to improve. Make it happen.
- 41-50 = You make a difference wherever you go. Keep it up – the world needs you.

Making the most of your inner Einstein



Intelligence takes many different forms: cognitive, creative, social, emotional, and so on. Albert Einstein made the most of all these smarts, and so can you. Use this assessment to find your strengths and improvement opportunities – with guidance from Dr. Einstein himself.

► INSTRUCTIONS: Read each item, then check the box (1 to 5) that best indicates how often your actions match the words. Use this scale: 1 = never 2 = rarely 3 = sometimes 4 = usually 5 = always

1 PERSISTENCE When facing challenges, I keep working until I reach a solution.

1	2	3	4	5
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In Einstein's own words: I think and think for months and years, and ninety-nine times, the conclusion is false. The hundredth time I am right.

2 SIMPLICITY In my work, I strive to keep things simple and straightforward.

1	2	3	4	5
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Everything should be made as simple as possible, but not simpler.

3 IMAGINATION I create new approaches instead of clinging to the status quo.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Imagination is more important than knowledge. Knowledge is limited; imagination encircles the world.

4 CURIOSITY I'm an interested person who asks questions and seeks new perspectives.

1	2	3	4	5
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We can't solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them.

5 IMPROVEMENT I am willing to take risks and make mistakes in the spirit of learning.

1	2	3	4	5
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Anyone who has never made a mistake has never tried anything new.

6 DIVERSITY In my daily interactions, I make a point of recognizing people's unique strengths.

1	2	3	4	5
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I believe in standardizing automobiles, not human beings.

7 TRUTH I am openly honest, even when the truth might rub some people the wrong way.

1	2	3	4	5
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If you are out to describe the truth, leave elegance to the tailor.

8 LEADERSHIP To bring about change, I'm willing to be the first person who takes action.

1	2	3	4	5
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Setting an example is not the main means of influencing others, it is the only means.

9 HOPE I am an optimist who sees the world as a place of possibility.

1	2	3	4	5
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The most important decision we make is whether we believe we live in a friendly or hostile universe.

10 WONDERMENT Even with all of life's challenges, I maintain a sense of awed respect and appreciation.

1	2	3	4	5
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There are only two ways to live your life. One is as though nothing is a miracle. The other is as though everything is a miracle.

Add the numbers in all the boxes you checked, and put the total here:

10-30 = Decide where you can most improve, then set a goal and take action.
31-40 = You're using your smarts, but there's room to improve. Make it happen.
41-50 = You're making the most of your inner Einstein. Stay sharp.

Are you working smart?

Take this assessment and find out...



In these challenging times, we all need to work smarter than ever. That's what this quick assessment is all about. Use it right now to find your strengths and improvement opportunities, then take action.

INSTRUCTIONS: For each of the items below and on the next page, check a box (1 to 5) to indicate how often you turn the statement into action. Use this scale: **1 = never 2 = rarely 3 = sometimes 4 = usually 5 = always**

PART ONE – IMPROVEMENT

1. I look for ways to improve how I do my work.

1	2	3	4	5
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2. When I come up with an idea for improvement, I act on it right away – putting it into practice or sharing it with someone who has the authority to make it happen.

1	2	3	4	5
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3. The people in my work area get together on a regular basis to share ideas for improvement.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---
4. Whenever we complete a project or some other big undertaking, my co-workers and I talk about what we did well *and* what we can do better the next around.

1	2	3	4	5
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PART TWO – LEARNING

5. I make a point of staying curious, asking questions about how things are done and why they are done that way.

1	2	3	4	5
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6. When workshops and training programs are available in my workplace, I participate.

1	2	3	4	5
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7. When I need help with a task or project, I reach out to colleagues who can provide it.

1	2	3	4	5
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8. I stay well-informed about other organizations in my field so I can pick up good ideas and best practices.

1	2	3	4	5
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PART THREE – PRODUCTIVITY

9. My workspace is organized so I can quickly find what I need.

1	2	3	4	5
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Continued on the next page...

Continued...

10. When planning my work schedule, I am realistic about the time that's required for each work activity. 1 2 3 4 5
11. I set aside time each day to review my latest e-mails all at once, instead of reading and responding to each e-mail as it arrives. 1 2 3 4 5
12. When I'm at work, I stayed focused on the task at hand – and do my best to set aside personal concerns and contacts for later. 1 2 3 4 5
13. When I have to get something done at work, I take action promptly. 1 2 3 4 5
14. In order to maintain my energy level throughout the day, I take breaks when I can. 1 2 3 4 5
15. Instead of trying to do several work activities at once, I focus on one thing at a time, getting it done efficiently the first time around. 1 2 3 4 5
16. During meetings, I do what I can to keep the group on track, even if I'm not leading the meeting. 1 2 3 4 5

PART FOUR – PERSPECTIVE

17. I know exactly who benefits from my work, and I try to see things from their perspective. 1 2 3 4 5
18. When making decisions regarding work-related tasks and projects, I take into account how those decisions will affect the organization's financial situation. 1 2 3 4 5
19. When I come to believe that a task or project isn't benefiting the organization or the people it serves, I speak up in a constructive way, explaining my reasoning to my manager. 1 2 3 4 5
20. Deep down, I believe that people can solve just about any problem when they team up and use their experience and know-how. 1 2 3 4 5

Add the numbers in all the boxes you checked, and put the total here:

20-40 There's a lot more you can and should do. Review the items in this assessment, pick out one or two for immediate action, and get started.

41-60 This would suffice during ordinary times, but the current situation is anything but ordinary. Maintain your strengths while taking additional steps right away. Remember, working smarter doesn't mean working harder. It often means the opposite.

61-80 You know what it means to work smart, and you're making progress. But don't stop there. Your workplace needs you to do more.

81-100 Great. Now focus on your colleagues, guiding them in what it takes to work smart.