

Life Satisfaction Strategies

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1 How do people make their lives more satisfying? How do they avoid being depressed? How do people become more happy? What you are reading will tell what lots of careful researchers have found out about this question.

Good Relationships

It's easier to be happy, and harder to be depressed, when you have very good relationships. In good relationships, people tend to

1. know each other well,
2. treat each other kindly,
3. speak respectfully to each other,
4. help each other,
5. have fun with one another,
6. have interesting conversations with each other,
7. solve their disagreements without getting too upset.

People who have even one good relationship, whether with a family member or a friend outside the family, are much more likely to be happy and not depressed than people who have no relationships of this sort.

The main point of this section is that

- A. learning how to resolve conflicts with other people well is a very important skill,
or
B. having good friendships contributes to happiness and protects against depression?

2 Having good relationships requires many skills. Having interesting conversations is a skill that can take a long time to develop fully. Solving disagreements without getting too upset is a very complex skill. When you want to

help a friend, the more skilled you are at whatever you are helping with, the more valuable your help will be. Another very important skill is selecting which people you want to try to develop close relationships with. Some people are much more capable of being your good friends than others.

The main point of this is that

- A. you should avoid trying to be friends with mean people,
or
B. there are lots of skills that can help you in building good friendships?

3 Even though it's great to have good friends, it's also useful not to worry too much about what any one person or group thinks of you. Paradoxically, it can be lots easier to have good friends if you are also able to tolerate it when someone doesn't like you very much.

One way to do this is to focus more on whether you are acting friendly and kind than on trying to figure out how much someone likes you. Do you use good manners? Do you greet people and say good bye to them in ways that let them feel valued? Are you a good listener? Do you speak with respect? Do you help out when you can? Do you keep a fairly upbeat attitude? If you treat people very decently and respectfully, and some of them don't like you for unsound reasons, it's good to be able to think, "That's their problem, not mine," and shrug it off.

The point of this section is that

- A. What clothes people wear and how attractive people are make way too much difference in how much people are liked.
Or
B. Paradoxically, you'll probably have better friends if it doesn't upset you terribly when someone doesn't particularly like you.

Goals, and Progress toward them

4 Do you want to become a very good writer? Do you want to succeed at school? Do you want to put on a good piano performance? Do you want to be an excellent public speaker? Are you interested in becoming an accomplished dancer? Do you want to come up with some good ideas on how to help the world, and communicate them to others? Do you want to earn enough money? Do you want to have a job where you can help lots of people? Would you like to be very physically fit? Would you like to keep your weight in the healthiest range? Do you want to contribute to the well-being of your family? These are all examples of goals. Goals, and progress toward them, give meaning, purpose, and happiness to life.

The largest part of this section

- A. gave examples of goals,
- or
- B. looked at research on the relation between goals and happiness?

5 Suppose that someone wishes very strongly to be a good writer. In that case, every time the person gets a little bit more skilled at typing, spelling, grammar, putting sentences together, or organizing ideas, the person has a chance to think something very important: "Hooray! I just made some progress toward my goal!" This type of thought gives happiness. Suppose the person does not care in the slightest about becoming a better writer. What does this person think when he or she has memorized a batch of spelling words? It's more likely to be something like, "Well, I got that meaningless task over with. What's the next pointless activity I have to do?" This type of thought doesn't lead to happiness!

This section gave an example of how

- A. when you have a strongly desired goal, work toward progress becomes more meaningful and

satisfying,
or

B. memorizing spelling words is difficult when spelling is so irregular, as in the English language?

6 Suppose someone wants to become physically fit. The person also wants to be highly skilled at having good conversations with other people. The person finds someone that likes to take long walks while talking about life. The person is likely to think, "Yay! I get to make progress toward two goals at once, in a fun way." Someone without these goals is more likely to think, "What's the point of walking in a big circle? And I don't have anything to say to that person." The first person has a much greater chance for lots of happy times than the second does.

This section gives another example of how

- A. exercise is very important for health,
- or
- B. having goals and celebrating progress on them is very important for happiness?

7 You can get the the feeling of progressing toward goals in many ways. Some of those ways are better than others. You can spend your time working to win a hot-dog eating contest. You can try to become a great player of a shooter videogame. You can try to become the head of a gambling casino or a cigarette company. But there's something missing from these ways of getting payoffs: doing something that helps people. The people who are really happiest get into the game of trying to do something that makes other people happier, and pick goals that are related to that in some way.

The point of this section is that

- A. Not only having goals, but having worthy goals, or goals of helping people, leads to greater happiness.
- Or
- B. Achieving many goals depends on getting

skilled at reading, writing, and math?

8 It's good to have both long-term goals and short-term goals. For a 10 year old, a long term goal might be to have a very satisfying job, years from now, that allows you to make a good living. A short term goal may be to do well on the science test coming up four days from now. It's great if you can make short-term goals that also contribute to your long-term goals. As another example, if your long-term goal is to have a very happy family life, a good short-term goal might be to decrease disrespectful talk to your sister to almost nothing, within two weeks. If your long-term goal is to become an engineer, a short-term goal might be to figure out what courses to sign up for next week, that will help you achieve your long-term goal.

A summary of this section is that

- A. It's good to have goals that are specific rather than general such as, I want to get an A in science, rather than I want to be smart.
or
B. It's good to have both short-term goals and long-term goals, and it's really nice if the short-term goals help you in achieving the long-term ones.

9 It's good to pick goals that give you a challenge that is not too great or not too little. You want to set for yourself just the right level of difficulty. For example, someone who is not yet a very good singer or dancer or actor probably doesn't increase her chances of happiness very much if she sets a goal like, "I want to be the star of the school musical, this year." She might increase her chances if she sets a goal more like, "I want to get a small part in the musical and have fun being in the group and encouraging my classmates." On the other hand, someone who has a very large degree of talent in math probably can do better than setting a goal of "I want to pass the math course without ever doing any work." A more challenging goal might be, "I want to shoot for over the 95th percentile on the standardized test

that is coming up." Lots of research shows that people are happiest when their challenges are not so easy as to be boring, not so hard as to be frustrating, but in the sweet spot that is in the middle.

The point of this section is that

A. You should choose goals that are ambitious enough to challenge you, but not so ambitious that you simply have a failure.

or

B. You should shoot for the most difficult goal you can, in order to achieve as much as possible?

10 I believe that people are happiest when some of their major goals involve doing very useful things to help other people. Human beings have a basic need to make a difference to others. If other people are grateful for the help they have received, that provides another source of happiness for the helper. Helping others often tends to produce a feeling of security, in knowing that the other people will want to help you in return.

Students often lead lives that revolve around memorizing information or writing down information, not to help anyone, but so that they can be judged favorably by someone. Or, they put lots of effort into sports activities that end up not really making anybody better off. It could be that the lack of meaningful effort put into making someone else's life better is a reason for the unhappiness of a lot of students.

In this section the author expresses the opinion that

A. Tutoring younger students should be a part of education for most students.

or

B. At least one of your important goals should be doing something that helps someone else.

Activities that are satisfying, fun, or fulfilling

11 An ingredient of happiness is having things that you enjoy doing, even if they don't achieve a goal. For example, someone enjoys playing chess against a computer, reading entertaining books, hanging out with some friends, wandering around on hiking trails, going dancing, cooking and eating new dishes, participating in a sport, playing a musical instrument, singing, or communicating with friends over the internet. It's good to be able to feel that something was worthwhile not just because "I made progress toward a worthy goal," but also because "That was fun."

According to this section,

A. pleasurable activities should always have some long-term goal that they are helping you achieve,

or

B. sometimes enjoyment is enough reason to do some activities, even if they don't accomplish much in the long term?

12 There's some evidence suggesting that pleasurable activities where you do something, as in the examples above, may be more connected to happiness than activities where you just sit and watch something – such as television. One study found that people who spent less time watching television tended to be happier.

This section suggested that

A. doing something is probably better than being a couch potato,

or

B. activities done with people are probably better than those done alone?

A Balance of Types of Time Use

13 There are various ways of classifying ways

that we use our time. We can call "scheduled time" activities you are committed to – job hours, school classes, sports team practices and games, chorus practices and concerts, play practices and performances, chess club sessions, volunteer activities, tutoring sessions, dance classes, appointments with a doctor. Homework is also "scheduled time" – even though you may not have written down a certain time to do it, there is a certain time it must be done by. Things with a deadline count as scheduled time. By "unscheduled time" I mean for example a period of time where you can do what you feel like at the time – go for a walk, call up someone and chat on the phone, meditate, invite someone to chat and shoot basketball hoops with you, read or write something you aren't required to read or write, exercise, chat with a family member, sit and think, read the newspaper, play with a pet, hang out with someone and chat, go to bed early, play chess against the computer, browse in a bookstore or on the Internet for whatever interests you at the moment, practicing or inventing some dance moves just because you feel like it, and so forth.

The purpose of this section was to

A. Show how some activities are good, and others are bad,

or

B. To define a distinction between two types of activities, by giving examples?

14 Another distinction is between "immediate payoff" and "delayed payoff." These terms are somewhat connected with the distinction between "work" and "play." We speak of "playing" at sports, or "playing" music, or putting on a "play." But sports, music, or acting can feel like, and be, hard work when we are practicing hard to achieve some future goal, particularly when we are thinking, "Will my performance be good enough?" At other times, sports, music, or acting can just be pure fun, at the time – we are enjoying the moment, not looking ahead to a future performance. For one

person, solving math puzzles has an immediate payoff – it’s fun; for another, doing these problems would be pure work. Some activities (such as having fun writing useful books) produce both short-term and long-term payoff; some activities (such as memorizing facts that you will never use and are not interested in) may produce neither an immediate payoff or delayed payoff.

What is a point made in this section?

A. Recreational activities such as sports or the arts can be carried out for immediate fun or future payoff, or both, or neither.

or

B. You can have so many activities scheduled that you don’t have adequate sleep time, and this is bad.

15 Another way of making a distinction between two types of activity is whether there is “approach” or “avoidance” motivation. If you’re singing with someone and you’re trying hard to get the pleasure that good sounds give you, that’s approach motivation; if you’re trying hard to avoid messing up and being embarrassed, that’s avoidance motivation. If you are taking a test and thinking, “It will feel so good if I get a good grade,” that’s approach motivation; if you are thinking, “I’ll feel so humiliated if I get anything other than a great grade,” that’s avoidance motivation.

What’s the distinction this section puts forth?

A. Some activities actually do other people good; others just prove how competent you are without actually helping anyone.

or

B. Some activities are meant to bring about something pleasurable, and others are meant to prevent something painful; the motives are called approach and avoidance, respectively.

16 So we have now set up three ways of classifying time use: scheduled versus unscheduled; immediate payoff versus delayed

payoff; approach motivation versus avoidance motivation. What do these ideas have to do with happiness versus depression?

Each person needs to find a balance as to how his or her time use is allocated. Going too far in either direction on any of these three dimensions, and neglecting the other direction, can make us less happy or destroy our happiness.

What’s the attitude of the author toward these three ways of classifying time use?

A. You should aim for 100% scheduled, delayed payoff, and approach motivation.

or

B. Find a balance along each of these dimensions that is compatible with psychological health.

17 Someone is unemployed and has no regular schedule of anything. He seeks fun by playing video games, eating, drinking, and doing other immediate-payoff activities. He can’t get himself to work toward delayed payoffs. He’s trying to approach pleasure, although there’s a lot of activity that is really aimed at avoiding boredom. This person may be very unhappy because of too much unscheduled time and too much dependence on activities with immediate payoff only.

A high school student is trying to do everything that admissions committees for elite colleges appear to want, but finds that life is not happy. The student takes a very heavy course load and is involved in many extracurricular activities. The student views anything other than a top grade and top performance in everything as a failure, and thus most of the motivation is avoidance motivation. This person may be very unhappy because of an unbalance in the direction of too much scheduled and structured time, too much delayed payoff orientation, and too much avoidance and too little approach motivation.

What was the purpose of this section?

- A. To give examples illustrating that unhappiness can result from either too much or too little of certain types of time use.
or
B. To show you how to change avoidance motivation to approach motivation by changing your way of thinking?

18 Very many people sacrifice their happiness, and that of their family members, for the sake of “achievement.” They are constantly driven to work, to schedule more and more tasks, to strive toward future payoffs, and to avoid failure at all costs. When they succeed at something, they immediately raise their standards so that anything less is considered a failure. They are prisoners of scheduled time, delayed payoffs, and avoidance motivation.

On the other hand, very many people sacrifice their happiness because they are too addicted to immediate pleasures, can’t show up reliably for scheduled activities, and deal with bad things that might happen in the future by not allowing themselves to think about them, rather than preventing them. They are prisoners because they can’t follow schedules, work for delayed payoffs, and harness avoidance motivation when appropriate.

The smart course that so many people seem to miss is the “middle path.” This means scheduling enough activities that you have structure in life and achieve things, but also leaving time for relaxed hanging out time; leaving time for a creative idea to pop into your head every once in a while. It means setting long term goals and working toward them, but recharging your batteries by doing things that give you fun almost every day. It means warding off and avoiding accidents, diseases, failure, poverty, humiliation, imprisonment, and so forth (i.e. using avoidance motivation), but also approaching great fellowship, fun activities, the pleasure of discovery, the pleasure of helping others, and so many of the positive payoffs life has to offer – using approach motivation.

What is a summary of this section?

- A. Although many people get into difficulty because of either addiction to immediate gratification or too much self-denial, you can take a “middle path” that results in both achievement and happiness.

or

- B. Sleeping is a paradoxical activity because it should be scheduled, has both immediate and future gratification, and should be done both to approach payoffs and avoid problems.

19 Before leaving this section I want to briefly note that I didn’t make up the phrase “middle path,” and that ideas fairly close to those of the preceding sections have been around a long time, independently arrived at by various people throughout history. To quote from an Internet passage on Buddhism: “Some heretics in India during Buddha’s time encouraged extreme luxury and desire. They regarded extreme enjoyment as the purpose of life. Others concentrated on meaningless asceticism and tortured themselves. All these things do not help, nor do they bring us liberation. It was to counsel avoidance of these extreme behaviors that the Buddha taught us about the Middle Path.” Those teachings took place somewhere around 5 centuries B.C.E. But many centuries later, many people fail to find the “middle path,” partly because it never occurs to them to look for it.

What’s a summary of this section?

- A. The idea of a “middle path” has been around a long time, and is central to Buddhist teachings, among others; still, many people fail to find it, perhaps because they don’t think to look for it.

or

- B. What sort of path you are able to take depends partly on the economic circumstances you are born into.

Regular Sleep Rhythm

20 We sleep best when we have a regular rhythm of going to bed and getting up. Regular

sleep rhythms also seem to help us have good moods. For example, one person goes to bed at 10 pm and gets up at 7:30 am just about every day. The second person often stays up till 2 or 3 am and sleeps in till noon or 1 pm, but also often tries to go to bed at 9:30 pm and get up at 6 am. The first person will find it much easier to be cheerful and in good spirits.

The main point is that

A. It's good not to worry too much if one doesn't fall asleep.

or

B. We sleep better and we are in better spirits when we go to bed and get up at close to the same time each day.

21 Most people don't know that our brains have a certain group of cells that are like a clock. This clock gets set so that we know when to go to sleep and when to wake up. Lots of times when people can't sleep, it's because they've stayed up late recently, and their clocks are telling them, "It's not time to fall asleep yet. You stayed up lots later before! It's not bedtime yet." When people have trouble getting out of bed in the morning, lots of times it's because their clocks are saying, "You're not supposed to wake up yet! You slept much later before! You should go back to sleep and sleep till the time I'm set for." Our brain's clocks take longer to reset than alarm clocks. You have to get into a regular pattern over at least several days, and better still several weeks. That way your brain really knows when to be awake and when to be asleep.

What's the main idea of this?

A. The reason it's important to keep your sleep schedule regular is that your brain has a clock that gets set according to the times you've gone to bed and gotten up recently.

Or

B. Exercise can be a very good way of helping to reset your sleep rhythm, as well as of improving your mood.

22 If you want to get into the habit of going to bed earlier and getting up earlier, how can you do this? There are four major ways of doing this. The first is to experience bright light soon after you wake up -- for example by taking a walk outdoors. The second is getting exercise early in the morning (for example, by taking a walk outdoors!) The third is having breakfast soon after you wake up. And the fourth is, of course, going to bed earlier and getting up earlier. These four experiences -- bright light, exercise, eating, and being out of bed -- can help you get your sleep rhythm adjusted so that at bedtime you feel sleepy, and at waking up time, you feel refreshed. When you do these four things early in the morning, you set the clock earlier; when you do them late at night, you set the clock later.

What is the point of this?

A. People who work at different shifts, so that they can't have a consistent bedtime, have more mood problems.

Or

B. There are four ways of telling your body, It's time to be awake now: bright light, exercise, eating, and being out of bed.

Bright Light as an Antidepressant

23 More people feel sadness and lower energy in the winter than in the summer. Why is this? Researchers have found that the amount of light falling upon our eyes has to do with our moods. It's dark much longer in the late fall and winter than during spring and summer. When we are in dark or dim light enough, for many of us it's as if we want to hibernate, and we don't feel like doing much, except perhaps eating. When we have to get up and deal with the world, we feel sad or irritable. This is called the winter blues.

One way to get over the winter blues is to spend more time outside when the sun is out. Another way is to use a special bright light sold just for overcoming winter blues. Anywhere

from half an hour to two hours of bright light in the morning can sometimes be very helpful in overcoming the winter blues. If you've gotten winter blues, it's a good idea to start getting more light as soon as the days start to get shorter in the fall.

A summary of this section is that

A. Some people get the winter blues from not having enough light fall upon the eyes in winter; getting more bright light, either by being outdoors or using a special bright light, can greatly help the winter blues.

Or

B. For most kids who go to school, it's difficult to get bright light in the morning because of the rush to get ready for school.

24 Does bright light improve people's moods at times other than the winter? Several studies have found that it does. This is particularly likely to be true for people who are indoors most of the time. Going for long walks outside is something you might try at any time of year, as a way of lifting your mood, if you can do so safely. Even cloudy days outside usually give your eyes more light than indoor lighting does. An alternative is to use a bright light inside.

The main point of this section is

A. The eye is the place where light has its effect, not the skin.

Or

B. Bright light can be helpful for our moods at times other than the winter.

Exercise

25 In one important study, depressed men were divided into two groups. One got medicine for depression. The other group got together to do lots of exercise, often. They did aerobic exercise, the type that got them breathing really hard. After a short time, the two groups did about equally well. After a

longer time, more than a year, the exercise group actually did better.

The problem that really depressed people have with exercise is that they just can't get themselves to do it. But if you have the self-discipline and resourcefulness to find a way of exercising that you enjoy and do it each day, your chances of staying in a good mood are much higher. Of course, exercise helps with all sorts of other things, including weight control, health, and quality of sleep.

The most important point of this section is that

A. Exercise helps people not to be depressed.

Or

B. Rather than just relying on self-discipline, you should look for a form of exercise that you really enjoy.

Diet

26 A 2012 review of many studies on diet and depression listed the following as associated with less depression: "folate, omega-3 fatty acids and monounsaturated fatty acids; foods such as olive oil and fish; and a diet rich in fruits, vegetables, nuts and legumes." Another 2012 study found that people who ate more fast food such as hamburgers and more commercial baked goods such as doughnuts had a higher risk of depression.

There have been several studies of the effects of omega-3 fatty acids. Most of these have used fish oil as a supplement. There are two important omega-3 fatty acids in fish oil, called DHA and EPA. Some researchers have concluded that EPA is the more important one for antidepressant effects. About a gram per day of EPA may be in the region of how much is required for the antidepressant effect. For vegetarians, there are omega-3 fatty acid supplements that are derived from algae rather than fish. One brand name for these is "Ovega-3."

A summary of this section is which of the

following?

A. Eat lots of fruits and vegetables, not much junk food, and get some omega-3 fatty acids, especially EPA, either from fish or from supplements.

or

B. The amino acids in protein are the building blocks for crucial chemical reactions in cells, so you should not let your protein intake go below a certain minimum.

Self-talk

27 Here's one of the big discoveries of the 20th century: We can make ourselves lots happier by taking control of what we say to ourselves, or our self-talk. Suppose a person is in the habit of saying things to herself like, "What's the use of trying; it's never going to work out." or "I messed that up, just like I mess up everything; I can't do anything right." or "Nobody likes me, and nobody will ever like me," or "People are just mean and out to hurt you; you can't trust anybody to be nice." These are all pretty depressing thoughts! The more people tell themselves depressing things, the less happy they are. But we can consciously choose to tell ourselves things that help us celebrate the good things in our lives and find solutions for the bad situations. We can change our habits of self-talk, and this is often a fantastically successful way of getting happier and getting over depression.

The main idea is that

A. We can learn to make good decisions and increase our happiness by getting into the habit of choosing the most useful forms of self-talk.

or

B. In order to change habits, you have to do the new behavior many times.

28 Many times, people aren't even aware of what their self-talk is. They may be saying very depressing things to themselves without even

realizing it! Often a very useful first step is paying attention to what you say to yourself.

But watch your own reaction to finding out what you are saying to yourself! Some people find themselves saying depressing things to themselves, and then think more depressing thoughts about their thought patterns. They might think, "Oh, I'm saying depressing things to myself! I'm doing something bad, I'm really screwing myself up. I might have known I'd be messing this up." But discovering something controllable that is responsible for your bad feelings is really cause for celebration. Thus, if you catch yourself saying depressing things to yourself, it is useful to think, "Hooray, I'm finding out why I'm feeling bad! The more I'm aware of what I'm thinking, the more I can take control of it! I've taken a very important step in helping myself!"

The section you just read gave an example of

A. Some not-so-useful, and more useful, self-talk that people might use when first paying attention to their own thoughts.

Or

B. The importance of practicing new thought patterns over and over?

29 I have found it very useful to label twelve different types of thoughts. For any situation you're in, it is possible to think any of these types of thoughts. Your goal is to use the ones that are most helpful to you, the ones that help you react to the situation in the best way, and not make yourself feel worse than necessary.

Here is an example of each of the twelve types of thoughts. Let's suppose someone invites a friend to come over and hang out, but the friend says, "I'm sorry; I have other plans." Here are twelve ways of thinking about this situation:

1. Awfulizing: "This person must not like me, and other people don't either -- this is terrible."
2. Getting down on yourself: "I probably did something that made her not like me."
3. Blaming someone else: "She's just trying to

mess up my mind. She shouldn't do that."

4. Not awfulizing: "This isn't so bad. People do make plans. It's no big deal."

5. Not getting down on yourself: "This doesn't mean I did anything bad. Even if I did, I would want to correct it, not just punish myself."

6. Not blaming someone else: "My friend didn't do anything bad -- she just couldn't accept my invitation. That's no sin."

So far we've listed six of the twelve types of thoughts. Which would seem to create MORE anxiety, guilt, or anger:

A. the first three,

or

B. the second three?

30 We continue with listing examples of the twelve thoughts, about the situation when a friend turns down an invitation.

7. Goal-setting: "My goals are to stay cheerful and friendly, be nice to my friend, and find someone to socialize with."

8. Listing options and choosing: "I could say, 'OK, maybe some other time.' Or, I could say, 'Is there another time that would work out better?' If this friend can't get together, I can ask my other friend Sally. Or, I can plan some useful and fun stuff to do by myself. I can read that book I've been interested in. I think what I'll do is ask this friend if another time would work out, and if not, ask my other friend, and if the other friend can't, then read my book."

9. Learning from the experience: "It's possible that if I made my invitation farther ahead of time next time, I'd be more likely to get an acceptance. But I also learned from this that it's no big deal if someone can't get together."

10. Celebrating luck: "I'm lucky that there are other days and other people and other things to do, and this isn't my only chance to do something fun."

11. Celebrating someone else's choice: "I'm glad my friend was polite in turning down my invitation rather than blowing me off rudely."

12. Celebrating your own choice: "I'm glad I

made this invitation, and I'm really glad I was able to stay cool when the friend couldn't get together."

The main point of this example is that

A. In any situation, we can talk to ourselves in several different ways; some more useful than others.

Or

B. It's often useful to do the exercise out loud rather than just thinking the thoughts silently?

31 If you think of a situation and practice coming up with each of the twelve different types of thoughts about that situation, you have done the twelve thought exercise. Doing this exercise helps your mind get more flexible about the ways you talk to yourself. It helps your mind learn that there are many possible ways to react to a situation, not just one. It helps free you from habits of saying certain types of things to yourself automatically. It helps you practice some very useful types of thoughts. Let's go through the twelve-thought exercise one more time. This time the situation is that I have gotten back a test with a bad grade on it.

1. Awfulizing: "This is seriously bad. This is a very big problem."

2. Getting down on yourself: "I did poorly on this because I goofed off. This is my fault."

3. Blaming someone else: "The teacher asked a bunch of stuff that we hadn't really covered. It was a bad test."

4. Not awfulizing: "It's not the end of the world. I can make up for this with good performances later."

5. Not getting down on yourself: "I don't want to spend a lot of time going over how lazy I was. That would waste time and energy."

6. Not blaming someone else: "I don't want to spend a lot of time blaming the teacher. That won't get me anywhere."

So far we've listed the first six of the twelve thoughts. When someone says, "It's not the end of the world; I can handle it," that thought is

likely to be an example of

- A. getting down on yourself,
- or
- B. not awfulizing?

32 We continue with examples of twelve thoughts, about the situation where I've gotten a bad grade.

7. Goal-setting: "My goals are to stay cool, to get myself motivated to work harder, and to find the best ways of doing better."

8. Listing options and choosing: "I could increase the amount of time I study this subject each day. I could go over the test and analyze what I did right and what I did wrong. I could do lots more reading, and lots more practice problems before the next test. I think I'll do all three of these options."

9. Learning from the experience: "I learned from this that the tests in this course are not easy, and if I want to do well I need to be really well prepared."

10. Celebrating luck: "I'm glad that this isn't the only test and that I have lots of chances to bring my grade up."

11. Celebrating someone else's choice: "I'm glad my friend has liked to study together in the past; this might be a fun way of studying more now."

12. Celebrating your own choice: "I'm glad I reacted to this by getting more motivated and not by giving up."

When the person in this example thought of different possible things that could be done to make things better, that type of thought was called

- A. not getting down on yourself,
- or
- B. listing options and choosing?

33 There are some ways of awfulizing or getting down on yourself or blaming someone else that usually work better than others. In one

way of doing these, you make conclusions not just about THIS situation, NOW, but LOTS of other situations in the future as well. For example: if I get a bad grade and say to myself, "This is really a bad grade. I don't like this. This is a big problem," then I'm pretty much sticking to the present situation. But if I were to say, "This means I'll never succeed in anything. This means I'll be an awful failure for the rest of my life," then I'm going way beyond the present situation and drawing conclusions that go way beyond the evidence I have. I'm thinking that the badness of the situation will last forever, when it may last only a short time.

The main idea of this is that

A. Awfulizing in a way that sticks to the present, temporary situation, usually works better than thinking things are permanently awful.

Or

B. Listing options and choosing really helps you figure out the best thing to do.

34 Similarly, when you get down on yourself, it's usually better to think that you made a certain specific mistake rather than that you are always going to mess up on everything for the rest of your life. Again, you don't want to conclude that you can't handle any situation well in the future, just because you didn't handle one situation well in the past.

Likewise, if someone does something annoying, it's usually better to think, "That person did something I don't like. That was irritating," than to think, "This person is totally bad and worthless."

Sometimes you can make more general conclusions. Some people, for example, are close enough to totally bad that you want to stay away from them completely. But you don't want to make such conclusions without having enough evidence.

Suppose that you forgot to take out the trash when you had promised to do so. Which way of getting down on yourself would be more likely

to be more useful, and to cause the least unnecessary pain?

A. I made a mistake. I wish I'd remembered. I didn't pick a good enough way of remembering.
Or

B. I can't remember anything. This shows that I'm going to fail at whatever I try. I can't do anything right.

35 Can you do the twelve-thought exercise with desirable events as well as undesirable events? Yes, you can do any of the twelve thoughts with any event. Let's imagine the twelve-thought exercise with the following event: someone has tried out for a part in a play, and the person gets selected to do just the part he wanted to do.

1. Awfulizing: "Oh, no, what have I gotten myself into? What if I totally embarrass myself?"

2. Getting down on yourself: "Oh no, I've bitten off more than I can chew. I'm not up to it."

3. Blaming someone else: "Those other people who convinced me to try this -- they're to blame."

4. Not awfulizing: "This is a big challenge, but I can handle it. And if I don't do it perfectly, no one will die."

5. Not getting down on yourself: "I don't want to punish myself, because I had a success, not a failure."

6. Not blaming someone else: "The people who encouraged me were trying to help, and they almost certainly did help."

So far we've listed the first six of the twelve thoughts. Is it conceivably possible that the person's Getting Down on Himself thought could be accurate, and that he really is not up to the challenge?

A. Yes.

Or

B. No.

36 We continue with the listing of twelve

thoughts about a desirable situation, of getting chosen for a part in a play.

7. Goal-setting: "My goals are to stay cool, work hard, play my part really well, have a great time, and not let my other work suffer."

8. Listing options and choosing: "I can spend a certain time each day studying and practicing my lines. I can be really cheerful and encouraging of the other people in the play. I can stop watching tv so I'll have more time to do my work and practice the play. I think I'll do all of these."

9. Learning from the experience: "I practiced a lot for the audition, and I watched two different actors do the scene in movies. I think this might be why I was successful."

10. Celebrating luck: "I'm glad that there wasn't someone else trying out for this part who was lots better than I!"

11. Celebrating someone else's choice: "I'm grateful to our drama leader for picking me."

12. Celebrating my own choice: "I'm glad I did a good job on the audition, I'm glad I was brave enough to try out, and I'm glad I'm able to look forward to how much fun this will be!"

The author is making the point with this example that

A. It's good to do the twelve-thought exercise with desirable situations as well as with undesirable ones,

or

B. It takes a lot of work to do well in a play?

37 Here's another tip about doing the twelve-thought exercise. How do you do not awfulizing when the situation really is awful? How do you do not get down on yourself when you really have made a bad mistake? How do you do not blame someone else when the other person really has done something very wrong? You can actively choose not to keep running these thoughts through your head, even though they might be true, because you decide they are not the most useful thoughts to think. For example, if something really awful has

happened to me, I can not awfulize by thinking, "This is really bad, but I'm choosing not to keep thinking how bad it is, because I want to use my energy in other ways." If I've made a bad mistake, I can not get down on myself by thinking, "Even though I've made a bad mistake, I don't want to punish myself so much that I keep myself from doing good things." If someone else has treated me very badly, I can not blame someone else by thinking, "I have more useful things to do than to keep going over how badly this person acted."

What's the main point the author is making?

A. If you get down on yourself too much, you feel too much guilt; if you blame someone else too much, you feel too much anger.

Or

B. You can choose to spend your energy in ways other than awfulizing, getting down on yourself, or blaming, even when the situation is awful or it is really your fault or really someone else's fault.

38 Most people who are very unhappy do much more awfulizing, getting down on themselves, and blaming other people than is good for them. Most very unhappy people would be much happier if they did lots more of all the other nine thoughts. But should we try to banish awfulizing, getting down on ourselves, and blaming others from our minds? No. These thoughts are sometimes useful, particularly when they are not overgeneralized to lots of situations that we don't have evidence about.

When the terrible dictator, Adolf Hitler, was coming to power in Germany, it would have been very good for the world if more people had said to themselves, "Something very bad is happening," or even "This is terrible!" The not awfulizing thought, "This isn't such a big deal," would not have been appropriate.

How should we think about the fact that tens of thousands of people get killed in car accidents each year? I believe that "This is awful," is more appropriate than "We can handle it, it's not that big a problem."

In my opinion, people who scream and swear at other people would usually do well to think, "I did something wrong. I disgraced myself," rather than something like, "I don't want to get down on myself, because this person had it coming to them."

The main point of this section is that

A. Even though most unhappy people do the first three thoughts way too much, there are situations where they are very appropriate, particularly if they are not overgeneralized.

Or

B. Blaming someone else leads to anger, but anger is sometimes a useful emotion.

39 You can do the twelve-thought exercise with any situation. Often it's fun to do it with someone else, taking turns. You first come up with a situation. The first person makes up an example of awfulizing. The second makes up an example of getting down on yourself. Now it's the first person's turn, for blaming someone else. And so forth, till all 12 thoughts are done.

If you do this exercise enough, you will soon have an experience that will be something to celebrate greatly. Something will happen, and you will find yourself not just reacting to the situation by reflex. You will think, "What is the most useful way of thinking about this situation? Do I want to blame someone else? Do I want to goal-set? Am I ready to list options and choose?..." When you catch yourself choosing how to think, pat yourself on the back. You are doing something very important, that will change your life for the better.

The main message of this is that

A. The idea that thoughts influence how we feel is a very old idea. It was written about by ancient philosophers.

Or

B. If you find yourself consciously choosing how you want to think about a situation, try to feel very good about that, because it's a great

thing to do.

40 If you are going to have a strong habit, a reflex way of responding to unwanted situations, I think the following four thoughts are great all-purpose ones to use: not awfulizing, goal-setting, listing options and choosing, and celebrating your own choice. Another great exercise to do is the Four-thought exercise. You think of an unwanted situation, and you practice running quickly through each of those four thoughts. The four thoughts can be done quickly enough that you can really do all four when handling any unwanted real-life situation.

Here's an example of how to do the exercise. The situation is that I'm at school, and someone who passes me in the hall looks at me and says, "You stupid-face!"

Not awfulizing: "I can handle this. This is more that person's problem than mine."

Goal-setting: "I want to stay cool and not get into trouble. I want not to reward this guy for acting mean."

Listing options and choosing: "I can say to him, 'Whatever.' I can just look at him and walk on. I can say, 'I don't know what makes you say things like that; maybe you do.' I think I'll just give him an unconcerned glance and walk on."

Celebrating my own choice: "Hooray, I handled that situation really well! I feel good about what I did!"

If two people do the four-thought exercise with each other, I recommend that one person do all four thoughts with one situation. Then it's the second person's turn to do all four thoughts with another situation. If you do the four-thought exercise hundreds of times, you will develop some good reflexes on how to handle unwanted situations.

The purpose of this section was to

A. explain how feeling good or feeling bad affects your brain,
or

B. explain how and why to do the four-thought exercise?

41 It's important to realize that you can't revise your habits of thinking by just doing the twelve-thought exercise or the four-thought exercise five or ten or twenty times. More realistic is five to twenty exercises per day for several months. Does this sound like a lot of exercise to reach a goal? If it does, please think about how many times someone has to lift a heavy weight if that person wants to get very much stronger. Five or ten or twenty repetitions have very little effect. But if the person does two sets of ten repetitions every day for several months, you can start to see a real difference. Or think about how much work it takes to learn to play a musical instrument, or to do mathematics. Responding in a calm, clear-thinking way to unwanted situations is a hugely valuable skill; it is worth a great deal of practice and work.

The main point of this section is that

A. It takes many, many practices of the four-thought exercise to revise your habits of handling unwanted situations not just a few practices.

Or

B. It takes a great deal of practice to learn to play a musical instrument.

42 Dealing with unwanted situations is not the whole job. Fortunately, things go well sometimes! One of the characteristics of unhappy people is that they fail to celebrate when good things happen. By celebrating, I am not talking about actually having a party with a cake and so forth. I'm talking about thinking to yourself things like, "Yay! Hooray! I'm glad that happened! That's wonderful! Oh Boy! This is great!" This is celebrating through your own self-talk. Try to recognize whenever something lucky happens, and celebrate luck; recognize whenever someone does something you like, and celebrate that person's choice; and particularly, recognize when you've done

anything smart or good, and celebrate your own choice. If you do such celebration in your mind very often and very enthusiastically, I predict you will be happier and less depressed.

The point of this section is that

A. It helps to learn not to get down on yourself terribly much when you make a mistake.

Or

B. It's important to use celebratory self-talk when good things happen.

43 How do you practice the habit of celebrating good things that happen? One way is the celebrations exercise. It's most fun to do this with someone else. You simply take turns telling each other things you've done that you're glad you've done, or things other people have done that you're glad they did, or good things that happened by luck. It helps to do this with someone who genuinely feels really good about the good things in your life, as well as that person's own life.

The point of this section is:

A. To practice celebrating good things, do the celebrations exercise: Take turns telling someone about the things you have to celebrate.

Or

B. People are not sure which is more important: feeling good about good things, or not feeling terribly bad about bad things.

The Effort-Payoff Connection

44 Here's a thought that is depressing for most people: "It doesn't matter what I do. Things will turn out the same, no matter what I do." The opposite of this thought is, "What I do makes a big difference. If I make good decisions, things will turn out a lot better than if I make bad decisions." The difference is the feeling of having some control over how things turn out -- having the feelings that your efforts matter a lot in what rewards or payoffs you are able to

get. People are happiest in situations where what they do matters -- where there is a strong effort-payoff connection.

Let's do a little thought experiment to illustrate how much people like having an effort-payoff connection. Let's imagine three videogames. In each of them, the goal, let's say, is to save some people from a raging fire. In the first game, no matter what you do, every time, the poor imaginary people get burned up. In the second game, no matter what moves you make, without fail the lucky imaginary people get saved. In the third game, making the right moves results in saving them and making the wrong moves results in losing them. Only one of these three games would stand a chance of anyone's actually playing it -- the third. People don't want to spend money or effort in situations where there is no effort-payoff connection.

What is the main point of this section?

A. People enjoy things more when through their efforts, they have some control over the payoffs they get.

Or

B. Videogames should be possible to win, but not too easy.

45 If you want to be happy, try to get yourself into situations where what you do makes a difference. These sorts of situations are usually those where you are trying to do something that is not too hard, not too easy, but just right. For example, if you are choosing a math class to take in school, you certainly don't want to select one that is so advanced that you are totally lost, and no matter what you do, you will fail. That is very frustrating. But you also want a course that is not so easy that you could sleep through each class, never do any homework, and still get a high grade. That is boring. You want one where you can do well if you work, and do poorly if you don't work. There's where you find the effort-payoff connection.

The point of this section is that

A. Some, but not many children are depressed because their classes are too easy for them.

Or

B. You find the effort-payoff connection most in situations where you are working at something that is not too hard, not too easy, but of just right difficulty.

46 The effort-payoff connection also has to do with activities that we don't usually think of as work. Social conversation offers a great opportunity for the effort-payoff connection. If people put their minds to the goal of having an interesting and pleasant conversation, they can make things very enjoyable for both themselves and the people they are chatting with. But if they make the wrong choices, they can offend or bore the other person. People who know what successful conversation feels like, and are able to bring about this result often, have much more opportunity for happiness than those who don't see social conversation as a place for any payoff.

The main idea is that

A. You will be much happier if you can find the effort-payoff connection in creating good conversation with people.

Or

B. It's important to realize that during part of the time, we need to get away from the effort-payoff connection, and just kick back and relax.

47 Which way do family members get more of the effort-payoff connection with each other: by going for walks and chatting with each other, or by sitting and watching television? Television offers very little effort-payoff connection. The only effort is paying attention and being entertained, and television usually attempts to make paying attention as effortless as possible. The average American spends 34 hours a week watching television. This, with the attendant loss of the effort-payoff connection, is one of my main nominees for an explanation of why more and more Americans have become

depressed over the second half of the 20th century and first part of the 21st.

Indeed, studies have found that people who watch more television tend to be less happy and more depressed. The moral is, if you want to be happier, turn off the TV and start doing something that makes a difference.

Which of the following activities would offer someone the most effort-payoff connection?

A. Tutoring someone,

or

B. watching tv?

Talking About Problems

48 Everyone has problem situations to deal with in life. Very often we run into dilemmas, where it seems that whatever choice we make, there will be some negative consequences. There are times when there are unpleasant things that are happening that we can't decide what to do about.

Putting your thoughts into words, when you have problems, very much helps you to solve them. Words are a huge aid to the problem-solving process. Writing about problems is one way of putting them into words. Thinking in words, to yourself, is another way. But many people find that talking with someone else is the best way of using words to help them grapple with problems.

What's a point made by this section?

A. Words are very useful in dealing with problem situations, and talking to someone else is a very useful way of employing words.

or

B. In solving problems, it's useful to think about the advantages and disadvantages of options that you have thought of.

49 Talking with friends or family members about problems has a major advantage, when it

works out well: you often feel closer to that friend or family member. The friend feels more empowered to talk with you about a problem that he or she might have. You are moving closer to that ideal state of human affairs where people often help each other.

What's a point made in this section?

A. Some people are not lucky enough to have family members who are good to talk with about problems.

or

B. When people talk with each other about problems, they get to be closer friends.

50 Talking with a professional therapist about problems sometimes also has major advantages. Often a therapist will be able to listen and respond in more objective and calm way than friends will. Often a therapist will have had experience that will help in solving the problem. A therapist will sometimes be expert in asking questions that lead someone to explore a problem in very useful ways. A therapist often will have cultivated the self-discipline to choose well when to give suggestions and when to let someone think about the problem on his or her own.

What's a point made in this section?

A. Professional therapists should bring specialized skills to the process of talking about problems.

or

B. There are several very different paths of training that therapists can take.

51 One of the big barriers to people's solving problems is being too ashamed to talk about them, or sometimes even to think carefully about them. The thought, "I should not be having this problem," or "Having this problem means I'm a bad person," or other thoughts like these can make people too ashamed to address their problems. And yet they often know that the problems will not go away on their own.

The result is a very unpleasant stuck feeling. The answer to this is usually to have the courage to talk about the problems and let the feeling of shame gradually go away as one gets used to talking about the situation.

What's a point made in this section?

A. It's useful to write out options on paper.

or
B. Shame is often a big barrier to working on problems.

52 Sometimes people feel that if they can get their bad feelings "out" by talking about them, all the bad feelings will go away. Getting bad feelings "out" and ridding oneself of them by expressing them is usually not the way things work, and often people are disappointed when they rely on this strategy. However, often it does occur that the more someone talks about a situation that has a lot of bad feeling associated with it, the more the person gets used to thinking about the situation, and the bad feeling associated with it gets less and less.

What's a point made in this section?

A. Although the strategy of "getting feelings out" is often disappointing, "getting used to situations" that at first produce bad feelings is a strategy that has scientific support.

or

B. People who have anger problems should not pound pillows.

53 As you talk about problems, it will probably be helpful to keep the twelve thoughts in mind. It will be useful not to overgeneralize too much in awfulizing, getting down on yourself, or blaming someone else. It will be helpful to consider your goals and to list options and choose carefully among them. When you have come up with good and reasonable plans, it's great to celebrate your own choice.

What's a point made in this section?

A. As you talk about problems, keep in mind the twelve thoughts, and try to use the ones that are most useful at the time.

or

B. It's good to focus on one problem at a time.

Cheerful Actions Produce Cheerful Moods

54 Most people realize that we often act a certain way because we feel a certain way. For example, we speak in a cheerful tone of voice because we feel joyous. Or we mope around and do nothing, because we feel discouraged.

But most people don't realize how much our behaviors affect our moods. For example, if we speak in a cheerful voice, that will tend to make us feel more joyous. If we quit moping around and start doing something, we make ourselves feel less discouraged.

In one experiment, people asked the research participants to move their faces so as to get into different facial expressions. The directions did not involve any words for emotions. For example, the researchers might say things like, try to move your eyebrows closer together, or move the corners of your mouth up some. The people who were assigned directions to get their faces into happy expressions actually felt better than those who were assigned sad or angry expressions.

The point of this section is that

A. You will probably feel better if you act the part of someone who feels good.

Or

B. Letting angry feelings come out does not usually get rid of them, but often makes them greater.

Don't Let Yourself Get Rewarded for Feeling Bad

55 Most people realize that people tend to repeat the behaviors they get rewarded for. For example, if every time you do a certain comedy routine, people laugh and congratulate you and want to be your friend, you tend to do that routine or similar ones more often. This is true for nonhuman animals as well if a dog gets a bit of food every time he comes up and begs, he will start begging more and more often.

Most people don't realize that people also repeat the feelings that they get rewarded for. Suppose that you are offered lots of disability money each month for being depressed, which will be taken away if you ever get feeling better. This makes it very hard to get feeling better! The money rewards the feelings of depression, and keeps them coming.

The main point of this section is that

A. Rewards work to strengthen habits of feeling as well as of behavior.

Or

B. Most of the time when people reward bad feelings, they are not really trying to make someone feel bad more often.

56 How else can someone get rewarded for feeling bad? Here are some examples.

A woman has arguments with her husband. If she stays rational and sticks up for herself cheerfully, he raises his voice and gets very angry at her. But if she cries and looks very sad, he feels guilty and hugs her and gives her what she wants to make her stop crying. Without trying to do so, he's rewarding her for feeling bad.

A boy hates getting out of bed to go to school. He finds that if he feels really depressed and tells his mom how depressed he feels, he is allowed not only to skip school, but also to go back to sleep for a couple more hours.

A girl is ignored by her classmates. When she makes a suicide attempt, classmates get very interested in her, visit her in the hospital, bring her gifts, and try to be nice to her.

This section presented three examples where

A. people felt bad because they said depressing things to themselves,

or

B. people were rewarded by other people for feeling bad?

57 What should you do, if you realize that someone is rewarding you for feeling bad? The answer to this takes lots of self-discipline. But often the best thing to do is to talk to that person, and explain what you think is going on, and ask the person to try to reward you for feeling good and to avoid rewarding you for feeling bad!

Which of the following sentences would be an example of what the author is suggesting in this section?

A. "Could I ask you not to pay so much attention to how much I weigh and what I eat, as long as I'm in a reasonable range of body weight?"

Or

B. "As much as I might like it at the time, could I ask you to try not to offer to give me anything I want when I start crying? I think the effect is to make me sadder and sadder."

Life Satisfaction Strategies Scale

Your name:

Today's

date: _____

0 = Not at all true

2 = Only a little bit true

4 = True some, but not much

6 = Pretty much true

8 = True to a large extent

10 = True to a very large extent

To what extent do you use each of these strategies? To what extent is each of these a true description of what you have been doing over the last _____ (default time= the last month)?

Good Relationships

_____ 1 I have good relationships. (A definition of good relationships: people know each other well, treat each other kindly, speak respectfully, help and have fun with each other, have interesting chats, solve disagreements without getting too upset, and are loyal with respect to the continuation of the relationships.)

_____ 2 I can get a lot of pleasure from social conversations, and do so often.

_____ 3 When disagreements occur with other people, I can be rational about them without getting too upset.

_____ 4 I make smart decisions about whom to cultivate friendships with.

_____ 5 I'm able to tolerate it when someone doesn't like me or approve of me.

_____ 6 My happiness is not totally dependent upon any one relationship's going well.

Goals, and Progress Toward Them

_____ 7 I have some goals that I strongly wish to accomplish.

_____ 8 I feel that my major goals are "worthy" ones: they have to do with accomplishing something really worthwhile rather than something frivolous and trivial.

_____ 9 My goals are neither too easy nor too difficult for me, but in the zone where my effort can pay off.

_____ 10 I have some way of measuring or monitoring my own progress toward my goals, and I feel good about every bit of progress that I make.

_____ 11 Some very central goals, and a good bit of my effort, concern ways of helping other people to be happy.

Pleasant Activities

_____ 12 I have some activities I do for fun, and I get lots of fun out of them.

_____ 13 I do not feel guilty about doing some things just for the fun of them.

_____ 14 I have some fun activities I enjoy doing alone.

_____ 15 I have some fun activities I enjoy doing with other people.

Regular Sleep Rhythms

_____ 16 I am aware of the usefulness of regular sleep rhythms and biological clocks.

_____ 17 I use the four ways of setting sleep rhythms earlier or later: (being in or out of bed, light, exercise, eating.)

_____ 18 I use self-discipline in getting to bed and getting out of bed at regular times.

_____ 19 I am pleasantly tired at bedtime and go to sleep easily.

_____ 20 I am refreshed after a night's sleep, do not have a hard time waking up, and feel energetic upon arising.

Bright Light

_____ 21 If my mood or energy level is low, I have experimented with various lengths of exposure to bright light as a way of helping myself feel better.

_____ 22 If I have found that bright light improves my mood, I am continuing to use it.

Exercise

_____ 23 I get a reasonably large amount of physical exercise each day – enough to make me quite tired when bedtime comes around.

_____ 24 I have found at least one form of physical exercise that I really enjoy.

Diet

_____ 25 I am aware of what current evidence tells us about the relationship between diet and mood.

_____ 26 I consume what I consider to be a really good diet.

Self-talk

_____ 27 I have become aware of the content of what I say to myself.

_____ 28 I am very familiar with the twelve types of thoughts, and I recognize when I am using them.

_____ 29 When I awfulize, get down on myself, or blame someone else, I don't overdo it or overgeneralize.

_____ 30 I practice the twelve-thought exercise.

_____ 31 I often have the experience of choosing which thought would be most useful for me and using it, rather than thinking by reflex.

_____ 32 I sometimes have the experience of consciously deciding to move from awfulizing, getting down on myself, or blaming someone else, to a different type of thought.

_____ 33 I have done a great deal of practice in using the four thought exercise to cultivate a reflex way of responding to problem situations.

_____ 34 I very often use some form of the celebrations exercise to help myself celebrate positive or favorable situations.

The Effort-Payoff Connection

_____ 35 I have managed to arrange things so that I often feel a strong connection between the effort I'm putting out, and some sort of payoff that I want to get.

_____ 36 I have managed to avoid having all of my effort go to things that I feel make no difference or are pointless.

_____ 37 I focus my attention on the things that I can control or change (where there is an effort-payoff connection), and minimize the time I spend feeling bad about the things I can't influence or change.

Decision-Making

_____ 38 I take enough time and effort to make careful decisions rather than acting impulsively.

_____ 39 I tend to make decisions that I'm glad I've made.

Talking About Problems

_____ 40 When there are things that bother me, there is at least one person that I can talk to about these things.

_____ 41 I am able to talk and think about my own mistakes and failures and shortcomings without letting shame get in the way of the problem-solving process.

_____ 42 I have the belief that when people work together on a problem that one person has, this is a good way for people to connect with one another.

_____ 43 As I talk and think about problems, I remember the twelve thoughts and try to use the thoughts that are most useful.

Cheerful Actions

_____ 44 There are times when I can successfully use the strategy of acting the part of a cheerful person and letting my mood catch up to my behaviors. (This strategy works best when there is at least one person I can be open and honest with about bad feelings, if I need or want to.)

Not Getting Rewarded for Feeling Bad

_____ 45 I am aware of the possible ways in which people can get rewarded for feeling bad.

_____ 46 If there are rewards for feeling bad that seem to be coming my way, I try to minimize them.