

Question Banks  
for  
*Positive Psychology: The Science of Well-Being*  
by  
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Note: This file contains two sets of questions for each chapter. One set is designed for *instructors* and includes approximately three short answer questions (with text excerpts relevant to answers) and ~12 multiple-choice questions. Another set is designed for students as a self-study tool and includes ~12 multiple-choice questions (short answer study questions are included in the book at the end of each chapter). Correct answers are colour coded in **violet**.

## Chapter 1: Describing the science of positive psychology

### Short answers

1. What is a third variable problem? What does this problem look like in correlational designs?  
In experimental designs?

- We cannot conclude a causal link between two things that are correlated because a ‘third variable’ may account for correlation—that third variable may cause both parts of the correlation. Even when we do not know what the potential third variables are, we know it is possible that they exist, and so we must avoid narrow causal interpretations of correlations.
- Experimental studies are also not completely immune from the third variable problem we discussed with the correlational approach. Experiments do a good job of ruling out some third variables, particularly those that participants would ‘bring to the study’ (like personality, gender and life histories) because random assignment makes experimental groups equivalent in these ways (things average out). However, in psychology, it is very difficult to directly manipulate many of the things we are interested in studying. Thoughts and feelings are internal, so we usually take an indirect route (e.g. showing a happy or sad video to manipulate mood). Also, when we manipulate one thing, we may unintentionally manipulate other things—those other things are like our dreaded third variables in the correlational approach.
- In experimental studies, these potential third variables are called confounds. The third variable is ‘confounded’ with what the experimenter intended to manipulate.

2. Why are less rigid but appreciative stances on human nature, and positive topics more descriptive of positive psychology than positive intention of psychologists, and positive ideology for human nature? Support your statement with relevant examples.

- However, ‘good intentions’ does not seem like the best way to define positive psychology. Many psychologists whose work does not seem to fit under the positive psychology umbrella still care deeply about improving the lives of others.

- If we define positive psychology as positive assumptions about human nature, we risk having positive psychology ‘disproven’. Analogies to other fields help underscore the issue; is it possible to falsify biology, chemistry, or economics in their entirety? No, even though prominent ideas in those fields have been revised over time. If positive psychology is defined by rigid assumptions about human nature, it is difficult for credible science to come from it. We do not want to produce easily dismissed or agenda-driven ‘evidence’.
- Thus, it seems healthy and useful that (positive) psychologists cultivate a sense of appreciation for human nature, but to do so with some flexibility, open-mindedness and lucidity. This need not make them different from all other psychologists, but it does seem a reasonable feature of positive psychology.
- In this vein, one way we can define the ‘positive’ in positive psychology is via its topics; positive psychology is about positive things. For example, positive psychology is about forgiveness rather than revenge, joy rather than sadness, cooperation rather than competition and resilience rather than defeat. Positive psychology seems to be about the positive poles in dichotomies such as these.

3. What is the ‘greater than zero’ analogy? Why is this an important feature of positive psychology?

- Greater than zero analogy: Positive psychology is not about bringing people from negative to 0, but, rather, focusing on what lies in the positive territory of this metaphorical number line (or literally interpreted as a scale of happiness). When we focus on terms or topics in the positive zone, it goes beyond word games, instead prompting new domains of study and application.

### Multiple choice

1. Positive psychology is *primarily* concerned with \_\_\_\_\_.  
a. happiness  
b. optimal human functioning  
c. reducing mental health problems  
d. self-help

e. seeing the world with 'rose coloured' glasses

Ans: B

2. What are common topics of study of mainstream psychology?

- a. Mental illness
- b. Maladaptive behaviour
- c. Irrationality
- d. Prejudice
- e. Aggression
- f. All of these

Ans: F

3. The greatest strength of positive psychology has been \_\_\_\_\_.

- a. its ability to rebalance psychology
- b. its lack of focus on the negative
- c. its ability to study fun subjects
- d. its optimistic approach to science
- e. its application to all fields of psychology
- f. its resemblance to self-help psychology

Ans: A

4. In his blog Data Colada, Nelson (2014) described the classic \_\_\_\_\_ as the phenomenon where people draw on their own behaviour when judging the behaviour of others.

- a. bias effect
- b. false consensus effect
- c. ego effect
- d. psychology effect

Ans: B

5. Positive psychologists typically consider \_\_\_\_\_ to know whether or not something is positive.

- a. habits, choice of career and relationships
- b. cognitive ability, personality and perception
- c. choices, values and subjective experiences
- d. mental health, social functioning and performance

Ans: C

6. Positive psychologists rely on \_\_\_\_\_ to understand people.

- a. strong opinions
- b. historical documents
- c. the self-help method
- d. the scientific method
- e. the humanistic method

Ans: D

7. In a longitudinal study by Harker and Keltner (2001), women who expressed more positive emotions in their photos were more likely to \_\_\_\_\_.

- a. be married by age 27
- b. score higher on the traits of affiliation and competence
- c. score low on the trait of negative emotionality
- d. All of these

Ans: D

8. What does the correlation coefficient describe?

- a. The causal direction of the association between two things
- b. The strength and direction of the association between two things
- c. The longitudinal association between two things
- d. All of these

Ans: B

9. A longitudinal study is \_\_\_\_\_.
- a. conducted over multiple points in time
  - b. synonymous to an experimental design
  - c. conducted with different age groups
  - d. the only way to infer causality

Ans: A

10. An important characteristic of an experimental manipulation is that \_\_\_\_\_.
- a. participants are randomly assigned to conditions
  - b. participants choose their own condition
  - c. participants are not assigned to any condition
  - d. there is only one condition

Ans: A

11. Why do we not have to worry about the causal direction of findings in an experiment?
- a. Because the experimental manipulation comes after the dependent variable
  - b. Because the outcome comes after the experimental manipulation
  - c. Because the dependent variable comes after the independent variable
  - d. Both because the outcome comes after the experimental manipulation and because the dependent variable comes after the independent variable
  - e. Both because the experimental manipulation comes after the dependent variable and because the dependent variable comes after the independent variable
  - f. None of these

Ans: D

12. What do we call a variable that is the outcome of a manipulation?
- a. An independent variable
  - b. A confound variable

- c. A random variable
- d. A dependent variable

Ans: D

## Chapter 2: Positive emotions

### Short answers

1. Describe the five most common appraisal dimensions. How are appraisal dimensions related to positive emotions? Support your statement with relevant examples.

- Is the event relevant to my goals or concerns? Is the event consistent or inconsistent with my goals or concerns? How certain am I? Is the event caused by myself, someone else or something else? Can I cope with or control the event?
- Positive emotions occur when events are appraised as relevant and consistent with goals.
- The other appraisal dimensions can further refine positive feelings into more specific emotional experiences
- Appraisals are not just about objective circumstances; they are interpretations that depend on the idiosyncratic goals, skills and knowledge of the individual making the appraisal.
- For example, pride involves a sense of personal control and responsibility, whereas awe is associated with a diminished sense of self and external causes (Shiota, Keltner, & Mossman, 2007). Each emotion has a recipe with a unique blend of different appraisals as ingredients.

2. What does the term ‘emotional expression’ imply and why are these expressions important? How do people typically express emotions? Support your statement with relevant examples.

- The term ‘expression’ implies that they reveal something about internal states.
- In this way, expressions help communicate those states to other people.
- Emotions can be expressed in vocalizations (sounds) by varying pitch and tone—even without speech, such as with sighs, giggles and grunts (Juslin & Laukka, 2003; Sauter, Eisner, Ekman, & Scott, 2010). Gestures and changes in posture can also signal emotions (Tracy & Robins, 2004), yet most research has focused on the face.
- For example, typical expressions of anger involve contracting the brow, and tightening muscles around the eyes and mouth.

3. What is the ‘duration neglect’ phenomenon? What results did Redelmeier and Kahneman (1996) find in their study of remembered pain of colonoscopy procedures?

- Remembering self pays little attention to time.
- When remembering experiences, moments are not created equally. Our memories depend particularly on the peak intensity and on how episodes ended.
- An hour after the procedure, patients rated the ‘total amount of pain experienced’. Objectively, patients who experienced longer procedures experienced more pain, because it lasted longer (see Figure 2.3). However, the study found that actual time was unrelated to patients’ ratings of ‘total pain’. Total pain ratings depended more on how the procedures ended (high or low pain) and how bad the very worst (peak) moment was.
- A follow-up study asked doctors to try making some colonoscopies last longer—creating objectively more pain—by keeping the camera relatively still in the rectum, and thus creating a mild ending to the procedure. Compared to participants who had regular, shorter and objectively less painful procedures, the experimental group with mild endings reported substantially less pain.

### Multiple choice

1. Through many repetitions, \_\_\_\_\_ tracks the ebb and flow of experience in people’s daily lives.

- a. the flow state method
- b. the experience sampling method
- c. the repetition method
- d. the correlational method

Ans: B

2. What do positive emotions promote?

- a. Exploration, creativity and sociability
- b. Healthy functioning
- c. Fewer negative emotions
- d. Mental health problems

- e. Both exploration, creativity and sociability and healthy functioning
- f. Both fewer negative emotions and mental health problems
- g. None of these

Ans: E

3. People are more sensitive to signs of threat because \_\_\_\_\_.
- a. threats produce long-lasting emotional states
  - b. threats quickly grab our attention
  - c. threats are processed at an unconscious level
  - d. threats are more easily remembered

Ans: B

- 4) Ekman and Frisen's (1971) research on facial expressions across all humans is limited because \_\_\_\_\_.
- a. they only studied people in European and North-American countries
  - b. they only took black and white photographs of participants' facial expressions
  - c. they did not take into account expressions of unpleasant emotions
  - d. They did not take into account more subtle physical expressions of pleasant emotions

Ans: D

- 5) Emotions \_\_\_\_\_, while moods are \_\_\_\_\_.
- a. occur in a few seconds or minutes; slower to change
  - b. are always conscious; often unconscious
  - c. dissipate in a few seconds or minutes; ambiguously caused
  - d. both occur in a few seconds or minutes; slower to change and are always conscious; often unconscious
  - e. Both occur in a few seconds or minutes; slower to change and dissipate in a few seconds or minutes; ambiguously caused
  - f. All of these

Ans: E

- 6) The dimensional perspective of emotions \_\_\_\_\_.  
a. describes emotions that have specific causes, are brief, and have automatic consequences  
b. does not have clear categorical boundaries for particular emotions  
c. only describes emotions that are low in intensity  
d. describes emotions along a spectrum of internal to external causes

Ans: B

- 7) The five components of emotions include \_\_\_\_\_.  
a. appraisals, physiological change, expressions, subjective experience and action tendencies  
b. intensity, duration, valence, cause and outcome  
c. joy, contentment, fear, disgust and sadness  
d. love, happiness, pride, sorrow and fear  
e. None of these

Ans: A

- 8) In \_\_\_\_\_, bodily functions like heart rate and electrodermal activity are measured in order to infer psychological processes.  
a. electroencephalography  
b. psychophysiology  
c. positron emission tomography  
d. neuropsychology

Ans: B

- 9) Positive psychologists have determined that the recognition of emotional expressions is \_\_\_\_\_.  
a. culture-specific  
b. universal  
c. more accurate for positive emotions

- d. more accurate for negative emotions
- e. None of these

Ans: E

10) \_\_\_\_\_ is distinct from \_\_\_\_\_ in the brain.

- a. Wanting; liking
- b. Wanting; addiction
- c. Cannabinoids; liking
- d. Opioids; liking
- e. All of these

Ans: A

11) The two-dimensional conceptual space where emotion terms are arranged is also called the \_\_\_\_\_.

- a. emotional arousal model
- b. circumplex
- c. subjective experience of emotions
- d. dimensional model of emotions

Ans: B

12) The Positive and Negative Affect Schedule measures \_\_\_\_\_.

- a. physiological and cognitive emotional activations
- b. motivations and subjective feelings
- c. low arousal pleasant and unpleasant affect
- d. aroused pleasant and aroused unpleasant affect

Ans: D

13) Studies have found that when rating current feelings, \_\_\_\_\_ are almost non-existent. However, when recalling those moments later, memories follow \_\_\_\_\_.

- a. self-related memories; the self
- b. positive emotions; high arousal positive emotions
- c. gender and cultural differences; stereotypes
- d. appraisals; beliefs

Ans: C

14) The motivational parts of emotions are also called \_\_\_\_\_.

- a. action tendencies
- b. appraisals
- c. subjective experiences
- d. basic emotions

Ans: A

15) The idea that positive emotions widen the scope of thoughts and behaviours comes from \_\_\_\_\_.

- a. circumplex model of emotions
- b. broaden and build model of positive emotions
- c. humanistic model of positive emotions
- d. basic emotion view
- e. dimensional model of emotions

Ans: B

Instructor Resource  
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