

# The *Quiz* Issue

If you're puzzled over how to create your best life, you've come to the right place. The first step is understanding the unique pieces of your inner world—your dreams, your needs, your triggers, your talents. The quizzes on the next 14 pages will shine a light on what makes you *you*, and offer personally tailored, expert advice for achieving your happiest self yet.



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# Where Do You Find

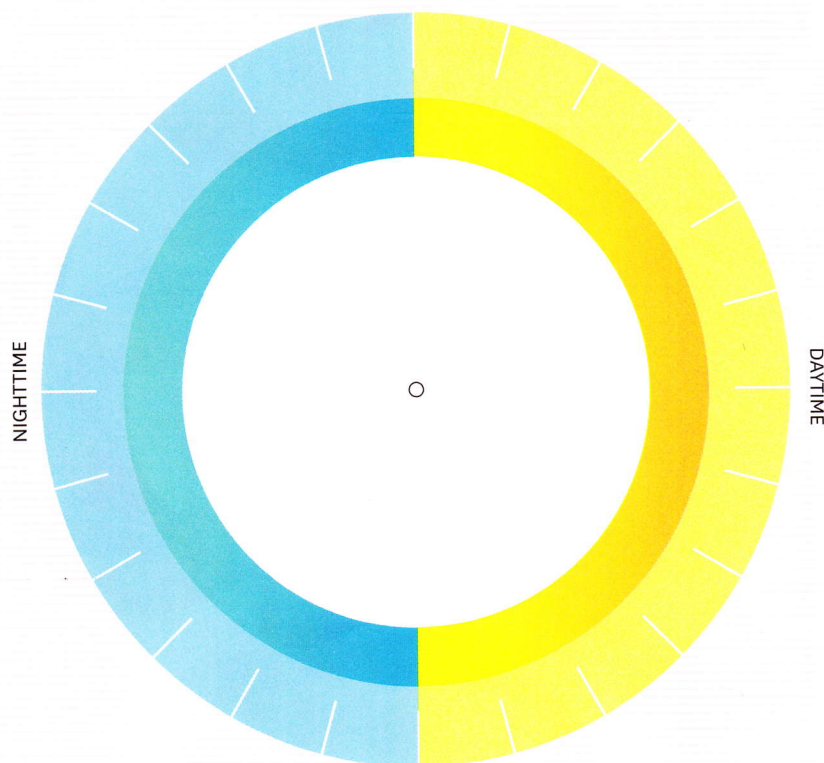


Can't remember the last time you did something just because it made you smile? This exercise will help you find room in your overloaded schedule for small but powerful doses of bliss.



## Step 1 Map a typical day.

In the circle below, create a pie chart that represents how you spend the 24 hours in an average day. (See sample at bottom of opposite page.) If you sleep eight hours, draw a slice that occupies one-third of the pie. Then calculate how much time you spend doing other things—working, caretaking, cooking, and so on. No need to be exact; rough estimates will do.



## Step 2 List what you love.

Complete each sentence with a different activity. Don't spend too much time thinking: Jot down the first answers that come to mind because those will typically be the most true.

- I could blow an entire rainy afternoon* \_\_\_\_\_
- When I was a kid, I used to love* \_\_\_\_\_
- I've always wanted to become really good at* \_\_\_\_\_
- If I could do one thing every day of my life, it would be* \_\_\_\_\_
- I can lose track of time when I'm* \_\_\_\_\_
- Nothing clears my head like* \_\_\_\_\_
- When I'm feeling drained, all I want to do is* \_\_\_\_\_
- I feel most connected to my body when I'm* \_\_\_\_\_
- In my daydreams, I imagine myself* \_\_\_\_\_
- I get a shot of energy when I* \_\_\_\_\_

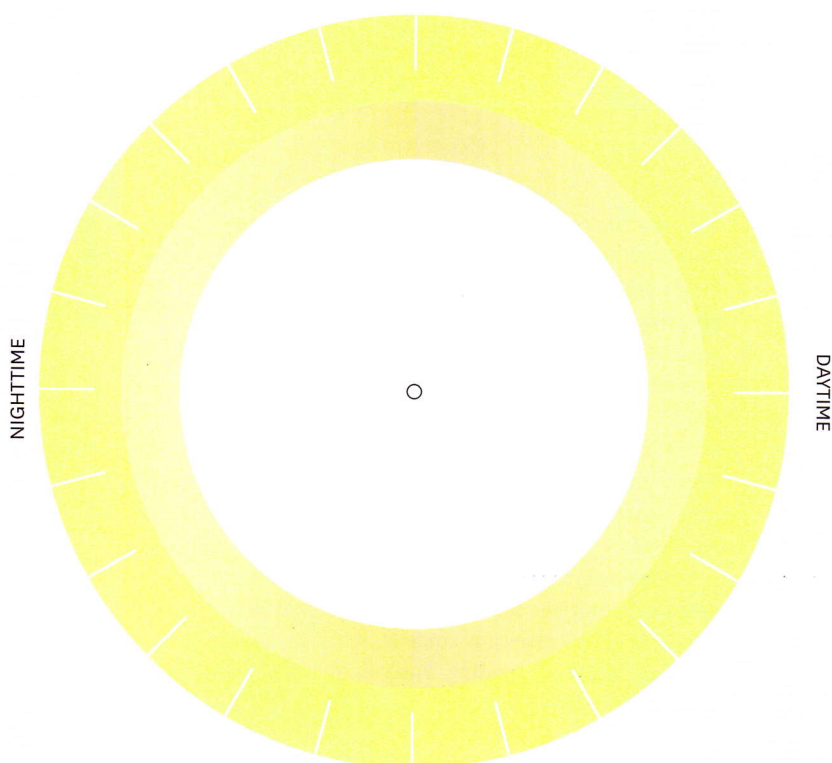
This exercise was developed by Alice D. Domar, PhD, a psychologist at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center in Boston and coauthor of *Live a Little!* (Crown).



### Step 3

## Pencil in fun.

Redraw your time pie, including at least a few activities from your list; some might not be practical on a daily basis, but others may be more doable than you think. Look back at your typical day and identify time spent on unrewarding or unnecessary activities (think *Celebrity Apprentice* and chores you could be delegating). Then redirect those minutes to activities that make you light up.

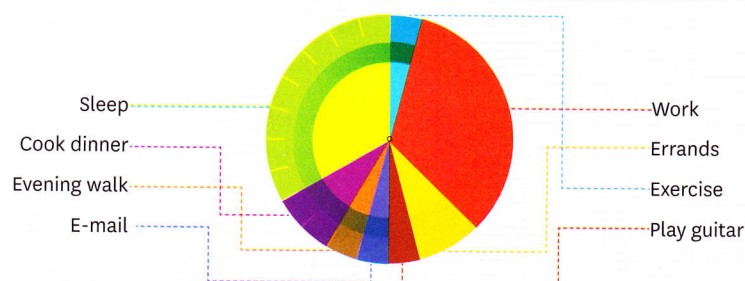


### Step 4

## Tell someone.

Call a trusted friend and share the details of your new schedule. Explain what you intend to do less of and what you aim to do more of, and ask her to check in with you from time to time. Studies have shown that people who share their resolutions are more motivated and more likely to achieve their goals.

SAMPLE PIE CHART



## Pop Quiz!

# Half Empty or Half Full?

*Your perspective can change everything.*

*Imagine this scenario: Your boss calls you at 10 A.M. and asks you to come to his office for a 2 P.M. meeting. The company rumor mill has been forecasting terminations, and now you're anxious. Which option best describes how you'd react?*

### Option 1

You make a list of the people who would be let go before you, based on seniority and job performance. Then you prepare to defend your work if need be.

### Option 2

You try to identify what you may have done wrong recently. Then you invite a close coworker out for coffee and speculate about the meeting.

### Option 3

You proceed with your day, but in the back of your mind you think about all the things you dislike about your job, until a pink slip doesn't seem so terrible.

### Option 4

You spend the morning sending out feelers to your contacts in the field. Taking action and knowing you have other prospects makes you feel better.

**If you chose option 3, congratulations—it demonstrates two hallmarks of healthy optimists.**

First is the ability to stop negativity from hijacking your thoughts. Second, and almost as important, is how this is done: The person in option 3 convinces herself she'll be okay even if she is fired. She has her talents and self-worth firmly in mind, which can make a big difference in a meeting with a superior.

If optimism isn't currently your default, the good news is that it's a perspective you can cultivate. When you feel fear rising, try these two steps: **1. Fake a sunny attitude.** Your brain gets feedback from your face—so if you force yourself to smile, you may actually feel better. **2. Identify all possible silver linings.** Imagine you have the "righting reflex" of a cat: No matter what, you'll always land on your feet.

*This exercise was created by Susan C. Vaughan, MD, author of Half Empty, Half Full: Understanding the Psychological Roots of Optimism (Mariner).*



4. *I have a circle of close friends and family who love to talk about using intuition. In my social circle, it's not taboo to sound "woo-woo."*

Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
1	2	3	4	5

5. *I'm not exactly conscious of my emotional state. In fact, I couldn't tell you what I'm feeling right now. (But if you really need to know, no problem—I'll just call my therapist.)*

Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
5	4	3	2	1

6. *I breathe deeply, and not just when I'm making prank phone calls. I allow my belly to expand with every inhale, then exhale every bit of air in my lungs. It feels awesome.*

Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
1	2	3	4	5

7. *I know exactly what I'm feeling in every part of my body: the beating of my heart, the tension in my muscles, the inner workings of my intestines—ask me anything, I'll tell you.*

Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
1	2	3	4	5

8. *If you want me to understand something, you'd better explain it to me in words. I'm so verbal, I need spoken instructions even for things like burping.*

Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
5	4	3	2	1

9. *If I ever started talking about my "inner voice," my friends and family would hoot as if I'd just dropped my pants.*

Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
5	4	3	2	1

10. *I can describe my emotional state in precise, accurate detail. In fact, I often do just that—to my loved ones, journal, pets, and the occasional houseplant.*

Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
1	2	3	4	5

## ANSWER KEY

Add all the numbers you circled, then find your score below.

### 10 to 18: Get Physical

Yes, you actually do have an inner voice. You just don't know how to hear it because you've been taught to pay attention to other voices—belonging to friends, authority figures, society itself—while going "deaf" to yourself. You won't be able to leap straight from this state to extreme intuitive awareness. Instead, you'll start by becoming aware of your physical sensations. Paying attention to them will usher you into the realm of sensitivity to emotion, which in turn will lead you to intuition.

Learning to notice what you're feeling in your body begins with deep, relaxed breathing. Set aside five minutes a day to go

somewhere quiet (you don't have to sit still; you can walk around, preferably outside). Focus on "belly breath," allowing your abdomen to expand as you inhale, keeping your shoulders relaxed. This isn't just a formality: It kicks your entire nervous system out of "fight or flight" and into "rest and relax." Give your body an attention scan, starting with your feet and moving upward. Notice all physical sensations (temperature, tingling, aching, itching, whatever) without judging them or trying to change them. When you can do this adeptly, retake the quiz and see if your score qualifies you to move on.

### 19 to 26: Become an Emotion Sensor

You listen to your inner voice only in moments of extremity: when you're feeling fear, pain, and perhaps occasionally joy. You can make the voice "louder" by learning to observe and describe your emotions, even if at this point you perceive them only as vague, unnameable feelings.

For starters, whatever you're feeling, assign it to one or more of these four categories: sad, mad, glad,

scared. Next, feel for the location of the emotion in your body. It's probably not in your left little toe or your earlobes; emotion tends to live in our larger parts: arms, legs, head, torso. Be specific about where you sense the feeling, and describe what it's like physically. How big is it? What color? Can it move, or is it a lifeless lump? These questions will seem odd at first, but you'll find that you can answer them, and ▶





as you do, your understanding of your emotions will become clearer and more informative. Don't fight or judge your

emotions—just let them be. Then retake the quiz, and see if your score is high enough to move on.

## 27 to 34: Talk to the Thought

You sometimes hear your inner voice but are still prone to deafness—especially under stress. To become more intuitive, first “drop into” your body, as explained above, feeling all physical sensations. Then describe your emotions in detail (writing them down may help). Identify the most intense emotion you're feeling; allow it to fill your attention, without judging or censoring.

Next, identify the thought that's driving your physical and emotional sensations. For example, if you feel neck stiffness that connects to dread, it may be driven by thoughts such as *I have so much to do* or *I'm not good enough*. Or your heart may be buoyant,

lifted by thoughts such as *I'm in love!* or *Gelato is excellent!* Whatever the emotion, there's an associated thought. Find it.

Holding this thought in mind, relax even more and feel for something even deeper. If you get loose enough, you'll hear another voice, very still and small, telling you the truth. If you're feeling unworthy, it may say, *No, kid, you're actually pretty awesome*. If you're hungry, it might suggest, *Let's get gelato!* Its instructions aren't always lofty, but they always cause relaxation, a feeling of *ah!* Once you've learned to hear this voice, requiz yourself to see if you're ready to continue.

## 35 to 42: Take Ten

You're very intuitive, but you could dial up your inner voice even more clearly. Set aside ten minutes a day to consciously practice. Sit somewhere peaceful with a notebook and pen. Drop into your body and identify your emotions as described above. Find the thought behind your dominant

emotion. Write it down.

If your dominant emotion is glad, elaborate on the thoughts that cause it. Write about each wonderful facet of love, or gelato, or whatever else is pleasing you. Luxuriate in enjoyment. That's your inner voice talking.

If the emotion is unpleasant,

consider that your thoughts may be erroneous (*I'm not good enough*). Feel for the truth (*I may be pretty awesome*).

When the thought is accurate, your inner voice will give you appropriate instructions. Anger or fear signifies that you need to set boundaries, get distance from something unhealthy, or stand

up for yourself. If you feel sad, your intuition will tell you to rest and lead you to people who can comfort you.

Write down your ideas about what you can do to improve your situation. Then follow your inner voice's advice. It will lead you from bad to good, from good to awesome. Requiz and continue.

## 43 to 50: Loud and Clear

The force is strong with you; your intuitive skills are sharp. But of course you know that. Hearing your inner voice even more clearly is just a matter of dedicated practice—and you know that, too.

In addition to your ten minutes a day of conscious listening, as described above, begin dropping into your body and emotions, then tracking

your thoughts, then feeling for the truth beneath the thoughts, every chance you get. Planes, trains, and automobiles are classic practice arenas. You can also practice while watching Elmo for the 7,000th time with your preschooler, or while having coffee with a friend as she runs through her list of gratuitous worries—opportunities abound!

## THE PAYOFF

As you improve your ability to pay attention to your core instincts, you become your own free psychic. You can ask your inner voice the same questions you'd blurt out if you went to a professional clairvoyant on a lark: “What should I do about my career?” “Does Bob really

love me?” “Should I write a novel or just start drinking?” Your intuition won't always be right, but very often it will be. And that's enough motivation to keep parsing the cocktail party in your head, to focus on the one voice whispering your name.

*Martha Beck's latest book is Finding Your Way in a Wild New World (Free Press).*



## Pop Quiz!

# What's Your Best Problem-Solving Approach?

*The answer may be hidden in your imagination.*

**Part 1:** Think of a dilemma you're currently facing.

Now quickly push it aside and switch mental gears: Imagine you're walking through a park when you come to a hole in the ground blocking your path. In the space below, sketch a scene that illustrates how you manage to continue on your way.

"When you draw yourself solving a problem, you call on your creative strengths," says Lynn Kapitan, PhD, therapist and executive editor of the academic journal *Art Therapy*. "Instead of thinking, *I can't do this*, you imagine what you *can* do—and realize you have strategies hidden within."



**Part 2:** The way you drew yourself getting past the hole—whether on a tree-branch bridge or in a hot-air balloon—may give you new perspective on getting past the

obstacle you're facing in real life. Kapitan suggests asking yourself these simple questions about your picture:

**Q:** How big is the hole? If it's more like a ditch than a canyon, maybe your real-world problem isn't as severe as you thought.

**Q:** Did you use the environment around you to get across the hole? If so, you might benefit from the support of friends, family, or a counselor as

you tackle your problem. If you relied on yourself, try to identify any coping skills you take for granted (the ability to stay levelheaded, for example, or to find humor in any situation); they might serve you now.

**Q:** Did you draw your picture quickly? If you were guided by instinct,

you may prefer to trust your gut. But if you took time to think, you might want to learn more about your problem before you proceed.

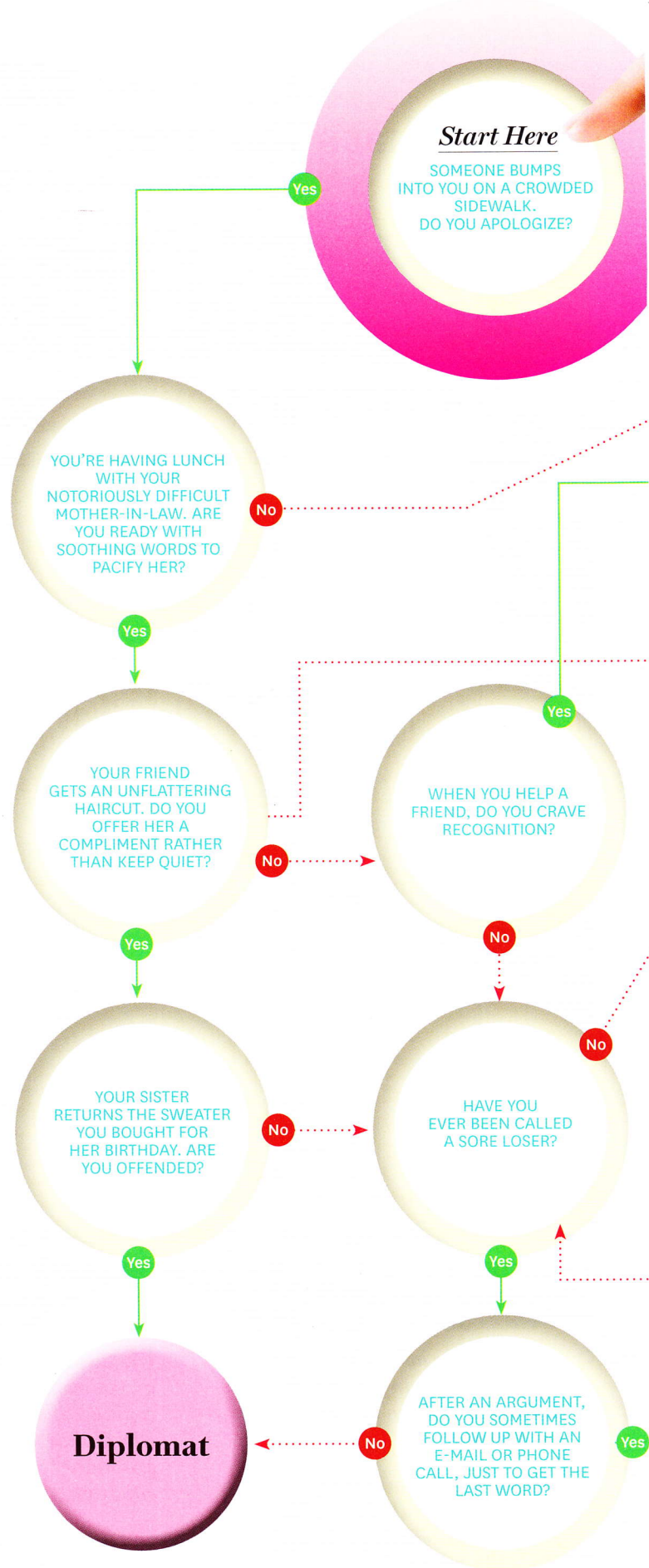
**Q:** Did you end up taking a risk, a leap of faith? Bold action just might move you closer to your goal.



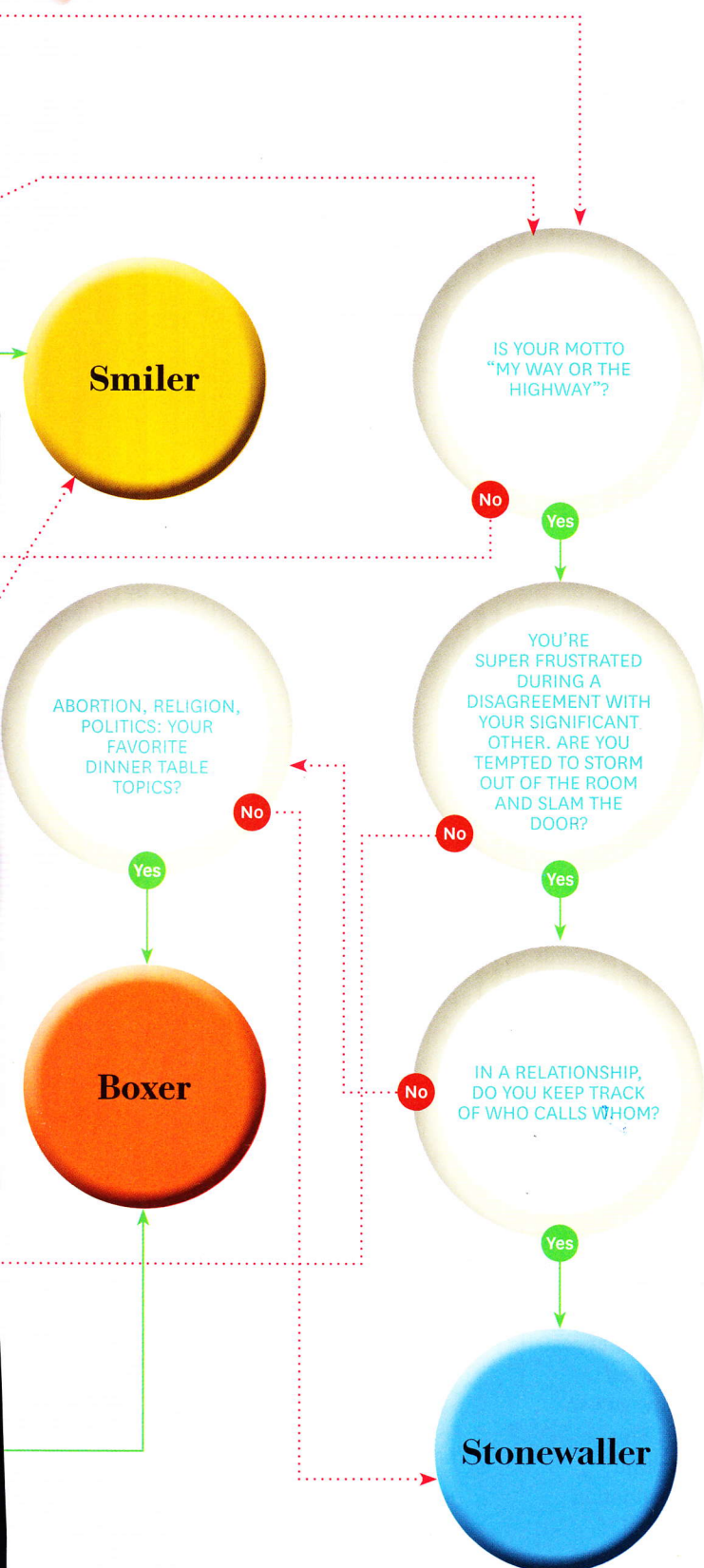
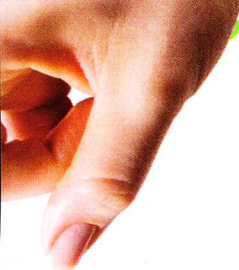


# Style?

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## If You're a Boxer

You thrive on accomplishment, so you tend to see conflict as a winner-takes-all competition, even if it means resorting to jabs or low blows when tensions spike.

**RULES OF ENGAGEMENT:** When emotions run high, avoid fueling the fight with generalizations ("You're never there for me") or long-buried slights ("You barely talked to me at last year's party"). Recasting the point you want to make as a "feeling" statement ("I felt undervalued when you forgot my birthday") will help your opponent not get defensive. But if you sense that you're getting too heated, suggest tabling the conversation until you've had a chance to cool down.

## If You're a Smiler

Cucumbers have nothing on your cool facade—even when you're hurt or stressed, your smile doesn't waver. But people-pleasing can be a dead end: Your opponent doesn't know what you truly want, and you're mad at yourself for saying one thing when you mean another.

**RULES OF ENGAGEMENT:** Stating what you really think may feel abrasive at first, but it grows easier with time. If you're flustered by a request, resist a knee-jerk assent. Instead, use a set answer—"Let me check my calendar first"—so you can respond after giving it some thought. If you feel pressured to bow to someone's opinion, an empathetic statement ("I understand where you're coming from") can placate an opponent without compromising your stance.

## If You're a Diplomat

You're a great negotiator and a crackerjack problem solver. During conflicts, your first impulse is to smooth things over ("If you're upset that I canceled our lunch, why don't we get together tomorrow instead?"). Your quick-fix knack is noble, but it can prompt you to act before you fully understand the situation—or how you feel about it.

**RULES OF ENGAGEMENT:** To combat your instinct for action, practice becoming an attentive listener. Rather than proposing a fix, ask the person, "How can we come up with a solution that's good for both of us?" To show that you're listening, focus on your body language: Shoulders back and down conveys receptivity to others.

## If You're a Stonewaller

You tend to think before speaking, so you're less likely to say things you regret. But you're also prone to holding your tongue in the hope that others will read your mind; when they don't, you get irritated.

**RULES OF ENGAGEMENT:** Before you head into a tense situation, draw up a communication cheat sheet, listing your needs ("I wish Liz would call me more often") and how you'll convey them ("I'll say, 'Liz, I feel hurt when you don't make an equal effort to see me'"). When you see your opportunity to speak up, recall the cheat sheet. If the thought of direct confrontation makes you shudder, talk to the person while doing an activity, like walking or driving, that doesn't require eye contact. Side-by-side conversations foster more openness.





# How Much



# Can You Take?

Understanding your personal breaking point is the first line of defense against losing your cool.

Most of us don't recognize the signs of stress until they've become too much to handle. But registering what each level feels like by building a stress meter can help you let off steam at a point well below "she's ready to blow!"

## Plot Your Stressors

For each of the seven levels in the meter at right, choose one word that describes your stress in increasing degrees of intensity (if you get stuck, look in the word bank, next page, for suggestions). With zero representing complete calm, plot your words in order of rising stress.

Next, think of an event from your past that sparked each emotion—a fight with your mother that left you frustrated, a passive-aggressive e-mail from a coworker that made you anxious, an argument with your partner that pushed you over the edge. What was your physical response in these situations? Were you pacing, sweating, clenching your jaw, biting your nails, muttering to yourself? Jot the details on your scale next to the word that describes how you felt.

Take a minute to think back on all seven of your stress scenarios and identify the point at which you felt yourself losing control. Now go two levels below that: This is your new action point. When a stressful situation escalates to this level, you'll know you need to find a release.

WRITE YOUR EMOTIONS HERE

7

6

5

4

3

2

1

0



WRITE YOUR FEELINGS HERE

## The Language of Stress

### High

*Frazzled*

*Jumpy*

*Distraught*

*Outraged*

*Infuriated*

*Attacked*

*Overwrought*

*Overwhelmed*

*Shell-shocked*

*Furious*

*Betrayed*

*Steaming*

*Seething*

*Enraged*

### Medium

*Tense*

*Jittery*

*Worked up*

*Frustrated*

*Aggravated*

*Strained*

*Exasperated*

*Dismayed*

*Bullied*

*Perturbed*

*Ticked*

*Anxious*

*Unnerved*

*Distressed*

### Low

*Worried*

*Irked*

*Upset*

*Flustered*

*Displeased*

*Disheartened*

*Disappointed*

*Troubled*

*Confused*

*Irritated*

*Bothered*

*Antsy*

*Disturbed*

*Annoyed*

## A Calming Effect

YOUR THREE-STEP GUIDE FOR FINDING PEACE.

### 1. Escape.

Remove yourself from the situation. If you're in the middle of a conversation, excuse yourself and spend a minute taking deep breaths in a quiet space (a bathroom break can be the perfect time-out). If there's nowhere to run—say, if you're in a meeting—distance yourself with an internal time-out. Picture yourself in a suit of armor with the person's words bouncing off you. It sounds silly, but it works.

### 2. Seek solutions.

Venting may feel good in the moment, but it only fuels tension. So when you call a friend to discuss frustrations, rather than rehash things endlessly, tell her up front that you want advice on how to work through your stress. Try to spend the majority of your conversation coming up with a problem-solving strategy.

### 3. Find a release.

A quick outburst—like punching a pillow or shouting—won't make a lasting impact on your stress. Instead, choose an activity with a defined beginning and end, such as a yoga class or a long hike. Think of it as a physical escape from your stressors; tell yourself, *By the end of this, I will feel reinvigorated.*

*This exercise was created by Ronald Potter-Efron, PhD, who has written ten books on anger management. His latest is Healing the Angry Brain (New Harbinger).*



# What Do You Really



## in a Relationship?

Research suggests that couples must share at least three essential qualities to feel fulfilled in a partnership. They are the nonnegotiables, the must-haves—and they're different for everyone. This quiz is designed to identify your bedrock emotional needs, even those tucked away in your subconscious.



Rate the following statements based on this scale:

- 1 Not at all true
- 2 Somewhat true
- 3 Mostly true
- 4 Very true

1. I can usually intuit what others are feeling.

1 2 3 4

2. The truth may sting, but ignorance is never bliss.

1 2 3 4

3. I'm big on hugs and hand-holding; I like to connect through touch.

1 2 3 4

4. I appreciate a good, rousing pep talk now and again.

1 2 3 4

5. I'm the kind of person who can walk away from an argument before I lose my cool.

1 2 3 4

6. In a perfect world, my partner would notice when I wear a new dress.

1 2 3 4

7. I enjoy dishing about all the details of my day—the good, the disappointing, and the funny.

1 2 3 4

8. A good sex life is a necessary ingredient in a relationship.

1 2 3 4

9. I think of partners as teammates because so much of a relationship is teamwork.

1 2 3 4

10. "Carpe diem" is my mantra.

1 2 3 4

11. When someone is upset, I first make sure she or he feels heard.

1 2 3 4

12. If I had a free afternoon, I'd rather spend it with someone than by myself.

1 2 3 4

13. I need my partner to take my side when I'm upset.

1 2 3 4

14. If I ran into an ex-lover, I'd feel wrong not telling my partner.

1 2 3 4

### Pop Quiz!

## Could Your Dreams Use a Wake-Up Call?

On this graph, plot seven things you fantasize about accomplishing someday, considering both how important the goal is to you and how easy it would be to achieve.

EASY TO ACHIEVE

VERY IMPORTANT

LESS IMPORTANT



15. Before I tackle a troubling problem, I find it helpful to vent and seek feedback.

1 2 3 4

16. I jump at the opportunity to do favors; tomorrow I could be the one who needs help.

1 2 3 4

17. When my girlfriends and I get together, the conversation usually turns to sex at some point.

1 2 3 4

18. I genuinely enjoy taking care of others—friends, pets, even plants.

1 2 3 4

19. Ideally, my partner would know me better than anyone else.

1 2 3 4

20. I tend to wait until the last minute to commit to plans and invitations.

1 2 3 4

21. In a household, it's important that everyone has clearly defined responsibilities.

1 2 3 4

22. I like to make a big deal of my friends' victories, large and small.

1 2 3 4

23. I'm quick to admit when I've overreacted.

1 2 3 4

24. Learning a new skill or trying out a new recipe gives me a high.

1 2 3 4

## Answer Key

**SCORING:** Add your numbers for each group of questions below, and write down the totals; your highest scores represent the things you truly need from a partner. Then read on for advice from therapist, researcher, and relationship expert Terri L. Orbuch, PhD, on how to use this information to improve the state of your union—and if you're single, to find a mate who values the same qualities you do.

Add questions **1, 7, and 12.**

This is your **companionship** score. \_\_\_\_\_

Add questions **10, 20, and 24.**

This is your **spontaneity** score. \_\_\_\_\_

Add questions **13, 15, and 18.**

This is your **emotional support** score. \_\_\_\_\_

Add questions **9, 16, and 21.**

This is your **teamwork** score. \_\_\_\_\_

Add questions **5, 11, and 23.**

This is your **communication** score. \_\_\_\_\_

Add questions **2, 14, and 19.**

This is your **trust and intimacy** score. \_\_\_\_\_

Add questions **4, 6, and 22.**

This is your **affirmation** score. \_\_\_\_\_

Add questions **3, 8, and 17.**

This is your **passion** score. \_\_\_\_\_

## If you're attached...

Your relationship may already meet all your needs. But if it doesn't, you can cultivate the elements that are key to your happiness. Here are a few tips to get started.

**Companionship:** Set aside ten minutes a day to talk about anything under the sun except work, the household, and kids. In my research, I've been following 373 couples for more than 22 years, and one of the traits shared by the happy couples is familiarity with each other's inner worlds. The ten-minute rule allows you to get reacquainted with each other.

**Spontaneity:** As counterintuitive as it sounds, schedule one new activity each week for the next month. (They can be as small as meeting for lunch on a workday or going to see a foreign film rather than a Hollywood blockbuster.) Once you're in the habit of breaking routine, your spontaneity will become...spontaneous.

**Emotional support:** Communication is key here, because men typically offer what psychologists call instrumental support—advice and resolutions—while women prefer empathetic feedback. If you're not getting the kind of help you need, speak up. Be clear about what's helpful and what isn't, and don't hesitate to provide reminders and coaching along the way.

**Teamwork:** Sit down with a pen and paper, list all the tasks and chores each of you does, then redistribute them in a way that feels equitable. This exercise isn't really about who does the dishes and who does laundry; it's about creating a sense of fairness, respect, and appreciation.

**Communication:** If you aren't able to express your feelings verbally, try writing them down

on paper or in an e-mail. It may be easier—and your partner may "hear" you for the first time in a long time.

**Trust and intimacy:** Sometimes you can change the course of your relationship simply by changing your own behavior, because certain actions inspire reciprocity. Research shows this is true for self-disclosure: If you want to build trust and intimacy, share your deepest secrets with your partner, and he'll likely respond at the same level.

**Affirmation:** The law of reciprocity works for affirmation, too: Shower him with compliments and loving gestures, and after about a week, you should start receiving them in return.

**Passion:** Rekindling your romance can be as simple as holding hands, kissing, dancing, giving foot rubs: Physical contact stimulates the release of oxytocin, a neurochemical basis of love and bonding.

## If you're single...

One of the most common reasons people choose the wrong partner is that they don't really know themselves. (It's nearly impossible to find someone capable of understanding and respecting your deepest vulnerabilities when you aren't clear about them, either.) We can become infatuated with a mate for a variety of reasons and idealize that person for months or even years. But eventually the incompatibilities become apparent, and we may fall out of love. In fact, it's often the qualities that attracted us in the first place that ultimately drive us away.

Identifying your relationship values—the ones that could lead to lasting love—is the first, crucial step toward finding someone who shares them. As early as the first few dates, you'll see clues that indicate those values. Does he look into your eyes, sit close to you, take your arm? This kind of contact signals confidence and a need for connection, both of which bode well for a passionate relationship. Does he comment on your appearance? (A sign that he appreciates affirmation.) When you talk about a dilemma, does he sympathize? (A show of emotional support.) Do you go on interesting, creative dates? (Spontaneity.) Does he talk about his ex-partners with respect? Is he reliable? Does he consistently think about you when making decisions? (All measures of trustworthiness.)

How he manages unexpected stressors (even something as minor as a mishandled restaurant reservation) can hint at his ability to communicate. The depth of his conversation can reveal his need for companionship. And his willingness to do favors for friends and colleagues can indicate his ability to be a team player.

When you find yourself falling for someone new, try to look beyond the traits that seem sexiest at the moment (his charm, for instance, or ambition, or love of travel). Ask yourself: Are the qualities that I most admire in this person very different from my own? If so, they might not seem as appealing in two years. Choose a mate for the traits that will make him a good partner now and down the road.

Cultivating goals of different sizes and durations will help you fulfill them, says M.J. Ryan, author of *This Year I Will...* "Big dreams give you something high to aim toward, so you're pulled far into the future," she says. "But when you set out to do something small and you succeed, you prove to yourself that you're capable. That gives you fuel to accomplish bigger goals." Are all your dreams clustered in one part of the graph? Look again. If your goals are mostly long-term, try to break them down into more immediate challenges. If they're mostly short-term, look for similarities: They may all be pointing to something big.





How



Are  
You to  
You?

When it comes to compassion, research suggests that most people have an easier time dishing it out than turning it inward. Yet studies have linked self-compassion to lower anxiety and depression, as well as more optimism, better relationships, and greater life satisfaction overall. To find out how kind to yourself you are, read the statements here and fill in the blanks with whatever comes to mind first. This quiz is for your eyes only, so be as honest as possible.



1. After indulging in a second slice of cheesecake at a party, I tell myself \_\_\_\_\_
2. When my boss asks to speak with me, I'm almost certain that \_\_\_\_\_
3. When I lose my temper with someone I love—my significant other, my child, my mother—I find myself thinking \_\_\_\_\_
4. When friends ask me to pick the restaurant for girls' night out and then dislike the food, I think \_\_\_\_\_
5. When I try on a new bathing suit and look in the dressing room mirror, my first thought is \_\_\_\_\_
6. If I do something silly in front of someone I'm trying to impress, I say to myself \_\_\_\_\_
7. When a good friend criticizes what I consider one of my worst flaws, I think \_\_\_\_\_

Now look at each statement and circle anything you wrote that's self-critical. If you get stuck deciding whether something is critical, imagine a friend saying it to herself—would you tell her she's beating up on herself? Three or fewer circles show that you treat yourself with care and concern. If your answers skew negative—four or more circles—you're low on self-compassion. Three tips to give it a boost:

### Challenge Negative Thoughts

Interrogating your self-criticism can stop it from ballooning. When you think, *I'll never fit into my skinny jeans again after*

eating a cupcake, ask, *Is that really true?* Your instinctive answer might be yes, but keep pushing—*Does one cupcake really mean that I have zero chance of losing weight?* Self-critical thoughts can be stubborn—some of them may be hard to recast at first, but any crack in absolutism encourages perspective.

### Channel Your Compassion Adviser

Think of someone who embodies kindness and empathy, whether it's Mother Teresa or the aunt who always brought you chicken soup when you were sick. Unload your critical thoughts

to this person—aloud. Now imagine you are that empathetic person—how would you respond? Say those words as well.

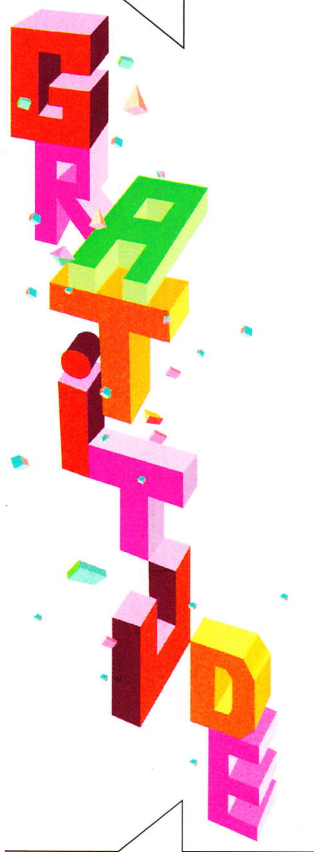
### Write It Out

If an event triggers a serious bout of self-criticism, write down the fears and concerns that have been stirred up. According to a University of Texas researcher, writing is not only a great way to ease emotional distress but also a proven method for bolstering a positive outlook. An added bonus: Writing out your troubles may allow you to recognize—and prepare for—the situations that provoke your harshest inner critic.

*This exercise was created by Jean Fain, a Harvard Medical School-affiliated psychotherapist and author of The Self-Compassion Diet (Sounds True).*



# Is There Enough



## in Your Life?

As Oprah has famously said, “The single greatest thing you can do to change your life today would be to start being grateful for what you have right now.” Rate the following statements to discover how much you appreciate your blessings, big and small.

- 1 Not at all true
- 2 Somewhat true
- 3 Mostly true
- 4 Very true

1. I have always been a morning person.

1 2 3 4

2. Before a friend leaves on a trip, I call to say bon voyage.

1 2 3 4

3. Every year I donate what I can to my favorite charity.

1 2 3 4

4. If I got passed over for a promotion, I'd take comfort in the fact that I at least had a job.

1 2 3 4

5. I make wishes on shooting stars.

1 2 3 4

6. If a good song comes on the radio, I'll sing along—even if I'm stuck in traffic and running late.

1 2 3 4

7. I'm known for writing cards and e-mails that tell loved ones how much they mean to me.

1 2 3 4

8. I feel that life's too precious to waste time sweating the small stuff.

1 2 3 4

9. Decisiveness is one of my most dominant traits.

1 2 3 4

10. I tend to get emotional at milestone events like births, graduations, and weddings.

1 2 3 4

11. When I get a clean bill of health, I feel like doing something small to celebrate.

1 2 3 4

12. I want my obituary to read “She lived every day to the fullest.”

1 2 3 4

13. I usually notice the little things around me—like the smell of bread outside a bakery or the color of the light at dusk.

1 2 3 4

14. I'm a big believer in thank-you notes.

1 2 3 4

15. I try to meet up with members of my family on a regular basis, just to see what's new.

1 2 3 4

### Answer Key

Add the numbers you selected for each statement except **1, 5, and 9**. (Those three statements are “fillers,” designed to minimize subconscious bias in your responses.)

#### 12 to 32 points

You aren't focused on the good that life has to offer—perhaps because you're distracted by anxiety, or feeling overwhelmed by the bad. But giving thanks can be a powerful force against troubling emotions. Once a week, jot down as many positive things that happened in the past seven days as you can—from a kind compliment to a good night's sleep. And make sure to include at least three brand-new entries each week. Research shows that people who keep gratitude journals feel happier and more optimistic about the future than those who don't.

#### 33 to 37 points

You're thankful for the big stuff, like family and friends, but don't always notice the smaller gifts. Try starting an appreciation piggy bank. Quarters represent people. Dimes are experiences (such as the first bite of a juicy peach). Nickels are career and finances (an exciting assignment). Pennies are wild cards (your new haircut). Once a week, empty your change purse, and as you deposit each coin, name a blessing in its category. This isn't exact accounting: Some weeks you'll have fewer dimes than memorable experiences. The idea is to spot the positives in various pockets of your life.

#### 38 to 48 points

No matter your life's circumstances, you regularly take time to reflect on what you have and to make sure your loved ones know how much they mean to you. All that gratitude will do you good: Research suggests that an appreciative mentality correlates with stronger relationships, a greater sense of satisfaction, even better health.

This exercise was adapted from the *Appreciation Scale*, by Nancy Fagley, PhD, associate professor of psychology at Rutgers University, and psychologist Mitchel Adler, PsyD.

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