

5.2 Positive Psychology

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

Total: 11 marks

Objective

Build the skills to answer exam questions on **positive psychology** 积极心理学.

You must be able to:

- state what positive psychology studies and why it emerged
- describe **subjective well-being** 主观幸福感 and how it is measured
- explain **hedonic adaptation** 享乐适应 and the **relative** nature of comparison
- name factors reliably associated with well-being

1 Worked examples

Study these first. Each one shows the method for a task used later.

■ What it studies

Positive psychology studies the conditions of flourishing —well-being, strengths, meaning —rather than only disorder. It arose because psychology's evidence base had been built largely on what goes wrong.

■ Subjective well-being

Usually measured as **life satisfaction** plus the balance of positive to negative affect, by self-report. The measure is subjective by design, which is both its point and its main methodological weakness.

■ Hedonic adaptation and comparison

People adapt to improved circumstances, so a gain raises well-being temporarily and then fades. Judgments are also **relative**: satisfaction depends on comparison with others and with one's own past.

■ What is associated with well-being

Close relationships, meaningful activity, health, and a degree of autonomy show reliable associations. Income is associated with well-being strongly at low levels and much more weakly once basic needs are met.

2 Practice

2.1 State what subjective well-being measures. [2]

2.2 Explain hedonic adaptation and one consequence for policy or personal planning. [2]

2.3 A person's satisfaction falls after their neighbours' incomes rise, though their own is unchanged.

(a) Name the property of judgment involved. [1]

(b) State what this shows about well-being measures. [1]

3 Exam-style questions

3.1 The relationship between income and well-being is [1]

- **A** strong at all levels
 - **B** strong at low income and much weaker once needs are met
 - **C** absent
 - **D** negative
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3.2 The main methodological weakness of subjective well-being measures is that they are [1]

- **A** too long
 - **B** self-reported
 - **C** physiological
 - **D** unreliable across time
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3.3 A government proposes to raise national well-being by increasing average income.

(a) State one limitation of the proposal. [1]

(b) Suggest one alternative target and justify it.

[2]

4 Go further

- work through the **5.2 Positive Psychology** lesson on the **Learn** page;
- read the **Mental and Physical Health** section of the AP Psychology handout on the **Know** page.

Solutions

2.1 life satisfaction plus the balance of positive to negative affect, by self-report.

2.2 people adapt to improved circumstances so gains fade; so a one-off improvement raises well-being only temporarily.

2.3 (a) relative comparison. (b) reported well-being depends on the comparison group, not only on absolute conditions.

3.1 B. the association is strong at low income and weakens once basic needs are met.

3.2 B. the measure depends on what people report about themselves.

3.3 (a) hedonic adaptation and relative comparison mean average income gains may not raise well-being much. (b) target social connection or autonomy at work, because these show reliable associations with well-being and are less subject to adaptation than income.