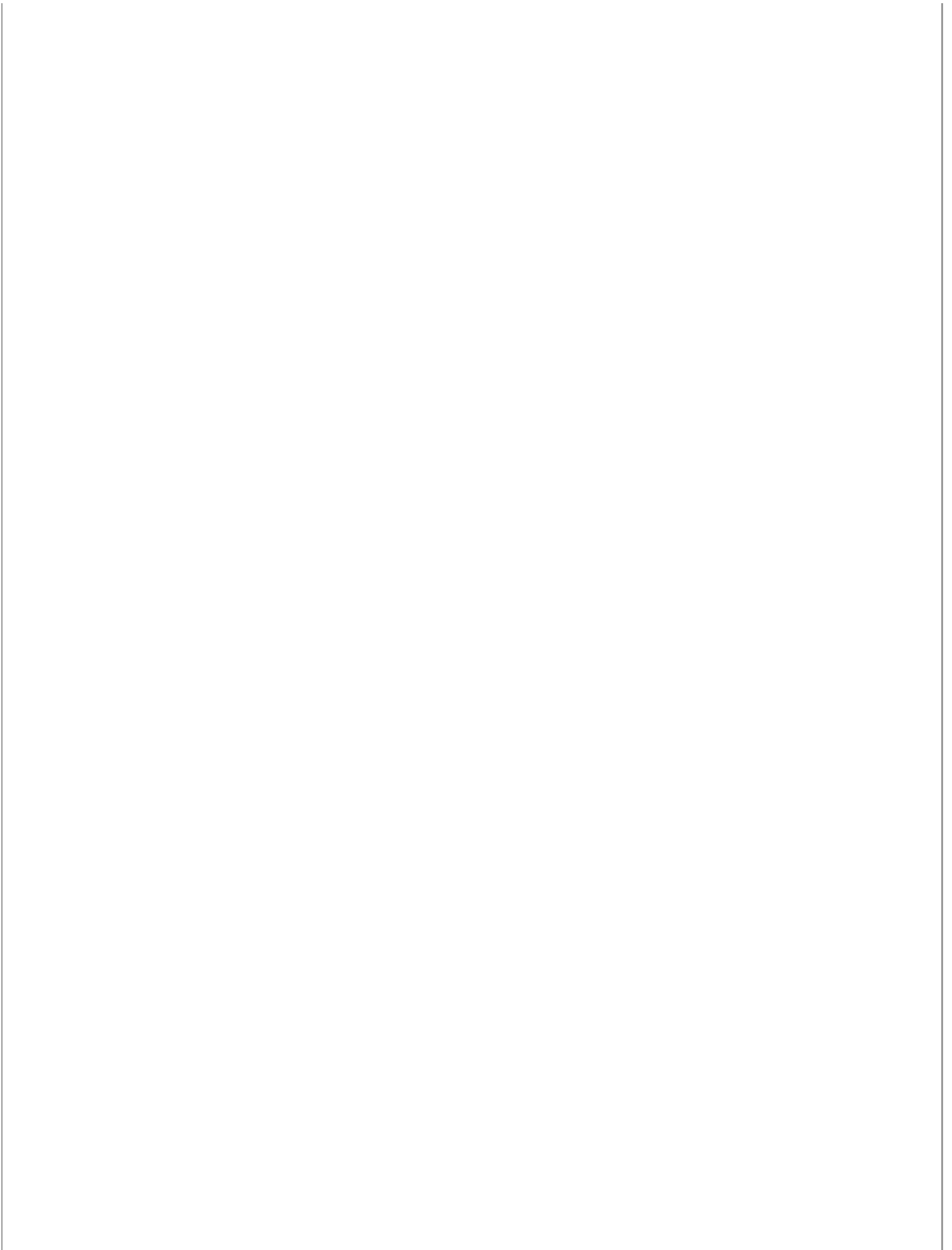




The New York Times















How Are You, Really?

This self-guided check-in will help you take stock of your emotional well-being — and learn how to make changes.

We know we should get a physical exam every year; we have annual reviews at work; some couples even do periodic relationship audits. And yet many of us don't regularly check in with our emotional health — though it is arguably the most important contributor to overall well-being.

The New York Times talked to experts in clinical psychology, positive psychology, flourishing, thriving, resilience and burnout about what contributes to a sense of well-being and how to evaluate it. Then we came up with a series of questions adapted from these conversations, as well as from prompts in [four common psychological assessments](#).

This self-guided exercise won't give you a "wellness score" or ranking, and it shouldn't be used as a diagnostic tool or a substitute for professional help. Instead, these types of questions are meant to get you thinking about different aspects of your life and mental health, and help you identify what's working and where you might make adjustments, said Tyler VanderWeele, the director of the [Human Flourishing Program](#) at Harvard University.

While some aspects of well-being are out of our control, many are within it. And the first step toward improving something is to assess it.

Take some quiet time to contemplate the following questions, then read about how each one relates to well-being. You may want to grab a pen and paper to jot down your thoughts.



1. MOOD

How would you describe your mood most days?

Is it generally positive, generally negative or a mix?

Do you tend to feel more positive or negative emotions throughout the day?

(Think joy, love or awe versus anger, sadness or anxiety.)

Why these questions matter



2. SELF TALK

Is your inner monologue more self-critical or self-compassionate?

When trying something new, do you think you're going to succeed, or are you sure you're going to fail?

If you make a mistake, do you beat yourself up afterward, or do you give yourself the benefit of the doubt?

Why these questions matter



3. PHYSICAL HEALTH

How is your physical health, generally?

How often do you sleep for seven to nine hours a night?

How much physical activity do you do each week?

Why these questions matter



4. RELATIONSHIPS

Do you feel like you have strong relationships with family, friends, neighbors or co-workers?

How often do you see people socially every week?

Do you have someone you could call in an emergency?

Why these questions matter



5. MEANING AND PURPOSE

Are there things in your life that give you a sense of meaning or purpose?

(This could be through work, volunteering, hobbies, a religious community or caring for others.)

Do you have a sense of responsibility to something or someone other than yourself?

Do you feel that your contributions matter?

Why these questions matter



6. COMPETENCY

Do you feel like there are things in your life that you're good at?

Are there parts of your life that give you a sense of accomplishment?

Do you feel like you are generally a capable person?

Why these questions matter



7. FLOW

How often do you feel completely absorbed in what you're doing?

Do you ever lose track of time while you're working or doing a hobby?

Do you look forward to participating in those activities?

Why these questions matter



8. CONTROL AND AUTONOMY

Do you feel like you are generally in control of your life?

Do you feel like you have autonomy and agency, at work and at home?

Do you make the major decisions about your life, or does someone else?

Why these questions matter



9. MONEY AND RESOURCES

Do you have enough financial resources to support yourself and your family?

Do you ever have to worry about necessities, like food or housing?

Do you have the resources and support you need to do your job well?

Why these questions matter



10. FAIRNESS

Do you feel like the world is generally a fair place?

Are there systems that stymie you?

Do you feel like you have as many opportunities as the next person?

Why these questions matter



11. LIFE SATISFACTION

Generally speaking, how satisfied are you with your life?

Have you achieved, or are you on the path to achieve, most of the important things you wanted?


Are there major aspects of your life that you would change?

Why these questions matter

If, after moving through these questions, you feel like things in your life aren't going as well as you want them to, consider reaching out to a professional. Try talking to your primary care provider about your mental health, or search for a local therapist or psychiatrist on the [Psychology Today](#) and [American Psychiatric Association](#) websites.

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How to Be Happy

Happiness can predict health and longevity, but it doesn't just happen to you.

- Small changes in your behavior and surroundings can set you on course for happiness. [Here's how.](#)
- Our [seven-day Happiness Challenge](#) will help you focus on a crucial element of living a good life — [your relationships.](#)
- Finland has been ranked the happiest country on earth for six consecutive years. What's the secret? [The answer is complicated.](#)
- Cultivating a sense of wonder [can be a salve](#) for a turbulent mind. [Here is how to make it part of your everyday life.](#)

- It can seem impossible to be optimistic about the future. But [these questions](#) will help you understand what all optimists have in common.
- Exercise, even in small doses, can improve your mood. Try our [eight-minute routine](#) that's based on movements researchers say are inspired by joy.

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