

# **Celia Urdanivia Cordova**

## **Happiness consultancy report**

**CST228, “Happiness: investigating its causes and conditions”**

**Autumn session, 2015**

**Cultural Studies, University of Wollongong**

**Subject coordinators: Chris Barker and Brian Martin**

### ***Assignment***

The consultancy is a continuation of your reflective journal.

- You continue with the activity you used for your journal, or a different one, and/or an additional one.
- You recruit two or more individuals — called clients — to undertake an activity known to increase happiness, either the same activity as your own or a different one.
- You introduce your clients to the activity, for example through a presentation, talk, workshop and/or handout.
- You monitor their engagement with the activity on a regular basis (at least weekly) through observations, interviews, survey and/or other means.
- You evaluate the effect of the activity on yourself and your clients using questionnaires, interviews, focus groups and/or other techniques.

For more details see [http://www.bmartin.cc/classes/CST\\_15outline.pdf](http://www.bmartin.cc/classes/CST_15outline.pdf)

*Celia Urdanivia Cordova's* consultancy report starts on the next page.

This document is located at <http://www.bmartin.cc/classes/happiness-consultancy-tops/>.

# **Happiness Consultancy Report**

## **Choosing the activity**

I chose the same activity I implemented in my reflective journal – “cultivating optimism” because I found it beneficial, therapeutic and enjoyable. I found that I was in a better mood, became more self-aware, felt less stressed, experienced less ruminative thoughts and gained more clarity & motivation towards my goals. The activity is working for me so far, therefore I was motivated to continue to research about it and also advice other people to attempt themselves.

In my reflective journal I followed professors Sonja Lyubomirsky’s instruction on cultivating optimism by writing a best possible self-diary, goals and sub-goals diary and identifying barrier thoughts (Lyubomirsky 2010, pp. 107-108). For this consultancy, I was planning to do the same, however, I considered adding adjustments to the activity based on further research.

Firstly other researchers conducted the activity on their participants more frequently (King 2001; Teismann et al. 2014). I was interested to find out if the activity would be even more effective if my client & I attempted it more frequently per week. Therefore, I decided to increase the frequency to 2-3 days per week.

Secondly, based on the initial research by King, several researchers have implemented 5 minutes visualisation to the best possible selves exercise after dialoguing about one’s best possible self as a way of boosting optimism for their participants (Meevissen et al. 2011; Peters et al. 2010). Before deciding to implement the extra visualisation I was questioned whether this extra activity would have a significant effect on the activity as a whole and which method the clients & myself would prefer: writing about their best possible self or visualisation.

## **Recruitment of Clients**

In order to recruit individuals for this activity I carefully wrote a list of people that I thought would be interested in participating & whom I thought would benefit in some way from this activity. Then I contacted them in person and/or through Facebook. I shared my personal experience of the activity and the positive effect the activity had on my lifestyle. Then I explained that I was still undertaking the activity myself and asked whether they would be interested in attempting the activity themselves.

I found two clients Sue-Ellen and Celeste, who were enthusiastic to participate. After the clients the clients agreed to participate I gave them a consent form (from the University of Wollongong) for them to sign. (See Appendix 1)

Sue-Ellen is a 21year old female. She is an undergraduate student who studies a Bachelor of Arts and International studies. Her interests lie in astronomy and foreign affairs. She is also artistic individual who is involved in music and practices painting. Sue-Ellen informed me that she was interested in participating in this activity because

she has been practicing meditation at home for over a year now and believes that meditation correlates well with practicing visualisation. At the beginning of the activity she believed that the activity would be effective for her because she knows about the benefits of cultivating optimism and believes this activity suits her. She also wanted to participate to improve her visualisation techniques.

Celeste is a 46year old female. She is a mother of two children, who works in retail management. She is an artistic individual who would like to participate again in performing arts (drama). She is also involved in religion (Christianity). In the interview she informed me that she was interested in participating in this activity because she wanted to more effective at organising her goals and also wanted to feel more confident and enthusiastic about reaching those goals. She believed that this activity would be beneficial for her because it would suit her well since she sees herself as a dreamer.

### **Client introduction to the activity**

Firstly, I introduced the activity to the clients, by meeting them in person and talking to them about the activity. I conversed about what is involved in the activity, my role in monitoring, what questionnaires they were going to undertake and answered any questions they had about the activity. Meeting my clients in person from the beginning of the consultancy allowed me to form a trusting relationship with them and also created a relaxed environment.

Additionally, I believed it was equally important to provide a handout with a summary of everything I had talked to them about the activity (See Appendix 2). The handout also included a brief explanation about optimism and research supporting the activity as happiness enhancing. The handout was necessary to remind the clients the information about the activity.

### **Monitoring Involvement**

Both Sue-Ellen and Celeste live nearby, so most monitoring was conducted in person. I monitored the activity by asking premeditated weekly interview questions (See Appendix 3) to each participant. Then I annotated their answers, my observations about the clients' happiness and my own experience in every interview. I also conducted two questionnaires – The life orientation test (revised) and the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire.

Before starting the activity, I conducted an initial interview to provide a brief background on the client (Appendix 4). The initial interview involved asking questions about the clients, such as: their extracurricular activities, level of education and age. Questions about their expectation & interest about the activity were also asked.

The weekly interview questions were about the clients' experience of the activity in the corresponding week. For example: talking about an event in their week, parts of the activity they thought were effective, enjoyable or not helpful, whether the activity influenced them in some way, rating the difficulty of the activity, suggestions on improving the activity and how they would recommend the activity to others. Often, these premeditated questions would lead to different follow up questions for each participant.

I monitored my clients' happiness & optimism levels before introducing the activity and at the end of the activity by using the Life orientation Test (Revised) and the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (See Appendix 5a & 5b). I thought it was important to conduct these questionnaires before introducing the activity, before providing too much information to the client in order for the result to be more reliable at determining the initial happiness level. The Life Orientation Test (Revised) was used to measure generalised optimism (University of Miami Department of Psychology 2007). The Oxford Happiness Questionnaire was used, to measure the effect the activity had on happiness levels of the clients, before and after (Lyubomirsky 2010, pp. 83-85) I decided to use this questionnaire for this consultancy because I used it to find my happiness level as I undertook the activity in my reflective journal and I found it effective at informing me whether this activity was working for me or not.

There were a few instances when I had to conduct the interview through Facebook with Sue-Ellen due to our busy schedules as undergraduate students. I found that conducting the interview through messages was time effective and effective at providing me with more detailed and structured answers to my premeditated interview questions. However, messaging made it more difficult to make observations about Sue-Ellen in those few instances and it did not lead to follow up questions.

Whereas with Celeste I conducted all the interviews in person and this allowed me to make more observations. I made observations on her mood, what was happening in her week, her reaction to events in her week, her outlook on her own happiness and behaviour. I was able to make these observations with Sue-Ellen also when we conducted the interview in person.

Therefore, meeting with my clients in person was my preferred option. This method was more effective because it was more spontaneous: it led to follow up questions and interesting discussions about the clients' happiness. It also provided me with more insight about the clients' happiness in order to make my evaluations.

Based on my observations it seems that conducting the interview in person made the experience more enjoyable for the clients. Both clients seemed more comfortable and relaxed about sharing their experiences with me.

## Evaluation of experiences

I evaluated my experience and my clients' experience by analysing the qualitative and quantitative data I had collected from both clients over those 5 weeks. The qualitative data was based on the interviews and observations that were made about the experience of my clients and my weekly reflections about my own experience. The quantitative data was based on the questionnaires (The Life Orientation Test (Revised) and Oxford Happiness Questionnaire) I had conducted on myself and on my clients.

To determine whether this activity was successful for myself and for my clients; I analysed the quantitative data & the qualitative data. Firstly I analysed the qualitative data I had collected – the observations, interviews and reflections to make my conclusion whether the clients found this activity successful. Secondly I compared the initial results in the questionnaires with the end results.

*My results are as it follows:*

According to the data gained from the oxford happiness questionnaire both clients found the activity to be happiness enhancing. Celeste experienced a boost in happiness levels after undertaking this activity from a score of 3.45 to a score of 3.93 (See appendix 6a). This was because Celeste experienced an increase in self-awareness, became better at organising her goals & life and developed better coping skills. Sue-Ellen also experienced a boost in happiness levels from 4.344 to 4.55 (See appendix 6b). She found meaning in self-awareness by finding out what was meaningful to her. She enjoyed practicing visualisation in addition to meditation and also because she found it useful to deal with negative thoughts to deal with the stress of assessments.

Based on the results of Life orientation Test (Revised), both of my clients increased in optimism. Celeste increased significantly from a score of 13 to a score of 18 and Sue-Ellen increased in optimism she started with a score of 17 and ended up with a score of 20. (See appendix 7a & 7b)

My clients and myself found that the best possible self-activity visualisation saved time during a busy schedule. We all found that it allowed us to think deeper and engage our thought process more easily. Celeste found that she needed to also write it down to remind herself of her best possible self when she needed to.

Overall both clients and myself benefited from this activity in a positive way. I believe this is because we find the activity meaningful and appealing to plan our goals and visualise our goals.

Celeste's experience:

**Weeks 1-2:**

Celeste found, that in the first few weeks, writing about her best possible self helped her gain awareness about what she wants to pursue for the rest of her life. As an artistic person, one of her long-term dreams has been to become an actress. In the interviews, she explained to me that this activity has made her feel more enthusiastic and motivated to make her dream a reality. She found the best possible self-diary and 5 minutes visualisation helpful, because they work well together. She explained that this section of the activity “allowed me to live my future self even though I might not be there yet, I enjoyed the experience and felt more enthusiastic about achieving my dreams”.

### **Week 3:**

During this week, Celeste had a difficult week she had to take care of her son who was sick and also had a busy week at work. Therefore she explained that she did not have much time to visualise her best possible self or write about life goals. However when she read or wrote about her BPS she felt better because it gave her something to look forward to. She found the identifying barrier thoughts activity helpful because it allowed her to deal with the negative thoughts she was experiencing in a more constructive way, thinking of solutions instead of the problems.

### **Weeks 3-4:**

Furthermore, in the next two weeks writing about life goals & planning them has helped her organise her time better. Especially, balancing her family and work life. She also seems to be planning ahead and taking action to achieve her goal of becoming an actress. For example, by getting involved in theatre classes and by networking with people involved in this field. Also by finding out information in order to enter university & study performing arts.

### **Week 5:**

At the end of week 5, Celeste explained that she experienced higher self-esteem by practicing this activity.

Sue Ellen’s experience:

### **Week 1:**

Sue-Ellen enjoyed implementing the visualisation activity to her daily meditation. It helped her improve her visualisation skills more and she found it more powerful than writing about her best possible self.

### **Week 2-3:**

Sue-Ellen found that she was able to complete her assignments effectively and with less stress by implementing the identifying barrier thoughts activity.

#### **Week 4:**

This activity revealed to her what she found meaningful in her life & determining her priorities – pursuing a career she could enjoy in her life, doing her best and helping others.

#### **Week 5:**

Sue-Ellen made use of her goal diary to plan what she wanted to achieve in the short term such as aiming for a High Distinction in her exam.

### **The relation between academic research and experiences**

There is consistent research proving that dialoguing about one's best possible self, is beneficial for individuals (King 2001; Sheldon & Lyubomirsky 2006; Peters et al. 2010; Layous et al. 2012). Initial research by King indicates increases in positive mood and general wellbeing after the 81 participants wrote about their best possible self for 20 minutes over 4 consecutive days. King compared writing about trauma and writing about the best possible self. The findings suggested that the participants who wrote about their best possible self were less emotional, experienced a lift in positive mood and were more optimistic (King 2001, p. 804). This is supported by Sheldon & Lyubomirsky who also found an increase in positive mood in the study about the efficacy of best possible self-activity in comparison to practicing gratitude (Sheldon & Lyubomirsky 2006). Furthermore King suggested that writing about one's best possible self can be also therapeutic by bringing awareness & self-regulation and allowing individuals to understand their goals and determine priorities and values (King 2001, p. 800).

Similarly, my clients and myself experienced an increase of positive mood over the five-week period. My client Celeste noticed that she was feeling enthusiastic (because she was more self-aware & less frustrated about her goals) to go about her day after writing and reading her best possible self-diary. Sue-Ellen experienced a positive mood because she gained self-awareness of herself and also became more aware of her studies. I continued to experience a positive mood because I enjoyed the experience of planning ahead for the future it made me feel more self-assured.

Further research by Peters et al. concluded that “positive future thinking” through best possible self-writing and visualisation can increase optimism in comparison to writing & visualising an ordinary day. In their study 44 out of 82 university students wrote about their best possible self for 15 minutes followed by 5-minute visualisation about what they wrote (Peters et al. 2010, p. 204). These students experienced increased positive mood and positive future expectancies and less negative future expectancies. (Peters et al. 2010, p. 209). Based on the results of Life orientation Test (Revised), this was experienced by both of my clients also. Celeste increased significantly in the

optimism score from 13 to a score of 18. Sue-Ellen also increased in optimism she started with a score of 17 and ended up with a score of 20.

Research conducted by Meevissen et al. suggest that visualising about one's BPS has several advantages over dialoguing about it. Visualisation is more advantageous because it provides a richer cognitive processing particularly as utilizing mental visualisation tends to avoid barriers encountered with the use of words, such as variances between personal view points or difficulties in expressing thoughts and images verbally (Meevissen et al. 2011, p. 376). Additional benefits include mental enactment of positive scenarios actually provide a similar result as if one actually were to really engage in the behaviour – leading to greater confidence of success achievement. Mental imaginations also provides stronger influence over cognition and emotion than verbalizing. (Peters et al. 2010, p. 210). In comparison to writing, visualisation is also less time consuming and does not need many resources (Meevissen et al. 2011, p. 376). This support the benefits my clients and myself found during the 5-minute visualization. All of us found it less time consuming in comparison to writing for 20 minutes. Celeste found that she could experience her future self more closely as she visualized about what she had written about for example as she was walking to the shops. Sue-Ellen found more enjoyable because it allowed her to think deeper and since she already practices meditation it allowed her to improve on her visualization skills. I enjoyed the visualization because as a creative person & visual person, I enjoyed engaging in my imagination.

Research supports writing about positive aspects of a negative event because provides health benefits (King & Miner 2000). In this study the participants were asked to write about the learning experience about the negative event (Layous et al. 2012, p. 636). Writing about the positive aspects prompted self-regulation on the individuals allowing them to cope more effectively by placing the attention on the positive aspects rather than the negative and at the same allowed them to not relive the event so intensely (King & Miner 2000, p. 227). Furthermore, it is beneficial to write about the awareness, knowledge and wisdom gained in a negative experience because it provides meaning, sorts priorities and involves greater understanding (King & Miner 2000, p. 228).

Both of my clients found the activity “identifying barriers thoughts” useful in assisting them dealing with daily negative experiences. The activity involved identifying a negative thoughts and then coming up with a more positive alternative to the situation. Sue-Ellen found this activity helpful because it gave her a new way of viewing her problems in particular in the weeks she was dealing with stress because of the many assessments she had due. She was able to then complete her assessments with less negativity. Celeste also found this activity useful when dealing with a busy week and also having to take care of her son when he was sick. She explained that even though she did not have time to visualize and write about her possible self, identifying barrier thoughts helped her deal with obstacles in that week in a more constructive way – thinking about solutions instead of the problems.



## **Advantages and disadvantages of the activity**

Based on the feedback from my clients I found that there were several advantages and disadvantages about the activity that I was not aware of before.

My client, Celeste benefited the most from this activity. Implementing this activity provided her with the motivation to implement her goals. Firstly she found that the activity in particular the goals and sub-goals diary helped her organise her time effectively. For example managing family and work life. It also helped her plan for long term goals such as planning steps to become an actress. For example finding by networking with people with a similar interest or taking drama classes.

My client Sue-Ellen found the activity effective in dealing with daily stresses. By implementing “identifying barrier thoughts” activity she found that she could cope more effectively with the negative thoughts and stress from assessments by reminding her self when she succeed at something and working on changing the negative outlook into something more positive.

However Sue-Ellen suggested that the downside to this activity was that they found that hours after the exercise had been completed they still experienced doubt on whether they will achieve what they had planned. This doubt eased when they applied the barrier thoughts activity was applied.

My client Celeste perceived the negative statements in the questionnaire (the life orientation test (revised)) difficult to respond because she did not want to declare negatives upon herself. I believe it was her religious views that influenced this.

## **Recommendations for helping people to continue with the activity**

Based on my own personal experience of the activity, my recommendation lies on finding an activity that suits the individual’s personality and points of view rather than continuing with an activity that they might find too difficult. For example I chose to continue with this activity because I value pursuing my goals, using my imagination & visualizing the future so it is more likely to work for me because I find enjoyable and it adds meaning into my life.

Based on research the ability find a happiness enhancing activity successful lies in the 40% solution – making the most of the happiness potential through “intentional activity (Lyubomirsky 2010, pp. 20-21). Effort and motivation are important factors for an individual to make the most of a happiness activity (Layous et al. 2012, p. 639). Lyubomirsky et al. also found in their study that having the motivation to be happier

is important in making a positive activity such as the best possible self-activity improve on wellbeing (Lyubomirsky et al. 2011, p. 398) It was also reported that participants who put more effort into the activity by paying attention to the activity claimed better well-being. (Lyubomirsky et al. 2011, p. 399).

My clients also made a few suggestions about how to make the activity more effective in the future:

Sue-Ellen suggested adding a meditation technique for individuals to self-analyse themselves prior to starting the activity. She suggested sitting in silence for around 20 minutes and thinking about 10 things that were negative and positive. Consequently this would allow participants to gain self-awareness and learn how to improve their thoughts.

Also working in groups in this activity might motivate certain individuals to continue with the activity and using social networking to spread awareness of the activity. Furthermore changing the environment in which the activity is conducted in instead of doing it at home. Doing the activity, in a peaceful place, such as surrounded by nature might have a positive effect on thought processes.

My other client, Celeste suggested sharing your personal experience about the activity with others as a way of motivating yourself to continue with the activity and also motivating others who might be struggling to pursue their own goals. She also recommended adding prayer for those who are interested in practicing religion too, in order to deal with negative emotions or stress more effectively and help individuals persevere in their goals.

## **References**

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## Appendices

### **Appendix 1:**

Consent forms:

  
UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

**Consent to participate in the research project**  
**'Happiness: investigating its causes and conditions'**  
**being conducted by Celia Urdanivia Cordova**

Your participation is sought in a research project being undertaken by students of the University of Wollongong under the supervision of Professor Brian Martin and Associate Professor Chris Barker. The project involves talking to people about the causes of happiness in their lives and involves semi-structured interviews, or conversations, lasting approximately 30 minutes. Students will write a research report for the purposes of university assessment. The material will not be published without further explicit consent being given. Some conversations will be audio recorded with your consent but no one other than the student researchers Celia Urdanivia Cordova and Professors Martin and Barker will hear them.

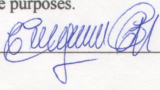
As a participant, you should not reveal any information of an incriminating nature. Should you do so, be warned that the researcher would be obliged to report any information relating to a serious criminal offence; such information could be subpoenaed.

Your participation in this research is voluntary: you are free to refuse to participate and you are free to withdraw from the research at any time. Your refusal to participate or withdrawal of consent will not affect your relationship with the University of Wollongong in any way. To discuss this research further please contact Professor Brian Martin, 4221 3763, or A/Prof Chris Barker, 4221 3671. If you have any enquiries regarding the ethical conduct of the research please contact the Secretary of the University of Wollongong Human Research Ethics Committee, 4221 4457.

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**Research Title: Happiness: investigating its causes and conditions**

I, Celia Córdoba Hurtado de Blain consent to participate in the research conducted by Celia Urdanivia Cordova of the University of Wollongong (under the supervision of Professor Brian Martin and A/Professor Chris Barker) as it has been described to me in the information sheet. I understand that the data collected will be used to analyse the causes of happiness among the individuals being studied and to write a research report for the purposes of university assessment. I understand that the material will not be published without my giving further explicit consent. I consent for the data to be used for these purposes.

Signed  Date 04.05.15



UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

**Consent to participate in the research project**

**'Happiness: investigating its causes and conditions'**

**Being conducted by Celia Urdanivia Cordova**

Your participation is sought in a research project being undertaken by students of the University of Wollongong under the supervision of Professor Brian Martin and Associate Professor Chris Barker. The project involves talking to people about the causes of happiness in their lives and involves semi-structured interviews, or conversations, lasting approximately 30 minutes. Students will write a research report for the purposes of university assessment. The material will not be published without further explicit consent being given. Some conversations will be audio recorded with your consent but no one other than the student researchers Celia Urdanivia Cordova and Professors Martin and Barker will hear them.

As a participant, you should not reveal any information of an incriminating nature. Should you do so, be warned that the researcher would be obliged to report any information relating to a serious criminal offence; such information could be subpoenaed. Your participation in this research is voluntary: you are free to refuse to participate and you are free to withdraw from the research at any time. Your refusal to participate or withdrawal of consent will not affect your relationship with the University of Wollongong in any way. To discuss this research further please contact Professor Brian Martin, 4221 3763, or A/Prof Chris Barker, 4221 3671. If you have any enquiries regarding the ethical conduct of the research please contact the Secretary of the University of Wollongong Human Research Ethics Committee, 4221 4457.

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**Research Title: Happiness: investigating its causes and conditions**

I, Sue-Ellen Simic consent to participate in the research conducted by Celia Urdanivia Cordova of the University of Wollongong (under the supervision of Professor Brian Martin and A/Professor Chris Barker) as it has been described to me in the information sheet. I understand that the data collected will be used to analyse the causes of happiness among the individuals being studied and to write a research report for the purposes of university assessment. I understand that the material will not be published without my giving further explicit consent. I consent for the data to be used for these purposes.

Signed:

Date 06/05/15

**Appendix 2:**  
Copy of handout:

**Cultivating Optimism- "The Best possible selves" activity**

"Cultivating optimism" is known as a happiness enhancing activity where optimism encompasses one intentionally seeing the "silver lining", feeling good about one's personal and global future and alike. Positive psychology research suggests that visualizing & writing about one's best possible selves is an effective way of implementing optimism in one's life (Lyubomirsky 2010, p. 100).

"The best possible selves" activity enhances optimism because it encourages the individual to think about the brightest possible future. Furthermore by adding a goals and sub-goals diary & identifying barrier thoughts, the individual is able to see how they will accomplish this desired future and identify thoughts that might be a barrier to their happiness and turn these into more optimistic thoughts (Lyubomirsky 2010, pp. 107-108).

**Some of the benefits of the best possible self-activity:**

- ❖ Increases self-awareness – individuals learn more about their own values and motivations.
- ❖ Better general wellbeing.
- ❖ Individuals generate a more optimistic perspective.
- ❖ Individuals report feeling more motivated to pursue their goals.
- ❖ Individuals experience less ruminative thoughts.
- ❖ Individuals feel more control over their own lives.
- ❖ Increases in positive mood.



**"Best possible selves" activity: (5/weeks)**

**1) Maintaining a best possible self-diary: - 20 minutes, 2 days per week.**

"Think about your life in the future. Imagine that everything has gone as well as it possibly could. You have worked hard and succeeded at accomplishing all of your life goals. Think of this as the realization of all of your life dreams. Now, write about what you imagined."

- o You can visualise yourself in 1, 2, 5, 10, 20 years from now.

For example:

"I see myself doing work that is meaningful and fills me with a sense of purpose as I help people reach their dreams on a daily basis".

**2) Goals and sub-goals diary:**

Based on your best possible self-diary write down your long-range goals break them into sub-goals.

a) Tips for setting goals

- For long range goals you can ask yourself:
  - ❖ What do you find meaningful?
  - ❖ What experiences do you find that you immerse yourself in?
  - ❖ What are your current interests?
  - ❖ What interests do you want to pursue in the future?
  - ❖ What values are important to you?
- For sub-goals:
  - ❖ Break down your main goals into manageable steps so that you don't become overwhelmed with your long range goals.

### 3) Identifying barrier thoughts:

This part involves identifying pessimistic thoughts and replacing it with a more positive point of view.

You can do this by:

- ❖ Reminding yourself of times you have succeeded at something.
- ❖ Recognising your current & developing strengths and resources.
- ❖ Ask yourself whether there are any good outcomes, strengths and/or opportunities that can come from the situation.
- ❖ Ask yourself whether you have learnt something from this situation that you can apply in the future.

### 4) Practicing visualisation:

Spend 5 minutes visualising about what you wrote in your best possible self-diary.

#### Monitoring involves:

1. Contacting me once a week, to chat for approx. 30 minutes about:
  - o Your feedback on the activity: for example;
    - What do you like or dislike about the activity?
    - What worked, what didn't work?
    - What would make you happier?
    - Your experience of the activity.
    - How can this activity be improved.
2. Completing questionnaires on happiness research such as "Life orientation Test" & "The Oxford Happiness questionnaire"

#### References

Lyubomirsky, S 2010, *The how of happiness: A practical guide to getting the life you want*, Piatkus, Great Britain. |



## Appendix 3:

### Samples of the premeditated interview questions:

#### **Interview questions for week 1:**

- 1) Describe your experience of the activity in this first week. Was it therapeutic? Helpful? Tedious? Enjoyable?
  
- 2) Provide an example of a situation in your life during this week, when this activity was useful or not useful.
  
- 3) Based on your experience: was practicing visualisation for 5 minutes in addition to the activity, useful in cultivating optimism?
  
- 4) Which method do you think is more effective so far, in cultivating optimism: writing about your best possible self or only visualising your best possible self.

#### **Interview questions for week 2:**

- 1) How did you find the activity this week?
  
- 2) An example of a situation in your life during this week when this activity was useful and not useful:
  
- 3) Over time, has it become easier or more difficult to carry out the activity?



**Interview questions for week 4:**

**1. How did you find the activity this week?**

**2. An example of a situation in your life during this week when this activity was useful and not useful:**

**3. Overall, what did you like or dislike about the activity?**

**4. Have you changed your thinking or behaviour as a result of the activity?**

**5. What factors helped you to continue the activity?**

**Interview questions for week 5:**

- 1. What factors made it difficult for you to continue the activity?**
- 2. If you repeated the activity what would you do to increase the likelihood of continuing with it?**
- 3. Would you recommend the activity to others?**
- 4. If so, would you try to encourage them to undertake it? If so, how?**

#### **Appendix 4:**

Background on the client:

#### **Brief background on the client:**

- 1) Provide some information about yourself.  
For example: age, level of education, extra-curricular activities.
  
- 2) What triggered your interest in participating in this activity?
  
  
- 3) Do you think this activity will be effective on yourself or are you sceptical about it?

## Appendix 5a:

### Oxford Happiness Questionnaire:

84

THE HOW OF HAPPINESS

#### THE OXFORD HAPPINESS QUESTIONNAIRE<sup>1</sup>

Instructions: Below are a number of statements about happiness. Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each statement by entering a number alongside it according to the scale below.

1	2	3	4	5	6
strongly	moderately	slightly	slightly	moderately	strongly
disagree	disagree	disagree	agree	agree	agree

- 1 I don't feel particularly pleased with the way I am (X)
- 2 I am intensely interested in other people
- 3 I feel that life is very rewarding
- 4 I have very warm feelings towards almost everyone
- 5 I rarely wake up feeling rested (X)
- 6 I'm not particularly optimistic about the future (X)
- 7 I find most things amusing
- 8 I am always committed and involved
- 9 Life is good
- 10 I don't think that the world is a good place (X)
- 11 I laugh a lot
- 12 I am well satisfied with everything in my life
- 13 I don't think I look attractive (X)
- 14 There's a gap between what I would like to do and what I have done (X)
- 15 I am very happy
- 16 I find beauty in some things
- 17 I always have a cheerful effect on others
- 18 I can find time for everything I want to

Before you begin

85

- 19 I feel that I'm not especially in control of my life (X)
- 20 I feel able to take anything on
- 21 I feel fully mentally alert
- 22 I often experience joy and elation
- 23 I don't find it easy to make decisions (X)
- 24 I don't have a particular sense of meaning and purpose in my life (X)
- 25 I feel I have a great deal of energy
- 26 I usually have a positive influence on events
- 27 I don't have fun with other people (X)
- 28 I don't feel particularly healthy (X)
- 29 I don't have particularly happy memories of the past (X)

#### How to calculate your score:

**Step 1:** Your scores on the 12 items marked with an X should be 'reverse-scored' – that is, if you gave yourself a 1, cross it out and change it to a 6; if you gave yourself a 2, change that to a 5; change a 3 to a 4; change a 4 to a 3; change a 5 to a 2; and change a 6 to a 1.

**Step 2:** Using the changed scores for those 12 items, now add your scores for *all* the 29 items

**Step 3:** Happiness score = Total (from Step 2) divided by 29 =

Your total happiness score is \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Your total happiness score is \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Your total happiness score is \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Your total happiness score is \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Your total happiness score is \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Your total happiness score is \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## References:

Lyubomirsky, S 2010, *The how of happiness: A practical guide to getting the life you want*, Piatkus, Great Britain.

## Appendix 5b:

### The Life Orientation Test (Revised)

#### Life Orientation Test Revised (LOT-R)

Please answer the following questions as honest and accurate as you can. Use the scale below as a guide.

0 = Strongly Disagree  
1 = Disagree  
2 = Neutral  
3 = Agree  
4 = Strongly Agree

- |  |                          |
|--|--------------------------|
| 1. In uncertain times, I usually expect the best.                | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. It's easy for me to relax. [X]                                | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. If something can go wrong for me, it will.                    | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. I'm always optimistic about my future.                        | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. I enjoy my friends a lot. [X]                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. It's important for me to keep busy. [X]                       | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. I hardly ever expect things to go my way.                     | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8. I don't get upset too easily. [X]                             | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 9. I rarely count on good things happening to me.                | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 10. Overall, I expect more good things to happen to me than bad. | <input type="checkbox"/> |

#### **Calculating your score:**

- The questions marked with [X] are fillers. They are not scored as part of the revised scale.
- Reverse score questions 3,7 & 9 before scoring 0=4, 1=3, 2=2, 3=1, 4=0.
- To obtain your overall score, add up your score for questions 1,3,4,7,9 & 10.

#### **The LOT-R score:**

High Optimism: 19-24

Moderate Optimism: 14-18

Low Optimism: 0-13

## References

*Life Orientation Test-Revised* 2011, After Deployment, viewed 3 June 2015 <  
<http://afterdeployment.dcoe.mil/sites/default/files/pdfs/assessment-tools/optimism-assessment.pdf>>.



LOT-R (Life Orientation Test-Revised) 2007, University of Miami Department of Psychology, viewed 3 June 2015, <<http://www.psy.miami.edu/faculty/ccarver/scILOTR.html>>.

## Appendix 6a:

Celeste's Oxford Happiness Questionnaire initial score:

84 THE HOW OF HAPPINESS		Before you begin 85	
<b>THE OXFORD HAPPINESS QUESTIONNAIRE<sup>1</sup></b>			
Instructions: Below are a number of statements about happiness. Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each statement by entering a number alongside it according to the scale below.			
1	2	3	4
strongly disagree	moderately disagree	slightly disagree	slightly agree
5	6	7	8
moderately agree	strongly agree		
1 I don't feel particularly pleased with the way I am (X)			5
2 I am intensely interested in other people			5
3 I feel that life is very rewarding			3
4 I have very warm feelings towards almost everyone			5
5 I rarely wake up feeling rested (X)			2
6 I'm not particularly optimistic about the future (X)			3
7 I find most things amusing			6
8 I am always committed and involved			4
9 Life is good			4
10 I don't think that the world is a good place (X)			2
11 I laugh a lot			6
12 I am well satisfied with everything in my life			4
13 I don't think I look attractive (X)			2
14 There's a gap between what I would like to do and what I have done (X)			2
15 I am very happy			4
16 I find beauty in some things			5
17 I always have a cheerful effect on others			4
18 I can find time for everything I want to			3
19 I feel that I'm not especially in control of my life (X)			2
20 I feel able to take anything on			3
21 I feel fully mentally alert			4
22 I often experience joy and elation			2
23 I don't find it easy to make decisions (X)			2
24 I don't have a particular sense of meaning and purpose in my life (X)			2
25 I feel I have a great deal of energy			3
26 I usually have a positive influence on events			4
27 I don't have fun with other people (X)			5
28 I don't feel particularly healthy (X)			3
29 I don't have particularly happy memories of the past (X)			2
<b>How to calculate your score:</b>			
<b>Step 1:</b> Your scores on the 12 items marked with an X should be 'reverse-scored' – that is, if you gave yourself a 1, cross it out and change it to a 6; if you gave yourself a 2, change that to a 5; change a 3 to a 4; change a 4 to a 3; change a 5 to a 2; and change a 6 to a 1.			
<b>Step 2:</b> Using the changed scores for those 12 items, now add your scores for all the 29 items			
<b>Step 3:</b> Happiness score = Total (from Step 2) divided by 29 =			
Your total happiness score is <u>3.45</u> Date: <u>04-5-15</u>			
Your total happiness score is _____ Date: _____			
Your total happiness score is _____ Date: _____			
Your total happiness score is _____ Date: _____			
Your total happiness score is _____ Date: _____			

## References:

Lyubomirsky, S 2010, *The how of happiness: A practical guide to getting the life you want*, Piatkus, Great Britain.



Celeste's Oxford Happiness Questionnaire final score:

84 THE HOW OF HAPPINESS						Before you begin		85
<b>THE OXFORD HAPPINESS QUESTIONNAIRE<sup>1</sup></b>								
Instructions: Below are a number of statements about happiness. Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each statement by entering a number alongside it according to the scale below.								
1	2	3	4	5	6			
strongly disagree	moderately disagree	slightly disagree	slightly agree	moderately agree	strongly agree			
1	2	3	4	5	6			
1 I don't feel particularly pleased with the way I am (X)								5
2 I am intensely interested in other people								3
3 I feel that life is very rewarding								3
4 I have very warm feelings towards almost everyone								4
5 I rarely wake up feeling rested (X)								4
6 I'm not particularly optimistic about the future (X)								4
7 I find most things amusing								6
8 I am always committed and involved								6
9 Life is good								3
10 I don't think that the world is a good place (X)								3
11 I laugh a lot								4
12 I am well satisfied with everything in my life								6
13 I don't think I look attractive (X)								3
14 There's a gap between what I would like to do and what I have done (X)								2
15 I am very happy								6
16 I find beauty in some things								6
17 I always have a cheerful effect on others								5
18 I can find time for everything I want to								5
19 I feel that I'm not especially in control of my life (X)								4
20 I feel able to take anything on								4
21 I feel fully mentally alert								5
22 I often experience joy and elation								2
23 I don't find it easy to make decisions (X)								3
24 I don't have a particular sense of meaning and purpose in my life (X)								3
25 I feel I have a great deal of energy								5
26 I usually have a positive influence on events								6
27 I don't have fun with other people (X)								4
28 I don't feel particularly healthy (X)								7
29 I don't have particularly happy memories of the past (X)								7
<b>How to calculate your score:</b>								
<b>Step 1:</b> Your scores on the 12 items marked with an X should be 'reverse-scored' – that is, if you gave yourself a 1, cross it out and change it to a 6; if you gave yourself a 2, change that to a 5; change a 3 to a 4; change a 4 to a 3; change a 5 to a 2; and change a 6 to a 1.								
<b>Step 2:</b> Using the changed scores for those 12 items, now add your scores for all the 29 items								
<b>Step 3:</b> Happiness score = Total (from Step 2) divided by 29 =								
Your total happiness score is <u>3.97</u> Date: <u>8-6-15</u>								
Your total happiness score is _____ Date: _____								
Your total happiness score is _____ Date: _____								
Your total happiness score is _____ Date: _____								
Your total happiness score is _____ Date: _____								

**References:**

Lyubomirsky, S 2010, *The how of happiness: A practical guide to getting the life you want*, Piatkus, Great Britain.

## Appendix 6b:

Sue-Ellen's Oxford Happiness Questionnaire initial score:

### The Oxford Happiness Questionnaire

Instructions: Below are a number of statements about happiness. Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each statement by entering a number alongside it according to the scale below.

- 1 = strongly disagree
- 2 = moderately disagree
- 3 = slightly disagree
- 4 = slightly agree
- 5 = moderately agree
- 6 = strongly agree

1. I don't feel particularly pleased with the way I am. (X) 2 X = 5
2. I am intensely interested in other people. 5
3. I feel that life is very rewarding. 5
4. I have very warm feelings towards almost everyone. 5
5. I rarely wake up feeling rested. (X) 5 X = 2
6. I am not particularly optimistic about the future. (X) 2 X = 5
7. I find most things amusing. 4
8. I am always committed and involved. 4
9. Life is good. 5
10. I do not think that the world is a good place. (X) 4 X = 3
11. I laugh a lot. 4
12. I am well satisfied about everything in my life. 2
13. I don't think I look attractive. (X) 3 X = 4
14. There is a gap between what I would like to do and what I have done. (X) 3 X = 4
15. I am very happy. 4
16. I find beauty in some things. 4
17. I always have a cheerful effect on others. 5
18. I can fit in (find time for) everything I want to. 4
19. I feel that I am not especially in control of my life. (X) 3 X = 4
20. I feel able to take anything on. 4
21. I feel fully mentally alert. 5
22. I often experience joy and elation. 4

23. I don't find it easy to make decisions. (X) \_\_4\_\_ X = 3  
 24. I don't have a particular sense of meaning and purpose in my life. (X) \_\_1\_\_ X = 6  
 25. I feel I have a great deal of energy. \_\_5\_\_  
 26. I usually have a good influence on events. \_\_5\_\_  
 27. I don't have fun with other people. (X) \_\_2\_\_ X = 5  
 28. I don't feel particularly healthy. (X) \_\_1\_\_ X = 6  
 29. I don't have particularly happy memories of the past. (X) \_\_2\_\_ X = 5

**How to calculate your score:**

**Step 1:** Your scores on the 12 items marked with an X should be 'reversed-scored' that is, if you gave yourself 1, cross it out and change it to a 6; if you gave yourself a 2, change that to a 5; change a 3 to a 4; change a 4 to a 3; change a 5 to a 2; and change a 6 to a 1.

**Step 2:** Using the changed scores for those 12 items, now add your scores for all the 29 items.

**Step 3:** Happiness score = Total (from Step 2) divided by 29 =

Your Happiness score is 4.344 Date: 6/5/15

Your Happiness score is \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Happiness score is \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Happiness score is \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Happiness score is \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Happiness score is \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**References:**

Lyubomirsky, S 2010, *The how of happiness: A practical guide to getting the life you want*, Piatkus, Great Britain.

Sue-Ellen's Oxford Happiness Questionnaire final score:

THE OXFORD HAPPINESS QUESTIONNAIRE<sup>2</sup>

Instructions: Below are a number of statements about happiness. Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each statement by entering a number alongside it according to the scale below.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	
	strongly	moderately	slightly	slightly	moderately	strongly	
	disagree	disagree	disagree	agree	agree	agree	

1 I don't feel particularly pleased with the way I am (X)  2 X 5

2 I am intensely interested in other people  5

3 I feel that life is very rewarding  5

4 I have very warm feelings towards almost everyone  6

5 I rarely wake up feeling rested (X)  2 X 5

6 I'm not particularly optimistic about the future (X)  2 X 5

7 I find most things amusing  3

8 I am always committed and involved  4

9 Life is good  5

10 I don't think that the world is a good place (X)  4 X 3

11 I laugh a lot  4

12 I am well satisfied with everything in my life  3

13 I don't think I look attractive (X)  3 X 4

14 There's a gap between what I would like to do and what I have done (X)  3 X 4

15 I am very happy  5

16 I find beauty in some things  5

17 I always have a cheerful effect on others  5

18 I can find time for everything I want to  4

19 I feel that I'm not especially in control of my life (X)  2 X 5

20 I feel able to take anything on  4

21 I feel fully mentally alert  5

22 I often experience joy and elation  4

23 I don't find it easy to make decisions (X)  3 X 4

24 I don't have a particular sense of meaning and purpose in my life (X)  1 X 6

25 I feel I have a great deal of energy  5

26 I usually have a positive influence on events  5

27 I don't have fun with other people (X)  1 X 6

28 I don't feel particularly healthy (X)  1 X 6

29 I don't have particularly happy memories of the past (X)  3 X 4

**How to calculate your score:**

Step 1: Your scores on the 12 items marked with an X should be 'reverse-scored' – that is, if you gave yourself a 1, cross it out and change it to a 6; if you gave yourself a 2, change that to a 5; change a 3 to a 4; change a 4 to a 3; change a 5 to a 2; and change a 6 to a 1.

Step 2: Using the changed scores for those 12 items, now add your scores for all the 29 items

Step 3: Happiness score = Total (from Step 2) divided by 29 =

Your total happiness score is 4.55 Date: 3/6/15

Your total happiness score is \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Your total happiness score is \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Your total happiness score is \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Your total happiness score is \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## References:

Lyubomirsky, S 2010, *The how of happiness: A practical guide to getting the life you want*, Piatkus, Great Britain.



## Appendix 7a:

Celeste's initial optimism score:

**Life Orientation Test Revised (LOT-R)**

Please answer the following questions as honest and accurate as you can. Use the scale below as a guide.

0 = Strongly Disagree  
1 = Disagree  
2 = Neutral  
3 = Agree  
4 = Strongly Agree

1. In uncertain times, I usually expect the best.	3
2. It's easy for me to relax. [X]	3
3. If something can go wrong for me, it will.	1
4. I'm always optimistic about my future.	4
5. I enjoy my friends a lot. [X]	4
6. It's important for me to keep busy. [X]	3
7. I hardly ever expect things to go my way.	1
8. I don't get upset too easily. [X]	2
9. I rarely count on good things happening to me.	1
10. Overall, I expect more good things to happen to me than bad.	3

**Calculating your score:**

- The questions marked with [X] are fillers. They are not scored as part of the revised scale.
- Reverse score questions 3, 7 & 9 before scoring 0=4, 1=3, 2=2, 3=1, 4=0.
- To obtain your overall score, add up your score for questions 1, 3, 4, 7, 9 & 10.

**The LOT-R score:**

High Optimism: 19-24  
Moderate Optimism: 14-18  
Low Optimism: 0-13 13

## References

*Life Orientation Test-Revised* 2011, After Deployment, viewed 3 June 2015 <

<http://afterdeployment.dcoe.mil/sites/default/files/pdfs/assessment-tools/optimism-assessment.pdf>>.

LOT-R (*Life Orientation Test-Revised*) 2007, University of Miami Department of Psychology, viewed 3 June 2015, <<http://www.psy.miami.edu/faculty/ccarver/sci/LOT-R.html>>.

Celeste's final optimism score:

**Life Orientation Test Revised (LOT-R)**

Please answer the following questions as honest and accurate as you can. Use the scale below as a guide.

0 = Strongly Disagree  
1 = Disagree  
2 = Neutral  
3 = Agree  
4 = Strongly Agree

1. In uncertain times, I usually expect the best.	4
2. It's easy for me to relax. [X]	3
3. If something can go wrong for me, it will.	3
4. I'm always optimistic about my future.	4
5. I enjoy my friends a lot. [X]	4
6. It's important for me to keep busy. [X]	3
7. I hardly ever expect things to go my way.	2
8. I don't get upset too easily. [X]	3
9. I rarely count on good things happening to me.	2
10. Overall, I expect more good things to happen to me than bad.	3

**Calculating your score:**

- The questions marked with [X] are fillers. They are not scored as part of the revised scale.
- Reverse score questions 3,7 & 9 before scoring 0=4, 1=3, 2=2, 3=1, 4=0.
- To obtain your overall score, add up your score for questions 1,3,4,7,9 & 10.

**The LOT-R score:**

High Optimism: 19-24  
Moderate Optimism: 14-18 18  
Low Optimism: 0-13

## References

*LOT-R (Life Orientation Test-Revised)* 2007, University of Miami Department of Psychology, viewed 3 June 2015, <<http://www.psy.miami.edu/faculty/ccarver/sci/LOT-R.html>>.

*Life Orientation Test-Revised* 2011, After Deployment, viewed 3 June 2015 <<http://afterdeployment.dcoe.mil/sites/default/files/pdfs/assessment-tools/optimism-assessment.pdf>>.

## Appendix 7b:

Sue-Ellen's initial optimism score:

### Life Orientation Test Revised (LOT-R)

Please answer the following questions as honest and accurate as you can. Use the scale below as a guide.

- 0 = Strongly Disagree
- 1 = Disagree
- 2 = Neutral
- 3 = Agree
- 4 = Strongly Agree

- |  |                                    |
|--|------------------------------------|
| 1. In uncertain times, I usually expect the best.                | <input type="text" value="3"/>     |
| 2. It's easy for me to relax. [X]                                | <input type="text" value="4"/>     |
| 3. If something can go wrong for me, it will.                    | <input type="text" value="2 = 2"/> |
| 4. I'm always optimistic about my future.                        | <input type="text" value="3"/>     |
| 5. I enjoy my friends a lot. [X]                                 | <input type="text" value="3"/>     |
| 6. It's important for me to keep busy. [X]                       | <input type="text" value="2"/>     |
| 7. I hardly ever expect things to go my way.                     | <input type="text" value="1 = 3"/> |
| 8. I don't get upset too easily. [X]                             | <input type="text" value="4"/>     |
| 9. I rarely count on good things happening to me.                | <input type="text" value="1 = 3"/> |
| 10. Overall, I expect more good things to happen to me than bad. | <input type="text" value="3"/>     |

**Calculating your score:**

- The questions marked with [X] are fillers. They are not scored as part of the revised scale.
- Reverse score questions 3,7 & 9 before scoring 0=4, 1=3, 2=2, 3=1, 4=0.
- To obtain your overall score, add up your score for questions 1,3,4,7,9 & 10.

**The LOT-R score:**

High Optimism: 19-24

**Moderate Optimism: 14-18 - Score = 17**

Low Optimism: 0-13

**References**

*Life Orientation Test-Revised* 2011, After Deployment, viewed 3 June 2015 <<http://afterdeployment.dcoe.mil/sites/default/files/pdfs/assessment-tools/optimism-assessment.pdf>>.

*LOT-R (Life Orientation Test-Revised)* 2007, University of Miami Department of Psychology, viewed 3 June 2015, <<http://www.psy.miami.edu/faculty/ccarver/sciLOT-R.html>>.



## Sue-Ellen's final optimism score:

**Life Orientation Test Revised (LOT-R)**

Please answer the following questions as honest and accurate as you can. Use the scale below as a guide.

0 = Strongly Disagree  
1 = Disagree  
2 = Neutral  
3 = Agree  
4 = Strongly Agree

1. In uncertain times, I usually expect the best.	4
➤ 2. It's easy for me to relax. [X]	4
↔ 3. If something can go wrong for me, it will.	1 <sup>3</sup>
4. I'm always optimistic about my future.	4
➤ 5. I enjoy my friends a lot. [X]	3
6. It's important for me to keep busy. [X]	2
↔ 7. I hardly ever expect things to go my way.	1 <sup>3</sup>
➤ 8. I don't get upset too easily. [X]	4
↔ 9. I rarely count on good things happening to me.	1 <sup>3</sup>
10. Overall, I expect more good things to happen to me than bad.	3

**Calculating your score:**

- The questions marked with [X] are fillers. They are not scored as part of the revised scale.
- Reverse score questions 3,7 & 9 before scoring 0=4, 1=3, 2=2, 3=1, 4=0.
- To obtain your overall score, add up your score for questions 1,3,4,7,9 & 10.

**The LOT-R score:**

High Optimism: 19-24 = 20

Moderate Optimism: 14-18

Low Optimism: 0-13

## References

*Life Orientation Test-Revised* 2011, After Deployment, viewed 3 June 2015 <<http://afterdeployment.dcoe.mil/sites/default/files/pdfs/assessment-tools/optimism-assessment.pdf>>.

*LOT-R (Life Orientation Test-Revised)* 2007, University of Miami Department of Psychology, viewed 3 June 2015, <<http://www.psy.miami.edu/faculty/ccarver/sciLOT-R.html>>.