

QTurn Recommendations for Assessing Subjective Well-Being

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Assessing Subjective Well-Being

While the onset of pandemic conditions in March 2020 created a huge pivot for all education organizations, including OST providers, toward distance learning solutions and technological inequity. In OST organizations that focus on student's socio-emotional skills and wellbeing, pandemic conditions created new urgency to staff's desire to know how students and caregivers were doing. While many OST organizations know how to ask families about basic needs created by the pandemic – health care, housing, food, transportation – staff are less comfortable checking in on mental health issues. For example, during the March-April period, QTurn received a number of requests from OST providers for “a few questions we could ask” that would be the right ones to understand how students and caregivers were feeling. Clearly, pandemic conditions have imposed tangible stressor and traumatic experiences on many children and families so it is more important than ever to have a non-invasive way of checking in on the students, caregivers, and OST staff.

The concept of subjective-well-being (SWB) has traditionally been assessed using measures of happiness and satisfaction with life. More recently, SWB has been conceptualized and measured by reference to several underlying dimensions, such as positive feelings, negative feelings, and life satisfaction. “Many scholars argue that it is necessary to examine all three in order to draw conclusions about subjective well-being (Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2002; Lucas, Diener, & Suh, 1996)” (Jebb et al., 2020, p. 1). Most of the measurement instruments developed to assess SWB use several items to assess each of several dimensions. However, for simplicity and efficiency, we recommend using only one item for each of the three dimensions: positive feelings, negative feelings, and life satisfaction.

Positive Feelings:

On a scale of 1 to 10: During the past month, how often have you had positive feelings (e.g., happiness, joy, interest, calmness, and love)?

Response Scale: 1 (Never had Positive Feelings) to 10 (Always had Positive Feelings).

Negative Feelings:

On a scale of 1 to 10: During the past month, how often have you had negative feelings (e.g., sadness, fear, boredom, anxiety, and hate)?

Response Scale: 1 (Never had Negative Feelings) to 10 (Always had Negative Feelings).

Life Satisfaction:

On a scale of 1 to 10: During the past month, how satisfied have you felt with your life?”

Response Scale: 1 (Not at all Satisfied) to 10 (Completely Satisfied).

Informal Script

The staff member who has the closest relationship with the student should be the one who conducts the Subjective Well-Being Assessment (SWB-A). This assessment should happen individually during a planned individual check-in with the student. You may have an SEL check-in routine in place, and this assessment could happen during that time.

The script:

Staff: So this is the time when we check in to see how things are going, how school is going, and most importantly just to see how you are feeling. This is a difficult time for all of us, and it's our job to care about how you and your family are doing. Is that okay?

<< staff build rapport start with general check in prompts, like 'how's everything been going for you?' 'have you been keeping up with your school work?' 'have you been able to spend time talking with your friends?' 'how's everything been going for your family?' >>

OK, so now I have three questions to ask you about the last month or so. These questions are really simple, there are no right or wrong answers, and your answers won't be shared with anyone in your family, or your teachers, unless you ask me to share them for some reason:

First, on a scale of 1 to 10: **During the past month, how often have you had good feelings (like, happiness, joy, interest, calmness, or love)?**

A "1" means that you Never had any Good Feelings, and a "10" means that you Always had Good Feelings, but you can pick any number from 1 to 10.

[You can help them pick a number by keeping in mind that a "5" or less means "less than half the time" and a "6" or more means "more than half the time."]

[STAFF ENTER RATING]

That's great. Thank you.

Now that you've thought about having good feelings, let's think about bad feelings.

On a scale of 1 to 10: **During the past month, how often have you had bad feelings (like, sadness, fear, boredom, anxiety, or anger)?**

A "1" means that you Never had any Bad Feelings, and a "10" means that you Always had Bad Feelings, but you can pick any number from 1 to 10.

[Again, you can help them pick a number by keeping in mind that a "5" or less means "less than half the time" and a "6" or more means "more than half the time."]

[STAFF ENTER RATING]

That's great. Thank you.

So those were pretty easy, and this last question is easy too. It's about how you feel about your life in general, like if its totally great or not so great.

On a scale of 1 to 10: **During the past month, how satisfied have you felt with your life?**

A “1” means that you are Not at all Satisfied, and a “10” means that you are Completely Satisfied, but you can pick any number from 1 to 10.

[Again, you can help them pick a number by keeping in mind that a “5” or less means “less than half the time” and a “6” or more means “more than half the time.”]

[STAFF ENTER RATING]

That’s great. Thank you.

Is there anything else you’d like to talk about today?

Note: This is not a clinical instrument, and there is no cut-off score or pattern that automatically determines a crisis situation. If you encounter a young person who either (a) score very poorly (e.g., 5 or less on all 3 questions) or (b) explicitly ask for additional support please consult your local guidelines, and try to prepare with relevant referral information.

Additional Social and Emotional Behavioral Items

Adult Rating of Youth Behavior: Emotion Regulation

1. Easily manage both positive and negative feelings (e.g., didn't lash out at others when feeling bad; didn't brag or gloat when feeling good)?
2. How often did the youth describe feelings using more than simple words like happy or sad (e.g., embarrassed, exuberant, ashamed)?
3. How often did the youth describe the reason for their feelings (e.g., "I got into a fight with my mom" or "he called me names")

Adult Rating of Youth Behavior: Empathy

1. How often did the youth notice when someone was sad, upset, uncomfortable, or feeling rejected or bullied?
2. How often did the youth appear to share others' feelings (e.g., not just understand, but feel what someone else was feeling, or empathize with others)?
3. How often did the youth respond without judgement to other people's opinions, feelings, or situation?