

Given the current socio-political climate, how optimistic are you? Do you believe in the potential for change? Do you care about the future and your role in shaping it? Do you vote? This questionnaire is designed to help you assess your personal level of optimism, defined here as the ability to look problems head on and actively engage the solution. Please read each question in section one and circle the lettered answer you feel most closely resembles your response. Tally your score at the end by assigning the values in section two and then consider our analysis in section three. Posit Art encourages you to take stock and participate in any way you can. Your opinion and actions do make a difference, but only if you clarify them, express them, and then act on your convictions. Think hard. Be critical. Get creative. – Jan Estep, Gregory Scranton, 2004

+++++

1 Take the test

1. You've had a really rough day, your response is:
 - a. go for a long run, unwind with friends, rest up, and prepare for tomorrow
 - b. go out for a drink, forget your troubles, pretend it never happened
 - c. remain pent up, hold it all in, you're more anxious than ever in the morning
 - d. what bad day? you thrive in difficult situations
2. You see something that upsets you, you:
 - a. take deep breaths until you are calm
 - b. become tense, act out, get angry
 - c. shrug your shoulders and hope it will go away
 - d. take stock of your feelings, access the situation, and see what you can do to change it
3. When you don't get what you want, your response is:
 - a. to become bitter and resentful
 - b. you're disappointed but will work even harder to get it
 - c. to take what you want anyway, you deserve it
 - d. you make sure you want very little, so you're rarely disappointed
4. When you fail to accomplish your goal, your response is:
 - a. you are easily demoralized and have difficulty bouncing back
 - b. you experience short-term disappointment but you learn from your mistakes and use this as an opportunity to grow
 - c. life is but a long process of getting what you want, you'll find some other way to get it
 - d. you hardly ever take risks, so failure is not an option
5. When someone rejects you, your response is:
 - a. to blame yourself, what did you do wrong?
 - b. to blame them, they can't see what a good catch you are
 - c. to strike back, anger is a great way to fight a negative response
 - d. to realize it wasn't meant to be, there will be someone even better for you down the road
6. You receive really good news, you:
 - a. have a hard time believing it's true
 - b. jump for joy, savoring the results of all your hard work
 - c. are amazed at your good fortune, what a lucky dog you are
 - d. you never get truly good news, there's always a catch
7. You read about a pill that promises everlasting love and confidence, your response is:
 - a. what a bunch of nonsense
 - b. at last, the answer to my prayers
 - c. why not? a little more of both can't hurt
 - d. you wait till the trial runs are finished, claims verified, side effects disclosed, and FDA approves
8. You are seated on a very crowded bus or subway car and an older rider steps on board, you:
 - a. stand up and offer your seat
 - b. bury your nose in your book or turn up your iPod
 - c. look around and hope someone else gets up
 - d. halfheartedly offer your seat but hope they refuse
9. If a cashier gives you too much change, do you:
 - a. smile and say "thank you" as you pocket the extra money
 - b. pause for a moment to see if the cashier will notice the mistake
 - c. tell the cashier they've given you too much change
 - d. take the money and pass it on to someone who needs it more than you or the store
10. When asked by someone on the street for spare change, do you:
 - a. ignore them but quicken your pace
 - b. automatically say "Sorry, not today"
 - c. ask if you can buy them something to eat
 - d. give them whatever change you have

11. When you see someone slap their child in public, your response is:
 - a. the child probably deserved it, that'll teach them a lesson
 - b. you mutter "jerk" (or some similar expletive) as you walk on by
 - c. you empathize but keep out of it, parenting is a private matter
 - d. you step in and ask what's going on
12. When you face a tough ethical dilemma, your response is:
 - a. to flip a coin
 - b. to go with the majority
 - c. to do what's legal
 - d. to ask WWJD (What Would Jesus Do?)
 - e. to reason it out and do what is fair and just
 - f. to weigh the consequences and minimize potential harm
 - g. to protect your own interests
 - h. to preserve the relationships of those involved
 - i. to ignore it, time will take care of it
13. When you hear the word "ethical," you:
 - a. think about all the hypocrites in the world
 - b. think of a clear set of values that you hold dear and for which you are willing to fight
 - c. wonder how to make moral decisions in a complex, difficult world such as ours
 - d. have no response, the word isn't in your vocabulary
14. A solicitor of religious materials knocks on your door, you:
 - a. slam the door as soon as you see the materials in their hands
 - b. politely tell them you're not interested, but thanks anyway
 - c. engage them in a friendly debate, you're willing to listen to what they have to say
 - d. use this as an opportunity to explain the superiority of your own position
15. Someone rides your bumper on the highway, you:
 - a. signal as soon as you can to get out of their way
 - b. stay the course no matter how aggressive they get
 - c. speed up so they can't pass you
 - d. let them pass but then pursue them, it's payback time
16. Someone makes a racist or sexist joke, you:
 - a. laugh as if you agree it's funny
 - b. keep your mouth shut, people can think what they want
 - c. call them on it, if there aren't any harmful repercussions to you
 - d. call them on it, regardless of the situation
17. You encounter someone engaging in an activity that is legal but you consider to be unhealthy (e.g. eating fast food, smoking, drinking too much), you:
 - a. mind your own business, it's their body
 - b. silently judge them as you note the folly of their ways
 - c. approach them, encouraging and advocating a healthier lifestyle
 - d. try your hardest to get the government to take up the issue as a matter of public safety
18. You encounter someone engaging in an activity that is legal but you consider to be immoral (e.g. lying, cheating on your spouse, disrespecting others), you:
 - a. let them do what they may, they're the ones who have to live with their own conscience
 - b. mutter a snide comment under your breath and subconsciously hope they hear it
 - c. try to talk some sense in to them
 - d. try your best to raise the standards of social behavior to reflect a moral sensibility
19. You hear/read about a corporation engaging in an activity that is legal but you consider to be unhealthy (e.g. polluting, using toxic pesticides, not researching risks associated with their products), you:
 - a. keep out of it, they're not breaking any laws and profitable companies are good for the economy
 - b. appeal to the consumer's self-interest by broadcasting the ill effects
 - c. boycott the company and its products
 - d. initiate a challenge to the current laws, people should be protected from such unlawful actions
20. You hear/read about a corporation engaging in an activity that is legal but you consider to be immoral (e.g. producing SUVs or cigarettes, paying CEOs extravagant salaries, evading taxes), you:
 - a. ignore the problem as this kind of change is much too complex to effect
 - b. let the market decide what the people want
 - c. boycott the company and its products
 - d. try your best to outlaw such behavior, to make the law reflect your values

21. Your attitude toward social responsibility is:
- each person should contribute in the way they see fit, some people feel a sense of duty, others don't
 - you get angry, no one has the right to tell you what your responsibilities are
 - for a narcissistic culture such as ours the entire notion is outdated
 - you wonder how we can raise the level of civic participation across the board
22. When you watch the evening news, your response is:
- you are appalled at the level of biased reporting, and engage the TV in a one-sided debate on the issues
 - you pay attention as best you can but become numb under the onslaught
 - you zone out, watching television relaxes you
 - you don't watch the news, it's too depressing
23. When you watch the evening news, you:
- believe 100% of what is reported (why would they make this stuff up?)
 - believe 50% of what is reported (the news is slanted toward those stories that drive up audience numbers, things are dramatized for extra punch)
 - believe 25% of what is reported (the media is heavily influenced by its corporate sponsors)
 - believe 0% of what is reported (in a grand conspiracy the media is completely controlled by its corporate sponsors)
24. When the current President of the United States publicly addresses questions asked to him by the media, you:
- believe 100% of what is reported (you may disagree with his values, but trust he has the best interests of the country in mind)
 - believe 50% of what is reported (he is as truthful as he can be but some things are best kept secret, for reasons of national security)
 - believe 25% of what is reported (he knows the world is watching him, so there must be some grain of truth in what he says)
 - believe 0% of what is reported (so focused on his own agenda "truth" is just another name for propaganda)
25. You are voting on an issue that if passed will directly benefit you but will cause problems for a large majority of your neighbors, you:
- vote for the issue, it's not your fault other people will suffer
 - vote against the issue, you would expect other voters to do the same
 - vote against the issue until a fairer solution is found
 - abstain from voting altogether, since the issue is not a clear-cut, yes-or-no matter
26. You are voting on an issue that if passed will directly benefit a majority of people but at some cost to you (financial, emotional, physical), you:
- vote for the issue, if you can afford to
 - vote for the issue no matter what, all for the greater good
 - vote against the issue, you would never intentionally harm yourself
 - don't vote, let others decide your fate
27. There is a political bill that only effects members of the opposite sex, you:
- don't vote on it, since it does not effect you
 - vote with a friend of the opposite sex in mind, how would your mother/father or girlfriend/boyfriend vote?
 - vote with a friend of the opposite sex in mind, you have no problem deciding what would be in their best interests
 - choose the option that would best protect your own interests, what's good for the opposite sex isn't necessarily good for you
28. What do you base your political decisions on:
- popular opinion, polls
 - your party's stance on the issue
 - your gut instinct, if you can't trust your gut what can you trust?
 - informing yourself of the issues, considering all sides, and choosing wisely
29. When the candidate you vote for does not win the election, you:
- decide to become more involved in the political process
 - already involved, you promise to work even harder next time to help them win the election
 - you didn't really expect your vote would matter anyway
 - you don't vote, it's too depressing

- 30. When world leaders make a decision you feel is ineffective, your response is:
 - a. to watch the outcome and hope for the best
 - b. to arm yourself with facts and figures and write your senators
 - c. to mobilize a grassroots campaign against it
 - d. you don't get involved in world matters, the system is ineffective

- 31. When world leaders make a decision you feel is immoral, your response is:
 - a. to reconcile yourself to the majority rule, to the powers that be
 - b. to act out in any way possible with any means available
 - c. to mobilize the grassroots troops for battle
 - d. you don't get involved in world matters, it's hard enough taking care of yourself

+++++

2 Tally your score

- | | | | |
|---------------|-------------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| 1. 3, 1, 0, 2 | 9. 0, 1, 3, 1 | 17. 0, 1, 2, 3 | 25. 1, 2, 3, 0 |
| 2. 1, 2, 0, 3 | 10. 0, 1, 3, 2 | 18. 0, 1, 2, 3 | 26. 2, 2, 1, 0 |
| 3. 1, 3, 2, 0 | 11. 0, 0, 1, 3 | 19. 0, 2, 2, 3 | 27. 0, 3, 2, 1 |
| 4. 1, 3, 2, 0 | 12. 0, 1, 1, 2, 3, 2, 1, 3, 0 | 20. 0, 1, 2, 3 | 28. 1, 1, 2, 3 |
| 5. 0, 2, 1, 3 | 13. 1, 3, 2, 0 | 21. 2, 0, 1, 3 | 29. 2, 3, 1, 0 |
| 6. 1, 3, 2, 0 | 14. 0, 1, 3, 2 | 22. 2, 2, 1, 0 | 30. 1, 2, 3, 0 |
| 7. 1, 0, 2, 3 | 15. 3, 2, 1, 0 | 23. 0, 2, 3, 1 | 31. 1, 2, 3, 0 |
| 8. 3, 0, 1, 2 | 16. 0, 1, 2, 3 | 24. 0, 1, 2, 3 | |

Total

+++++

3 Where do you stand?

(0-14)

Okay, it's not that bad, is it? Your refusal to become engaged is disheartening but not hopeless. While it does seem that democracy has been hijacked and turned against those of us unwilling to play the bi-partisan game, we are still engaged in, and governed by, a constitution that protects our freedoms. It is your right to voice your opinion, to ask any question you want, and most importantly to vote. While it may seem ineffectual or sadly symbolic, you have the power of choice. Use this power to initiate change, one step at a time. It all starts with you.

(15-46)

Perhaps you are still questioning your potential as a single agent of change. Possibly joining a group or collective agency would help realize your latent desire for direct participation and give you the external support you need. It is important not to remain in apathy over the issues that most effect you and your community. You are already dissatisfied with the way things are, so get to it and do something about it. Speak up. Get involved. Change the world.

(47-78)

Despite the current political climate, you possess a realistic amount of optimism. You see potential for change and growth when confronted with problematic situations and are able to act in the face of your own skepticism. Remember, however, that remaining critical is essential to the initiation of change. Don't get complacent. Your sensitivity to complexities is crucial. Continue with your current positions and don't be afraid to share your viewpoints with others, even if they are met with resistance. This resistance will only make your positions stronger in the end.

(79-91)

Wow, you are positive. It is obvious that you are a natural born leader and have an inner drive that won't let you simply be a bystander. But be cautious with your approach, over-zealous leaders are often viewed as fanatical and self-righteous. Harness your energy and intellect and provide ideas and examples of change to your immediate surroundings. Chances are, the people you live and work with have similar ideas but are too tentative to act on them. Be the leading agent of change in your community. Your beliefs are contagious.