Optimism
Scheier, Carver, & Bridges, 1994

Holding positive outcome expectancies, termed optimism, is a well-known protective factor. These 3 items were adapted from the revised Life Orientation Test (LOT-R; Scheier, Carver, & Bridges, 1994), a widely used 10-item assessment of dispositional optimism. All four filler items and three additional items from the LOT-R were omitted to obtain this shortened version used in the Life Paths study.

Reliability & validity: In our rural, low-income sample, internal consistency (coefficient alpha) was .55 and in a pilot sample of 104 participants the correlation with an informant who knew the participant well was .53. Construct validity was demonstrated with moderate correlation with a measure of purpose.

Scoring: To obtain an optimism score, the responses to each item were added together, with a higher score indicating a higher level of optimism. Items 1 and 2 were reverse coded.


1. If something can go wrong for me, it will.
   Mostly true about me ....................... 1
   Somewhat true about me .................... 2
   A little true about me ...................... 3
   Not true about me .......................... 4

2. I hardly ever expect things to go my way.
   Mostly true about me ....................... 1
   Somewhat true about me .................... 2
   A little true about me ...................... 3
   Not true about me .......................... 4

3. Overall, I expect more good things to happen to me than bad.
   Mostly true about me ....................... 4
   Somewhat true about me .................... 3
   A little true about me ...................... 2
   Not true about me .......................... 1