



Visit www.cengage.com/devenglish/doleconnect and select Chapter 7 to hear vocabulary words from this selection and view a video about this topic.

◆ Reading Journal

◆ What seems to be the main idea of the reading selection?

subjective well-being This expression is defined in the same sentence. What does it mean?

◆ How would you answer the question that the heading poses?

Exploring the Ingredients of Happiness

Wayne Weiten

1 Answer the following “true” or “false.”

1. The empirical evidence indicates that most people are relatively unhappy.
2. Although wealth doesn’t guarantee happiness, wealthy people are much more likely to be happy than the rest of the population.
3. People who have children are happier than people without children.
4. Good health is an essential requirement for happiness.
5. Good-looking people are happier than those who are unattractive.

2 The answer to all these questions is “false.” These assertions are all reasonable and widely believed hypotheses about the correlates of happiness, but they have not been supported by empirical research. Recent years have brought a surge of interest in the correlates of subjective well-being—individuals’ personal perceptions of their overall happiness and life satisfaction. The findings of these studies are quite interesting. As you have already seen from our true-false questions, many commonsense notions about happiness appear to be inaccurate.

How Happy Are People?

3 One of these inaccuracies is the apparently widespread assumption that most people are relatively unhappy. Writers, social scientists, and the general public seem to believe that people around the world are predominantly dissatisfied and unhappy, yet empirical surveys consistently find that the vast majority of respondents—even those who are poor or disabled—characterize themselves as fairly happy (Diener & Diener, 1996; Myers & Diener, 1995). When people are asked to rate their happiness, only a small minority place themselves below the neutral point on the various scales used (see Figure 7.2). When the average subjective well-being of entire nations is computed, based on almost 1000 surveys, the means cluster toward the