

# Livin' the Good Life?

## OVERVIEW

Students develop indicators to measure quality of life and conduct a survey of peers and adults to obtain data for their indicators. They analyze the survey data using spreadsheet software and produce charts to demonstrate their results. Students compare their own performance as measured by the quality of life indicators against averages determined by the survey results.

## INQUIRY/CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS

- How is quality of life measured?
- What are other ways to measure quality of life?
- How does the concept of what is necessary for a high quality life change over the course of our lives?

## OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- Develop quality of life indicators
- Develop and administer a quality of life survey
- Analyze data and present the results
- Understand the connection between how quality of life is measured and global issues such as sustainability, inequality, poverty, and good governance

## TIME REQUIRED: 3 hours\*

\*plus out of class time for data collection and entry

## KEY ISSUES/CONCEPTS

- Quality of life
- Community indicators

## SUBJECT AREAS

- **Social Studies**  
(Civics/Government, Economics, Global Studies, Contemporary World Problems)
- **Science** (Environmental)
- **Math**
- **Technology/Computers**
- **Business/Finance**

## NATIONAL STANDARDS CONSISTENCY

- **NCSS: 1, 2, 3, 4, 9, 10**
- **NSES: F**

## GRADE LEVEL: 9–12



## FTF Related Reading

- Intermediate: Chapter 6 from *Global Issues and Sustainable Solutions*
- Advanced: Unit 4, Chapters 1, 2, 3, and 5 from *It's All Connected*

## Materials/Preparation

- Overhead: *Quality of Life Categories*
- Overhead/Handout: *Quality of Life Survey* (you can download the survey form from [www.facingthefuture.org](http://www.facingthefuture.org))

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- Handout: *Excel Instruction Sheet*, 1 copy per student
  - Students will need basic competency with spreadsheet applications (e.g. Microsoft Excel). You may need to review how to enter data and perform basic summing and averaging functions before beginning this exercise.
3. Give the class the following information and instructions:
    - You are going to develop indicators (measurements) to evaluate quality of life based on these categories. You will develop and administer a survey of peers and adults asking for data on the indicators you develop.
    - In groups of 2-3 students, each group will come up with an indicator for 1 of these broad quality of life categories either from the pre-prepared list or from the list created by the class.
    - The indicators must be **measurable in units of time or quantities** and should fit into the formula **Number of \_\_\_\_ per \_\_\_\_\_**. For example, if an important element of quality of life is Relaxation, how would you measure that (e.g. number of hours per week you do after-school activities; number of days you take a vacation per year)?
    - Consider how easy or difficult it will be for the people you survey to provide data for the indicators. For example, an indicator of Recreation could be the number of milliseconds a person spends playing sports every day, but not many people can tell you how many milliseconds they spend doing anything!

## Activity – Day 1

### Introduction

1. (Optional) Do a Sides Debate using 1 of the following prompts (see Sides Debate description on page 28):
  - “People who make more money have a better quality of life.”
  - “The 40 hour work week should be reduced to 32 hours.”
2. Ask the class, “If everyone in the world was “livin’ the good life,” what would we have in common?” OR “If everyone in the world had a high quality of life, how do you think the world might be different than it is today?” (Encourage students to think about quality of life as a positive concept, not just a lack of negative aspects. For example, the World Health Organization defines “health” as “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.”)

### Steps

1. Ask the class to brainstorm general categories of things in their lives that are important to their quality of life. Start with 1 example such as “family”.
2. Either use the categories that they come up with or display the overhead, *Quality of Life Categories*.
4. Break the class into groups of 2-3 students, and assign each group one of the quality of life categories. Tell the groups they will have about 10 minutes to come up with their indicator and write it on a piece of paper. Circulate around the groups and assist where necessary.
5. Have each group tell you the indicator they came up with and write it on a transparency of the survey. Check that the indicator is something measurable in units of time or

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quantity, and that a person being surveyed could provide an answer easily. Check that the indicator will fit into the formula **Number of \_\_\_\_ per \_\_\_\_**.

6. Explain to the whole class that you will create a final survey based on their indicators and then the students will survey peers and adults to assess their quality of life as defined by these indicators.
7. Show the transparency of the indicators and conclude Day 1 with the following reflection questions.



lives to be in line

with 1 or more of these indicators? (For example, if it was socially accepted that a quality of life measurement for Relaxation is the number of vacation days taken annually then people might adjust their balance between work and vacation time.)

## Activity – Day 2

### Materials/Preparation

- Download and save on your computer the *Quality of Life Survey* from

[www.facingthefuture.org](http://www.facingthefuture.org)

(or make a copy or retype the handout *Quality of Life Survey*).

Type in the students' indicators in the "Indicator" section of the survey form.

- Make 7 copies of the completed *Quality of Life Survey* for each student in the class (1 copy for each student to complete during class, and 6 for each student to administer outside of class). You may decide that students will conduct more or less than 6 surveys outside of class, but the quantity of surveys per student should remain an even number to ensure that survey data from their peers and adults is represented equally.
- Make 1 copy of the *Excel Instruction Sheet* handout for each student.

### Steps

1. Tell the class that they are going to take

## Assessment Reflection Questions - - Day 1

### For Intermediate and Advanced Students

- Why did you choose the indicator you did to define your quality of life category?
- Can you think of other indicators for the categories written on the transparency? (Note: Do not change the original indicators given by the groups, as you will use those indicators for the survey portion of the exercise. Be sure that the students do not attack each other's ideas; explain that there are many different ways to measure quality of life.)
- How do you think people might adjust their

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a survey themselves and then administer the same survey to peers and adults in order to gather data for their quality of life indicators.

2. Explain that by collecting data, the class will be able to see the average performance in quality of life for their community, as well as determine how their personal quality of life compares against the community average.
3. Give each student 1 copy of the *Quality of Life Survey* you have prepared with their indicators and have them complete it in class. Tell them to be as accurate and honest as possible with the data they provide. Be sure they write their name on their survey, as you will be handing it back to them later.
4. Collect the surveys and tell the students they will get their surveys back later so they can compare their performance against the community average.
5. Pass out the remaining 6 surveys for each student and go over the *Survey and Excel Instructions*.
6. Tell the students to be aware of problems they may encounter when conducting their surveys that could make the data they collect less accurate. Typical issues to be aware of when conducting a survey include:
  - Are the people they are surveying being honest?
  - Are they surveying people in groups, instead of individually (people tend to adjust their answers based on what they hear their peers saying)?
  - Do people understand the questions?
  - Do people have enough information to give an accurate answer?
7. Ask the class to think of reasons why

inaccurate data could be harmful if it is used to make important decisions.

8. Give them about 2-4 days to conduct their surveys, enter the data in Excel, and turn in their Excel documents to you.

## Activity – Day 3

### Materials/Preparation

- Prior to class, cut and paste the data from the students' Excel sheets so that all the students' survey results are combined in 1 master sheet (you may want to give this task to a teacher assistant or a student).
- Calculate the average of the data for each indicator, combining the data for "Peer and Adult", "Peer only", and "Adult only" (i.e. add all numbers together for each indicator and divide by the total number of respondents).
- Print out a copy of the results and bring to class.
- Create and expand the following table on the board or overhead (or if you have access to an LCD projector you can display the actual Excel chart), including all of the survey indicators and the data from each set of respondents:

Indicator	Average Peer/Adult	Average Peer	Average Adult

### Steps

1. Ask the students how their surveying went, and if they think the data they collected is accurate.
2. Ask if they noticed any significant differences between responses from peers and adults.
3. Tell the students that you have combined

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all of their data, and that you now have averages for their community's performance in each quality of life category. Ask them how they would determine the average, or explain how you obtained the averages.



4. Tell the students you are going to give them back the personal surveys they completed earlier so they can compare their responses to the community averages.
5. Give each student his/her own *Quality of Life Survey*.
6. Have the students look at their personal surveys and compare their performance against the averages of the other survey respondents (adults and peers).
7. Bring the class together for reflection questions.

## Assessment Reflection Questions – Day 3

### *For Intermediate and Advanced Students*

- Do you think this process accurately measures quality of life? What worked and what was difficult about the process?
- What was surprising about the results?
- What could you and/or other people do differently to change or improve your/their quality of life?
- How did the results of the class surveys compare to the community's averages?
- Are these indicators of quality of life sustainable? If everyone on the planet

measured well-being by these indicators, what would the impact be on the environment, the economy, and society?

**For Advanced Students**

- If this process was accepted as the right way to measure quality of life, should governments be

responsible for guaranteeing people a basic level of quality of life?

- How is our government currently involved in guaranteeing basic quality of life (minimum wage, national parks, etc.)? Should they be more involved? Less involved?
- Would the indicators for quality of life be the same across this country? The world? For example, how might they differ between a wealthier country and a poorer country?
- How are international standards for quality of life determined?

## Writing Connection

- Have students research an African cultural group, and write a brief paper explaining how they think this tribe might measure “the good life” in light of their values, economic system, spiritual beliefs, and geographic location. A list of African cultural groups, including basic background on geography, history, culture, and economics can be found at: <http://www.africaguide.com/culture/tribes/>. The students can compare and contrast their interpretation of the cultural group's good life with their own interpretation of the good life. They can use the indicators developed in class during the exercise, or create their own indicators.

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Students may need to conduct some additional web based research on the cultural group they choose to supplement the information found on this site.

## Action Projects

- Have students write a “Quality of Life Report” for their local newspaper, based on the survey. Include the research methodology, results, and recommendations.
- Develop an “Alternative Holiday Catalog” with ideas for gifts that improve the quality of life of individuals in your local and global community. Distribute the catalogs at school events and in the community.
- Visit [www.facingthefuture.org](http://www.facingthefuture.org) and click on **Take Action** for more information and action opportunities related to quality of life.

## Additional Resources

### Films

- *Affluenza*, 1997, 56 minutes; *Escape from Affluenza*, 1998, 56 minutes, John de Graaf, Bullfrog Films. Humorous documentary films on the history and effects of consumption and a growing movement to live simply and consume less. [www.bullfrogfilms.com](http://www.bullfrogfilms.com)
- *Work and Time* (from “Reinventing the World” series), David Springbett and Heather MacAndrew, Bullfrog Films, 2000. This 50 minute documentary examines work and time as intertwined problems in our fast-forward lives. [www.bullfrogfilms.com](http://www.bullfrogfilms.com)

### Books

- *Take Back Your Time: Fighting Overwork and Time Poverty in America*, John de Graaf, Editor, Berrrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., San Francisco, 2003. The official handbook of the national movement behind “Take Back Your Time Day”

### Websites

- [www.yesmagazine.org](http://www.yesmagazine.org) – Yes! Magazine’s 2004 Summer Issue discusses what constitutes the good life according to a range of people including scientists, writers, sociologists, and religious leaders.
- <http://hdr.undp.org/statistics/> United Nations Development Program (UNDP) page on statistics and indicators.
- [http://www.who.int/substance\\_abuse/research\\_tools/whoqolbref/en/](http://www.who.int/substance_abuse/research_tools/whoqolbref/en/) The World Health Organization’s Quality of Life project uses a life assessment instrument to measure 26 broad areas, including physical health, psychological health, social relationships, and environment.
- [www.redefiningprogress.org](http://www.redefiningprogress.org) Redefining Progress is a leading organization in creating indicators that measure progress in the context of sustainable development.
- [www.timeday.org](http://www.timeday.org) – Home of the October 24th “Take Back Your Time Day”.
- [www.sustainablemeasures.com](http://www.sustainablemeasures.com) Sustainable Measures develops indicators that measure progress toward a sustainable economy, society and environment. Their website offers information and resources on sustainable indicators.

**Lesson 22 Overhead:**

# **Quality of Life Categories**

**Family**

**Recreation**

**Creative Pursuits**

**Work/Earning Money**

**Friends**

**Health**

**The Environment**

**Rest/Relaxation**

**Spiritual Pursuits**

**Volunteering/Helping Others**

# Quality of Life Survey

Survey Administered by (your name): \_\_\_\_\_

Person being surveyed is:  Peer (Age 18 or younger)  Adult (Older than 18)

Quality of Life Category	Indicator
Family	Number of _____ per _____ Answer:
Recreation	Number of _____ per _____ Answer:
Creative Pursuits	Number of _____ per _____ Answer:
Work/Earning Money	Number of _____ per _____ Answer:
Friends	Number of _____ per _____ Answer:
Health	Number of _____ per _____ Answer:
The Environment	Number of _____ per _____ Answer:
Rest/Relaxation	Number of _____ per _____ Answer:
Spiritual Pursuits	Number of _____ per _____ Answer:

# Lesson 22 Handout: Survey and Excel Instructions for “Livin’ the Good Life?”

## Step 1 – Administer Quality of Life Survey:

- Each student will survey 3 different peers outside of this class (under the age of 18) and 3 different adults (e.g. parents, teachers, relatives, etc.) using the Quality of Life Survey developed by your class.
- Survey responders do not need to give their name, but you will need to check the “Peer” or “Adult” box on the survey form.
- Explain to the survey responders that your class has developed some quality of life indicators and that you would appreciate them taking 5 minutes of their time to answer some questions (Note: Be sure that they have not already been given the survey by another student in your class).
- While administering the surveys, be sure to keep the units of measurement constant for each indicator. If an indicator is “hours of sleep per day”, make sure that hours per day is the measurement consistently used for that indicator, and not hours per week, per month, etc.
- If someone cannot answer a question, record that as N/A for “Not Available”.
- Record their answers legibly, since you will need to type it into the Excel sheet later.

## Step 2 – Create Excel Spreadsheet and Input Survey Data:

- Create an Excel document like the one in the example below and save it on your computer or on a disk.
- Enter the data from your surveys into the Excel spreadsheet. Enter peer or adult in the left hand column and their response under each category as shown in the example below. The sample data filled in below represents data from one surveyed peer and one surveyed adult (this data is just an example; the categories and indicators your class came up with may produce completely different kinds of numbers).
- If you have surveys with some unanswered indicators, DO NOT enter 0 in that category on the Excel sheet. Write N/A, like in the example under the “Creative Pursuits” category. Only use 0 if their answer is actually 0.

Quality of Life Data Entry Sheet [Your names]										
	Categories									
Respondent Type (Peer or Adult)	Family	Rec.	Creative Pursuits	Work/ Earning Money	Friends	Health	The Environment	Rest/ Relax	Spiritual Pursuits	Volunteer/ Helping Others
Peer	5	2	N/A	5	4	10	0	30	1	2
Adult	7	1	2	40	2	12	5	10	3	3
Adult										
Peer										

## Step 3 – Submit Excel Spreadsheet:

- After you have entered all your data, save the spreadsheet and either e-mail or hand in a disk to your teacher.
- Be sure you include your name somewhere in the e-mail or written on the disk.