

# Aspirations Index

## Scale Description

Aspirations refer to people's life goals, and SDT research on aspirations has focused on the relative strength of **intrinsic aspirations** (viz., meaningful relationships, personal growth, and community contributions) versus **extrinsic aspirations** (viz., wealth, fame, and image). Specifically, research has examined the antecedents, correlates, and consequences of placing strong relative importance on the extrinsic versus the intrinsic aspirations. Additional research has examined the consequences of actually attaining extrinsic versus intrinsic aspirations.

The Aspiration Index was developed to assess people's aspirations. There are 7 categories of aspirations with five specific items within each category. The seven categories include: the extrinsic aspirations of wealth, fame, and image; the intrinsic aspirations of meaningful relationships, personal growth, and community contributions; and the aspiration of good health which turned out not to be clearly either extrinsic or intrinsic. Participants rate: (1) the importance to themselves of each aspiration, (2) their beliefs about the likelihood of attaining each, and (3) the degree to which they have already attained each. Various approaches to data analyses can be found in research articles such as Kasser and Ryan (1996).

Research has revealed that having strong relative aspirations for extrinsic outcomes was *negatively* associated with mental health indicators; whereas, placing more importance on intrinsic aspirations was found to be *positively* associated with mental health indicators (Kasser & Ryan, 1993; 1996). Studies have also shown that, whereas self-reported attainment of intrinsic aspirations was positively associated with well-being, attainment of extrinsic aspirations was not (Kasser & Ryan, in press; Ryan, Chirkov, Little, Sheldon, Timoshina, & Deci, 1999). Further, Sheldon and Kasser (1998) found in a longitudinal study that well-being was enhanced by attainment of intrinsic goals, whereas success at extrinsic goals provided little benefit. Finally, initial evidence suggests that controlling, uninvolved parenting is associated with the development of strong relative extrinsic aspiration, whereas autonomy-supportive, involved parenting is associated with the development of stronger intrinsic aspirations (Kasser, Ryan, Sameroff, & Zax, 1995; Williams, Cox, Hedberg, & Deci, 2000). Chapters by Ryan, Sheldon, Kasser, & Deci (1996) and Kasser (in press) are excellent sources for reviews of this research area.

## References

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## The Scale

### Aspirations

Everyone has long-term Goals or Aspirations. These are the things that individuals hope to accomplish over the course of their lives. In this section, you will find a number of life goals, presented one at a time, and we ask you three questions about each goal. (a) How important is this goal to you? (b) How likely is it that you will attain this goal in your future? and (c) How much have you already achieved this goal thus far? Please use the following scale in answering each of the three questions about each life goal.

not at all			moderately			very
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

**Life-goal:** To be a very wealthy person.

1. How important is this to you?
2. How likely is it that this will happen in your future?

3. How much have you already attained this goal?

**Life-goal:** To grow and learn new things.

4. How important is this to you?

5. How likely is it that this will happen in your future?

6. How much have you already attained this goal?

**Life-goal:** To have my name known by many people.

7. How important is this to you?

8. How likely is it that this will happen in your future?

9. How much have you already attained this goal?

**Life-goal:** To have good friends that I can count on.

10. How important is this to you?

11. How likely is it that this will happen in your future?

12. How much have you already attained this goal?

**Life-goal:** To successfully hide the signs of aging.

13. How important is this to you?

14. How likely is it that this will happen in your future?

15. How much have you already attained this goal?

**Life-goal:** To work for the betterment of society.

16. How important is this to you?

17. How likely is it that this will happen in your future?

18. How much have you already attained this goal?

**Life-goal:** To be physically healthy.

19. How important is this to you?

20. How likely is it that this will happen in your future?

21. How much have you already attained this goal?

**Life-goal:** To have many expensive possessions.

22. How important is this to you?

23. How likely is it that this will happen in your future?

24. How much have you already attained this goal?

**Life-goal:** At the end of my life, to be able to look back on my life as meaningful and complete.

25. How important is this to you?

26. How likely is it that this will happen in your future?

27. How much have you already attained this goal?

**Life-goal:** To be admired by many people.

28. How important is this to you?

29. How likely is it that this will happen in your future?

30. How much have you already attained this goal?

**Life-goal:** To share my life with someone I love.

31. How important is this to you?

32. How likely is it that this will happen in your future?

33. How much have you already attained this goal?

**Life-goal:** To have people comment often about how attractive I look.

34. How important is this to you?

35. How likely is it that this will happen in your future?

36. How much have you already attained this goal?

**Life-goal:** To assist people who need it, asking nothing in return.

37. How important is this to you?

38. How likely is it that this will happen in your future?

39. How much have you already attained this goal?

**Life-goal:** To feel good about my level of physical fitness.

40. How important is this to you?

41. How likely is it that this will happen in your future?

42. How much have you already attained this goal?

**Life-goal:** To be financially successful.

43. How important is this to you?

44. How likely is it that this will happen in your future?

45. How much is this satisfied currently?

**Life-goal:** To choose what I do, instead of being pushed along by life.

46. How important is this to you?

47. How likely is it that this will happen in your future?

48. How much is this satisfied currently?

**Life-goal:** To be famous.

49. How important is this to you?

50. How likely is it that this will happen in your future?

51. How much have you already attained this goal?

**Life-goal:** To have committed, intimate relationships.

52. How important is this to you?

53. How likely is it that this will happen in your future?

54. How much have you already attained this goal?

**Life-goal:** To keep up with fashions in hair and clothing.

55. How important is this to you?

56. How likely is it that this will happen in your future?

57. How much have you already attained this goal?

**Life-goal:** To work to make the world a better place.

58. How important is this to you?

59. How likely is it that this will happen in your future?

60. How much have you already attained this goal?

**Life-goal:** To keep myself healthy and well.

61. How important is this to you?

62. How likely is it that this will happen in your future?

63. How much have you already attained this goal?

**Life-goal:** To be rich.

64. How important is this to you?

65. How likely is it that this will happen in your future?

66. How much have you already attained this goal?

**Life-goal:** To know and accept who I really am.

67. How important is this to you?

68. How likely is it that this will happen in your future?

69. How much have you already attained this goal?

**Life-goal:** To have my name appear frequently in the media.

70. How important is this to you?

71. How likely is it that this will happen in your future?

72. How much have you already attained this goal?

**Life-goal:** To feel that there are people who really love me, and whom I love.

73. How important is this to you?

74. How likely is it that this will happen in your future?

75. How much have you already attained this goal?

**Life-goal:** To achieve the "look" I've been after.

76. How important is this to you?

77. How likely is it that this will happen in your future?

78. How much have you already attained this goal?

**Life-goal:** To help others improve their lives.

79. How important is this to you?

80. How likely is it that this will happen in your future?

81. How much have you already attained this goal?

**Life-goal:** To be relatively free from sickness.

82. How important is this to you?

83. How likely is it that this will happen in your future?

84. How much have you already attained this goal?

**Life-goal:** To have enough money to buy everything I want.

85. How important is this to you?

86. How likely is it that this will happen in your future?

87. How much have you already attained this goal?

**Life-goal:** To gain increasing insight into why I do the things I do.

88. How important is this to you?

89. How likely is it that this will happen in your future?

90. How much have you already attained this goal?

**Life-goal:** To be admired by lots of different people.

91. How important is this to you?

92. How likely is it that this will happen in your future?

93. How much have you already attained this goal?

**Life-goal:** To have deep enduring relationships.



94. How important is this to you?

95. How likely is it that this will happen in your future?

96. How much have you already attained this goal?

**Life-goal:** To have an image that others find appealing.

97. How important is this to you?

98. How likely is it that this will happen in your future?

99. How much have you already attained this goal?

**Life-goal:** To help people in need.

100. How important is this to you?

101. How likely is it that this will happen in your future?

102. How much have you already attained this goal?

**Life-goal:** To have a physically healthy life style.

103. How important is this to you?

104. How likely is it that this will happen in your future?

105. How much have you already attained this goal?

**Scoring Information.** There are seven categories of aspirations or life goals, with 5 specific goals within each category. Further, there are three questions about each specific goal: namely, how important is it; how likely it is that you will attain it; and how much have you already attained it. To score this scale, you first calculate three subscale scores for each of the several aspiration categories: the importance score; the likelihood score; and the attainment score. To do this, average the items responses in that subscale.

Wealth:	importance	1, 22, 43, 64, 85
	likelihood	2, 23, 44, 65, 86
	attainment	3, 34, 45, 66, 87

Fame:	importance	7, 28, 49, 70, 91
	likelihood	8, 29, 50, 71, 92
	attainment	9, 30, 51, 72, 93
Image:	importance	13, 34, 55, 76, 97
	likelihood	14, 35, 56, 77, 98
	attainment	15, 36, 57, 78, 99
Personal growth:	importance	4, 25, 46, 67, 88
	likelihood	5, 26, 47, 68, 89
	attainment	6, 27, 48, 69, 90
Relationships:	importance	10, 31, 52, 73, 94
	likelihood	11, 32, 53, 74, 95
	attainment	12, 33, 54, 75, 96
Community:	importance	16, 37, 58, 79, 100
	likelihood	17, 38, 59, 80, 101
	attainment	18, 39, 60, 81, 102
Health:	importance	19, 40, 61, 82, 103
	likelihood	20, 41, 62, 83, 104
	attainment	21, 42, 63, 84, 105

In most studies, only six of these seven aspiration categories have been used, health being the one that has typically not been used. The other six categories fall neatly into two factors: an **extrinsic aspiration** factor, including wealth, fame, and image; and an **intrinsic aspiration** factor, including personal growth, relationships, and community contribution. In some analyses, an extrinsic aspiration score is calculated by averaging the subscale scores for the three extrinsic aspirations and an intrinsic aspiration score is calculated by averaging the subscale scores for the three intrinsic aspirations. For more information on analyses with these scales see Kasser and Ryan (1996) and other articles that have used the scale (which are listed above as part of the scale description).

Kasser, T., & Ryan, R. M. (1996). Further examining the American dream: Differential correlates of intrinsic and extrinsic goals. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 22, 280-287.