GREEN ZONE, RED ZONE

When there’s a challenge to one of your three core needs – safety, satisfaction, and connection – what usually happens? How able are you to deal with threats, losses, and rejections without getting carried away by fear and anger, by frustration and drivenness, by hurt and aggressiveness? Or to ask this question in a more positive way, how able are you to stay in the “green zone” – with a strong inner sense of peace, contentment, and love – when the world or the people around you are going “red?”

You can explore this topic by reflecting on and answering the questions below. Of course, a brief quiz like this one can’t cover all aspects of these matters, and feel free to adapt these questions to your own situation and needs, ignore some if you like, and even add new ones for yourself to answer. And it might be interesting to talk about these questions with others, including on the Foundations forum.

For each question, try to find a response in one of these five categories:

1 - strongly disagree  |  2 - disagree  |  3 - neither agree nor disagree  |  4 - agree  |  5 - strongly agree

A person’s responses to questions like these are often more complex and nuanced than a single number can indicate. But for scoring purposes, for each question please choose the number above that is most accurate (or least inaccurate!).

QUESTIONS

I often experience a strong sense of anxiety (worry, fear).

I often experience a strong sense of anger (irritation, annoyance, exasperation).

I often feel like I’m depleted or used up inside.

I often experience a strong sense of frustration (feeling thwarted).

I often experience a strong sense of drivenness (pressure, have to get things done).

It seems like little things bother me more than they used to.

I often experience a strong sense of hurt (feeling let down, mistreated).

I often experience a strong sense of inadequacy (not valued, unwanted).

I often experience a strong sense of resentment (grudge, antagonism, hostility).

If I feel anxious, angry, frustrated, driven, hurt, inadequate, or resentful, it often takes me quite a while to feel good again inside.

Your responses to particular questions can be taken at face value, in their own right, as opportunities for seeing useful things about yourself, for investigating further—perhaps talking about them with others—and for identifying inner resources that would be good to develop further in yourself.

Additionally, it can be helpful to get an overall sense of where you stand. Add up your responses to each question to get your total score. See where your score fits in just below; please hold these descriptions lightly, but in a general sense it could well be true that:

10 - 20 | You are not experiencing negative emotions very often – and when you do, you are recovering quickly from them or holding them in a larger context of well-being. You are able to deal with challenges – with threats, losses, and rejections – on the basis of a strong underlying feeling of being resource inside. When aspects of your experience are unpleasant, you can respond appropriately but without fighting or fleeing. When aspects of your experience are pleasant, you can enjoy them without trying to hold onto them or chase after them. When aspects of your experience are heartfelt, you usually stay balanced inside, without getting entangled with others or distancing from them. There is not much real basis for “craving” in your mind (i.e., resisting what’s unpleasant, grasping after what’s pleasant, and clinging to what’s heartfelt).

21 - 39 | You are not overwhelmed with negative emotions – the hallmark of the Reactive mode of avoiding harms, approaching rewards, and attaching to others – but you’re probably feeling considerably more of these than you’d like. When life is challenging, in general you are reasonably resilient, though challenges in the area of one of your core needs (safety, satisfaction, connection) could be particularly difficult for you; for example, you could be able to stay in the “green zone” related to safety and satisfaction, but interpersonal issues might all too easily have you seeing red.

40 - 50 | Currently, you are experiencing a lot of negative feelings and a high degree of emotional reactivity. When things are challenging, they really get to you, and it takes you a long while to return to a positive baseline. If you’re not already getting professional support for these issues, please consider doing so. Try to have compassion for yourself (see the resources in the Self-Caring pillar); the challenges facing you these days are probably substantial, plus they could well be stirring up negative material from your past (perhaps including childhood). It’s also important to receive appropriate support from others, and to develop more of the inner resources that will help you deal with challenges in ways that feel better for you.