

READING PASSAGE 2

You should spend about 20 minutes on Question 14-26, which are based on Reading Passage 2 below.

Second nature

Your personality isn't necessarily set in stone. With a little experimentation, people can reshape their temperaments and inject passion, optimism, joy and courage into their lives

A Psychologists have long held that a person's character cannot undergo a transformation in any meaningful way and that the key traits () of personality are determined at a very young age. However, researchers have begun looking more closely at ways we can change. Positive psychologists have identified 24 qualities we admire, such as loyalty and kindness, and are studying them to find out why they come so naturally to some people. What they're discovering is that many of these qualities amount to habitual () behavior that determines the way we respond to the world. The good news is that all this can be learned. Some qualities are less challenging to develop than others, optimism being one of them. However, developing qualities requires mastering a range of skills which are diverse and sometimes surprising. For example, to bring more joy and passion into your life, you must be open to experiencing negative emotions. Cultivating such qualities will help you realize your full potential.

B 'The evidence is good that most personality traits can be altered,' says Christopher Peterson, professor of psychology at the University of Michigan, who cites himself as an example. Inherently () introverted (), he realized early on that as an academic, his reticence () would prove disastrous () in the lecture hall. So he learned to be more outgoing and to entertain his classed. 'Now my extroverted behavior is spontaneous,' he says.

C David Fajgenbaum had to make a similar transition. He was preparing for university, when he has an accident that put an end to his sports career. On campus, he quickly found that beyond ordinary counselling, the university had no services for students who were undergoing physical rehabilitation () and suffering from depression like him. He therefore launched a support group to help others in similar situation. He took action despite his own pain - a typical response of an optimist.

D Suzanne Segerstrom, professor of psychology at the University of Kentucky, believes that the key to increasing optimism is through cultivating () optimistic behavior, rather than positive thinking. She recommends you train yourself to pay attention to good fortune by writing sown three positive things that come about each day. This will help you convince yourself that favourable outcomes actually happen all the time, making it easier to begin taking action.

E You can recognize a person who is passionate about a pursuit () by the way they are so strongly involved in it. Tanya Streeter's passion is freediving () - the sport of plunging () deep into the water without tanks or other breathing equipment, six minutes. The physical stamina () required for this sport is intense but the psychological demands are even more overwhelming. Streeter learned to untangle () her fears from her judgment of what her body and mind could do. In my career as a competitive freediver, there was a limit to what I could do - but it wasn't anywhere near what I thought it was.' she says.

F Finding a pursuit that excites you can improve anyone's life. The secret about consuming passions,

though, according to psychologist Paul Silvia of the University of North Carolina, is that ‘they require discipline, hard work and ability, which is why they are so rewarding. Psychologist Toss Kashdan has this advice for those people taking up a new passion: ‘As a newcomer, you also have to tolerate and laugh at your own ignorance. You must be willing to accept the negative feelings that come your way, he says.

G In 2004, physician-scientist Mauro Zappaterra began his PhD research at Harvard Medical School. Unfortunately, he was miserable as his research wasn’t compatible () with his curiosity about healing. He finally took a break and during eight months in Santa Fe, Zappaterra learned about alternative healing techniques not taught at Harvard. When he got back, he switched labs to study how cerebrospinal () fluid nourishes () the developing nervous system. He also vowed to look for the joy in everything, including failure, as this could help him learn about his research and himself.

One thing that can hold joy back is a person’s concentration on avoiding failure rather than their looking forward to doing something well. Focusing on being safe might get in the way of your reaching your goals,’ explains Kashdan, for example, are you hoping to get through a business lunch without embarrassing yourself, or are you thinking about how fascinating the conversation might be?

H Usually, we think of courage in physical terms but ordinary life demands something else. For marketing executive () Kenneth Pedeleose, it meant speaking out against something he thought was ethically () wrong. The new manager was intimidating () staff so Pedeleose carefully recorded each instance of bullying and eventually tool the evidence to a senior director knowing his own job security would be threatened. Eventually the manager was the one to go. According to Cynthia Pury, a psychologist at Clemson University, Pedeleose’s story proves the point that courage is not motivated by fearlessness, but by moral obligation. Pury also believes that people can acquire courage. Many of her students said that face with a risky situation, they fist tried to calm themselves down, then looked for a way to mitigate () the danger, just as Pedeleose did by documenting his allegations ().

Over the long term, picking up a new character trait may help you move toward being the person you want to be. And in the short term, the effort itself could be surprisingly rewarding, a kind of internal adventure.