

TASK 1
BRITISH CHILDREN THE LEAST HAPPY IN EUROPE

ANSWER BOX

QUESTIONS	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
ANSWERS	B	C	A	C	B	C	A	B	C

TEXT

Last month, headlines declared that teens in the UK were “the least happy in Europe”. **The source was a report from the *Children’s Society* (0)** – drawing on data from the 2022 international Pisa study – that found 25.2% of 15-year-olds in the UK reported low life satisfaction compared to a European average of 16.6%. As is often the case, **the Netherlands was declared the most “happy”, with just 6.7% reporting low life satisfaction (1).**

It is difficult enough to try to compare things like life satisfaction across countries and cultures. And knowing a bit about the Dutch system, I’ve increasingly realised that **many of these numbers don’t tell the whole story (2).** For years, the Dutch have scored highly on “happy children” in multiple surveys, such as those by the *World Health Organization* and *Unicef*. **A lot of young people are clearly in good spirits, with admirable levels of freedom (3)** and responsibility. But all of them? Actually, it turns out, we don’t know.

For one thing, the Pisa dataset that sparked all those headlines is not complete. **The growing number of children in Dutch special schools were not surveyed in 2022 (4).** *Influential Health Behaviour in School-aged Children* (HBSC) studies also excluded Dutch special schools.

Despite a 2014 law on appropriate education, the proportion of children in Dutch special schools, particularly children with ADHD and autism, **has marched upwards to a record 3.2% (5).** And the small private school sector has ballooned. A report in the *Financieele Dagblad* last week suggested **putting children in special schools (6)** – out of the way of Dutch parents who don’t want their “normal” ones hindered – **may not be best for them (6).** And a study by the Inspectorate of Education found children with additional needs appear less likely to get school-leavers’ qualifications in a special school than in the mainstream system.

As far as other high-scoring nations go, the Danes excluded children with dyslexia. That gave it an 11.6% exclusion rate, and in a report the *Adjudication Group* “noted that high levels of student exclusions may bias performance results upwards”. Latvia also had a “rather elevated” rate of missing some students, said the report, as did Croatia, Lithuania and **the United States, “which showed a marked increase in exclusions due to students with functional or intellectual disabilities” (7).** In other words, **with so many children excluded from the measurements (8)** – and this doesn’t even count the number of students who have fallen out of the school system entirely – **it’s hard to make glib comparisons across nations (8).**

*Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

TASK 2
THE FUTURE OF BEAUTY: NEUROCOSMETICS

ANSWER BOX

GAP	0	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
SENTENCE	K	F	J	E	A	G	B	D	H

DISTRACTORS: C, I

TEXT

According to *The Week News*, neurocosmetics are not just about looking good; they do feel good too since they target the intricate connection between your brain and the skin.

For example, if you're feeling stressed, or **you're going through a traumatic time (0)**, you may break out with acne. On the other hand, if you are feeling joyous, your skin will be plump and clear.

Understanding Neurocosmetics

Neurocosmetics treat the skin from both the outside and the inside—a new paradigm, with possibly much better skin health. Since they contain active ingredients that can have an impact on mood and stress, **such products would contribute to the decrease of skin stress disorders (9)**.

Pros of Neurocosmetics

- Holistic Approach
One of the main advantages of neurocosmetics over conventional beauty products is that they work holistically. Very often, **traditional skincare brands only think about external treatment (10)**. Neurocosmetics understand the intricacy between the mind and skin.
- Stress Reduction
Neurocosmetics may contain ingredients that have mood-boosting or calming properties, potentially helping to reduce stress levels. For example, **some products might include essential oils (11)** known for their relaxing effects, such as lavender or chamomile. By promoting relaxation and reducing stress, these products could help improve overall skin condition, as stress is a well-known trigger for various skin problems.

Cons of Neurocosmetics

- Lack of Long-Term Studies
Being a relatively recent trend, **little is known about the long-term efficacy and side effects (12)** of neurocosmetics. Much of the available information can either be attributed to pilot studies or evidence from anecdotes. The idea may be exciting, but still, it calls for a cautious approach until further research studies are available. Teenagers should be aware that **the benefits might not be as dramatic and long-lasting as one would hope for (13)** from an initial glance.

Cost

Innovative products are almost always pricier, and **neurocosmetics are no exception (14)**. The advanced formulation and addition of specialized ingredients can make such products more costly than the conventional skincare product line. For teens on a tight budget, this could be off-putting to trying neurocosmetics. It becomes important to then judge if the probable benefits are worth the cost and to seek cheaper options if required.

Should Teens Try Neurocosmetics?

Neurocosmetics can be quite interesting, especially for those teens who are keen on trying new products for makeup and skincare.

However, one ought to know the cons: long-term studies have not been done, and **skin sensitivity could occur (15)**. Hence, teens need to do wide research, maybe consult a dermatologist, and do a patch test to ensure the product will suit their skin type.

In case one doesn't develop any irritation, then **the chances that the product is going to be safe for facial application are higher (16)**. This would avoid possible allergic reactions and give assurance of positive experiences with neurocosmetics.

(Adapted from: theteenmagazine.com/the-future-of-beauty-how-neurocosmetics-are-changing-the-game-for-teens, 10/08/2024, 468 words)

TASK 3 HEROES OF 9/11

ANSWER BOX										
QUESTION	0	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
SECTION	B	B	C	A	D	B	A	C	A	D

TEXT

A.

British-born retired Army officer Rick Rescorla worked in the south tower of the World Trade Center. **He had been working at the north tower when it was bombed by terrorists in 1993 and had helped people evacuate the damaged building then (24)**. Rescorla believed a similar attack could happen again- and the next time might be worse. After the first plane struck the north tower, Rescorla used a bullhorn to order everyone in his office to leave. His co-workers knew exactly what to do—Rescorla had been practicing safety drills with them for years. To keep people calm in the stairwell, **he sang the same songs he had once crooned to cheer up his fellow soldiers (19)** during the Vietnam War. **Rescorla led nearly 2,700 of his employees to safety before the towers collapsed (22)**.

B.

The men of Ladder Company 6, a firefighter company from New York City's Chinatown, were rushing up an emergency stairwell of the World Trade Center's north tower when **they felt the floor begin to quake. Lights flickered overhead (0)**. Captain Jay Jonas heard the news over his radio: The neighboring south tower had just collapsed. **Fearing the north tower would be next, Jonas ordered his men to turn around at the 27th floor and head for the exit (21)**. On the 20th floor, they encountered a bookkeeper named Josephine Harris, who had just descended 50 floors on her own. She was out of breath and barely able to stand. If the men slowed to help her down the stairs, they risked their own lives. But they were firefighters, and saving people was their job. **Jonas ordered his men to help her. Minutes later, the north tower began to collapse (17)**. When the north tower fell, it peeled away like a banana around a tiny section of stairs. **Only the small bit of twisted stairwell around the firefighters was left standing, protecting them from being crushed (17)**. If the firefighters hadn't slowed to help Harris, they would have been killed. They had saved Harris—and she had saved them. She became known as the Angel of Ladder Company 6.

C.

Large crowds fled from the World Trade Center in New York City after the twin towers were struck by airplanes. **Many headed south till they were stopped by the Hudson River (23)**. The Coast Guard sent out a call for help. It asked all boats in the area to take people to safety. Despite the fear of another attack, more than 150 ferries, yachts, tour boats, and tugboats rushed to the area to rescue people. In less than nine hours, the boats picked up almost 500,000 people, taking them to Staten Island, Ellis Island, and New Jersey. **It was the largest water-rescue operation in American history (18)**.

D.

After planes hit the twin towers, all airplanes flying over the United States were ordered to land as soon as possible. No planes could fly over or into the country. For 38 large airlines, the closest landing spot was a little airport in the small town of Gander, Newfoundland, in Canada. For the next five days, residents of Gander and nearby towns took care of almost 7,000 passengers and crew members from about a hundred countries. **When hotel rooms filled up, people hosted passengers in their homes (25).** They gave them food, clothing, and **phones to call their loved ones (20)**, asking for nothing in return.

(Adapted from: kids.nationalgeographic.com/history/article/heroes-of-911, 555 words)