

Exercise 1 - Questions**Reading***Passage 1***Record low happiness index reveals pressure on Hong Kong students**

With just two years until graduation, Charis feels the weight of her future. Each morning, she and her classmates rush to finish homework they were too tired to finish the night before. They find moments to rest on campus when they can.

"I often get compared to people around me, whether it's about my passions or academics. When we see others doing better, we blame ourselves for not trying hard enough, which adds to the stress," said the 15-year-old student. The student said she would be happier if she could have "more social life and extended deadlines for schoolwork".

"I hope the education system in Hong Kong can ease some of the pressure so that my generation – and future generations – can learn in a less stressful environment," Charis said.

Last year, the city's happiness index was 5.88 out of 10. This was Hong Kong's lowest score in 10 years. This data was released in July from a study by HK.WeCare, a concern group under Wofoo Social Enterprises, HK.WeCare surveyed 1,283 people and asked them 74 questions about social well-being, health, and depressive symptoms.

Phoebe Wan is a programme director at HK.WeCare. She said that the decline in happiness showed the need to understand how people are affected by being raised with such a strong focus on academics and careers.

"From as early as kindergarten, life value is often equated with academic performance and securing a good job," she explained. "Long-term planning can be good, but focusing too far into the future isn't always beneficial."

Avis Ngan, a clinical psychologist in Hong Kong, said: "When perfect grades and rankings become your only measure of self-worth, you're sinking in quicksand – the harder you struggle with self-criticism, the deeper you go."

A lack of open communication in families is affecting children's well-being. "We often tell children, 'Don't hide your emotions, speak up.' But for them to open up, they need to feel safe," Wan said.

Wan called for more relatable life education in schools to address these issues. She noted that the goal should be encouraging open communication and emotional support at home and in schools.

Questions:

1. What does Charis mean when she says she feels “the weight of her future”?

2. What was Hong Kong’s happiness index score last year, and why was it significant?

3. According to Phoebe Wan, what is one main reason for the decline in happiness?

4. Why does Avis Ngan compare self-criticism to “sinking in quicksand”?

5. What two changes did Charis suggest would make her happier at school?

6. What does Wan say children need to open up about their emotions?

7. What solution did Wan propose to help improve students’ well-being in schools?

Advanced Vocabulary from the Passage:

Depressive symptoms 抑鬱症狀

Self-worth 自我價值

Quicksand 流沙

Relatable 產生共鳴的

Emotional support 情感支持

Clinical Psychologist 臨床心理學家