

**Approach to Life Inventory A: Interpersonal Social Support Form Instructions**  
**ISL, Version A 8/08/2000**  
**Prepared 02/21/01**

**I. GENERAL STATEMENT TO PARTICIPANTS**

The statement below should be read to all participants before providing them with the Approach to Life “Bring to Clinic” questionnaires.

“We are asking that you complete this packet of questionnaires at home. You should bring these forms with you to your Clinic Exam visit. In this packet, there are questions covering different topics. You will read some that ask about how much support you feel from your family and friends. Other questions ask about how you deal with stress. We are interested in your honest answers to these questions because we want to know more about how we cope or deal with stress relates to health in general, and particularly heart disease.

“This packet has several parts to it. At the beginning of each part, there will be instructions telling you how to answer the questions. Please take your time to answer each question carefully. Please do not skip any questions. Remember that there are no right or wrong answers. We are interested in your feelings and opinions.

“If you do not understand the instructions for one of the questionnaires or do not understand one of the questions, please tell the Jackson Heart Study staff member when you arrive for your Clinic Exam visit. They will be happy to help you.

“Thank you for filling out these questionnaires.”

**II. CHECKING THE QUESTIONNAIRES**

When reviewing/picking up the “Bring to Clinic” questionnaires, check to make sure that all items on each questionnaire were answered. If there are blank items, offer the participant the opportunity to complete the item(s), and provide any assistance needed. “Mr. or Mrs. (Participant), I’ve noticed that some of the questions were left blank. Would you mind answering these for me now?” If the participant left the items blank intentionally, the interviewer should explain the rationale to the participant again, and reassure the participant about confidentiality. If the participant does feel comfortable answering the questions for some reason, this should be noted, and the participant should be thanked for pointing out their concerns.

### **III. ANSWERING PARTICIPANT'S QUESTIONS**

Participants may have questions about particular items. The interviewer should read the item again, and provide a neutral prompt, such as, "Answer what's right for you" or "Answer what makes the most sense to you."

Most of the terms used in the various rating scales (e.g., Almost Never, Almost Always, Most of the Time, Rarely, etc.) are left to the participants' subjective perception of what these mean. If the participant has a question about the scaling on a particular questionnaire, the interviewer should provide only neutral information, such as, "Use it the way that you would normally use it in conversation", or, "Pick the answer that is closest to what is right for you." Remind the participant that there are no right or wrong answers to the questions, and that we are simply interested in their views.

If the participant has questions about a particular item or requires assistance completing the questionnaire (illiteracy or visual deficit), keep in mind that many of these questions are quite personal, and may be perceived as sensitive or potentially embarrassing to the participant. Read all questions in a neutral, non judgmental tone. Be sure to conduct this in a manner that assures their privacy.

When the response categories are repetitive (such as "True or False" or "Yes or No"), and the participant appears to understand the questions and provides reasonable answers, the interviewer may choose not to read the response categories to every question.

### **IV. GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS**

The Approach to Life Interpersonal (ISL) Form is completed by the participant as part of the Approach to Life form.

### **V. DETAILED INSTRUCTIONS**

This scale is made up of a list of statements, each of which may or may not be true about you. For each statement, circle "1" for "Definitely True" if you are sure it is true about you, and "2" for "Probably True" if you think it is true but are not absolutely certain. Similarly, you should circle "4" for "Definitely False" if you are sure the statement is false, and "3" for "Probably False" if you think it is false but are not absolutely certain.

Some individuals have difficulty categorizing their responses for a variety of reasons, such as 'it depends on the situation.' In such cases, the participant should be encouraged to respond with regard to their "usual" behavior, and which response is the most accurate for them, across all types of situations.

Responses are made based on a 4-point, extended True – False format, as follows: Definitely True (1), Probably True (2), Probably False (3), and Definitely False (4). The specific nature of what criteria constitute a particular rating is determined subjectively by the participant. Any difficulties in choosing a response should be made with respect to the participant's 'best guess.' The participant should be reminded that there are no correct or incorrect responses, and that we are simply interested in their views. No items should be left blank.