

19. Lesson 6: Happiness and Kindness

Introduction:

Happiness is closely linked to three kinds of habits:

- How we think and feel about the world, and therefore perceive our experiences.
- Certain actions or habits, such as regular exercise, eating healthfully, meditating, connecting with other people, even -- proven in study after study -- regularly smiling and laughing!

'Happy' and the brain.

- brain's natural "plasticity"—it's ability to change shape over time
- kids who are stressed a lot, release the hormone cortisol, which literally eats away, almost like an acid bath, at the hippocampus
- If we pay attention to what we are grateful for, when we are happy, what makes us happy, then we train our brain for happiness

The habit of happiness.

- The more you practice or remember happy things that have happened to you the more your brain cells - neurons - connect with each other. The more connected they are, the stronger they are. Neurons that fire together, wire together. Practicing happiness, you are training the brain to be happy more often.

Goals of the Lesson:

Lesson Materials:

Chime

Paper and markers or crayons

Exercises:

The Breath:

Smile Breath

Breathe in through your nose and imagine your happiest smell

The Body:

Exercises that make you happy

Make your best happy smile

The Senses:

Foods that cheer me up.

This song makes me happy every time I hear it!

Visualization

Who Makes you happy every day?

Dear _____, You made me happy today because.....

Starting the Lesson:

Begin with the chime. Review the brain parts, reminding students that the amygdala is the feelings center of the brain. Creating happy feelings often allows the amygdala to relax rather than be on guard. This makes your whole brain happy and able to pay attention and learn new things.

The Breath

Smile Breath

Breathe in through your nose and imagine your happiest smell

The Body

Exercises that make you happy

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The Senses

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Other Happiness Exercises

Think about a happy memory

It's Good To Be Kind

Building a Kindness Monster

The Happiness Tree

Friendly Wishes

Grati-toad

Research shows that gratitude has tons of fantastic benefits - You know the phrase, an *attitude of gratitude*? Well, it really *is* an attitude! There is a lot of research on gratitude, but here are some of the highlights. People who regularly practice grateful thinking:

- Feel better about their lives as a whole
 - Are more optimistic about the future
 - Are more likely to help others
 - Have better relationships
 - Have better sleep, exercise more frequently and have fewer physical symptoms
 - Feel happier, and are less lonely
- See more at: <http://momentousinstitute.org/blog/why-we-should-teach-kids-about-gratitude#sthash.65YB1OI5.dpuf>

Exercise:

The grati-toad is a concrete way for kids to express gratitude. Basically, you give the child a toad (a cheap-o dollar store toad is perfectly fine) and have them pose the toad with something that they're grateful for and snap a picture. Post the pictures in the classroom, or have the children take the photos home to remind them of what they are grateful for.

Momentous Institute



