

Global Satisfaction



Global satisfaction is the cognitive component of “happiness”. These ratings are not bound to any specific life domain (e.g., friends, school) but are based on immediate and deeper, longer lasting experiences (i.e., what people think of as “contentment”). As opposed to positive and negative emotions (the other component of happiness), global satisfaction ratings are quite stable and are a robust indicator of how people themselves and their world. These views predict future progress or potential difficulties.

Research shows that students as young as grade 3 can rate their global satisfaction reliably. In contrast to those with low satisfaction, students with high satisfaction levels are better able to adapt to stress and adversity, report more favorable attitudes to school, and report higher levels of interpersonal functioning. Moreover, global satisfaction is a significant predictor of academic achievement (including grade-point average and standardized reading and math scores).

OBJECTIVES

Global satisfaction ratings are based on self-selected, subjective criteria; Student A may base their ratings on their contentment with what they have in their life, while Student B may base their ratings on more immediate, tangible experiences (such as just getting a new phone). Both ratings are valid but ratings from Student A underlie personal resiliency.

For this reason, the objectives of this module are to teach students to appreciate what they have (no matter how seemingly trivial), as opposed to what they may not have or feel that they are lacking. In other words, students will learn to:

- Understand the importance of happiness through class discussions, with a focus on acceptance and appreciation
- Develop insight into what they experience when they are happy/content
- Develop effective ways to practice happiness skills

MATERIALS



For Grades 3-5

What Makes Kids Happy? 

For Grades 6-12

How to be Happy in Life: 10 Simple Things to be Happy Teens 

Other Videos for Educators: Why Are We Doing This?

- This Class Receives Happiness Lessons 
- What Students Really Need to Hear 



Primary Lesson (all ages)

Time: One class period; 15 minutes for initial lesson and the remaining time for discussion

Facilitators can present this topic to the class using the following script:

"I am going to ask you a simple question, but I want you to really think about it before answering. You do not have to share your answer. Ready? Think about your life overall. How are you doing?" [give students at least a minute to think through their answer]

"So here is another question simple question. Why did you answer that question the way you did? Take out a piece of paper and write down as many reasons you can think of. Please do not share your responses, these are your reasons"

1. The facilitator presents Maslow's well-known hierarchy of needs, which contends that basic needs must be addressed before optimal functioning (self-actualization) can be attained. In brief, physiological needs such as food, water, and other necessities for survival must be met before an individual can turn to higher-level motivations such as seeking safety, belonging, esteem, and finally self-actualization (in that sequence). As self-actualization and global satisfaction are highly correlated, a review of Maslow's hierarchy helps the place global satisfaction (the highest level) within a proper framework.

Facilitators can use the following script

"The question I asked you is another way of asking how "happy" you are. There are two ways to know we are happy. The first way is from our emotions, Think of a time when you had something really great happen to you [provide an example or ask for some examples from the students]. That event certainly led to a great feeling, but how long did this feeling last? [ask for feedback]. So while we get a rush when we feel happy, we also see that it may not last long"

"But notice that I did not ask you how you felt, but to think about how you are doing. This is a different way of knowing you are happy, and this type of happiness lasts longer. Rather than focusing on your feelings, you had to stop and think of reasons so that you could answer my question.

Now let's look at this figure [present the hierarchy handout]. As you see, happiness is at the top of the pyramid but it not based on feelings. This form of happiness is called "contentment", which means peace of mind. Let's pretend we are celebrating Thanksgiving. What are some things that you are thankful for? [ask for examples]. Did you notice that answers focused on what you had in your life, no matter how minor? Did you also notice that you didn't focus on things that may be missing? This is contentment. Being content does not mean that life is perfect, but that you appreciate what you have.

But to get to contentment, some other needs need to be met, which are lower in the pyramid. For example, let's look at "what our body needs to survive". What are some examples that could go here? How about breathing? Any others? [ask for examples]. So, can one be content if they can't breathe? What about if they are hungry? Right, it is quite difficult to be content if our body's needs aren't met.



Primary Lesson (all ages)

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Now let's look at the next level [point to need for personal safety]. What are some examples of knowing that you are safe [examples would having shelter, living in a safe neighborhood]? Just like our body needs, can one be content if they are worried about their safety? Right, one could be content, but it would not last very long."

2. After the educator discusses the hierarchy, students examine their reasons and place them in their own hierarchy, so they can see what is present for them and how they lead their global satisfaction. Older students can use the "Happiness Hierarchy" worksheet while younger students have a different sheet (the "Happiness Cake") where they are instructed to think of needs as ingredients needed to be happy. Each tier in the cake corresponds to a step in the hierarchy. Students place what they presently have within the respective layer of the hierarchy. Students should not list anything that they do not presently have. For example, within the Esteem layer (i.e., "things that make me feel good about myself"), students should not list self-confidence if they currently lack that component.

Facilitators can use the following script

"Now take a look at the reasons you provided to my question. Let me ask it again so you remember: Think about your life overall. How are you doing? Why? Maybe you've come up with more reasons, and I will give you time to write them down on your sheet [give another minute].

In this handout [provide age-appropriate worksheet), place your reasons on their correct level in the pyramid. Be honest. Do not provide a reason that is not true for you. For example, if you don't think you live in a safe neighborhood, don't list this as a reason."

3. Students then compare what they listed in their hierarchy to the videos (see the Materials section) to identify anything in each layer that they do have but did not consider. Students then add that information. (For students in the at-risk range, some components will likely be lacking).

- It should be noted that the video How to be Happy in Life: 10 Simple Things to be Happy Teens (grades 9-12) is somewhat of a departure in that it discusses factors that stop students from being happy. But the exercise follows the same principle; identifying components that they have that contribute to their happiness. (That video is also an excellent entry point to initiate class wide or a small-group discussions)

Facilitators can use the following scrip

"Let's take a look at some videos and see what others have thought about when they consider their own happiness. Perhaps there are additional reasons that you have not thought about, and you are free to list these in your sheet, provided that they are true for you."



Primary Lesson (all ages)

4. After viewing the videos and revising their lists (if necessary), students complete the Happiness Exercise worksheet. Students are asked to consider any component that was not listed in the hierarchy. (Students who are doing well can simply list one goal that they will have in the next 3-6 months that will lead to their being even happier). The sheet is a running log of their efforts, which helps them monitor their own progress including their adhering to the specific happiness exercises (see below).

Facilitators can use the following script

“Now that you have listed all reasons, I want you to list one goal that you will work on for the next three to six months that will increase your contentment [hand out the Happiness Exercise worksheet]. What is one area that you would really like to focus on? [provide 1-2 age-appropriate examples, such as improving relationships with a sibling, getting a job, etc.] List that here [indicate on worksheet] Now let’s say that you meet your goal. How will I know that you are happy? What will you do differently that you are not doing now [provide an illustration, such as being able to enjoy an activity with a sibling without fighting, or paying for their own clothes]. Great, this is what you will be working on, and I will help you monitor your progress. Every two weeks, I will have you pull out our worksheet and you will enter the date and whether you have been doing your exercises, which are easy to learn. We will do one today. [facilitator will choose one of the supplemental lessons]”



Primary Lesson (all ages)

5. Students keep track and record their progress over time. The facilitator will periodically check on their progress through classroom discussions and/or with individual students. The duration between progress checks should never be longer than two weeks when school is in session.

The facilitator closes the Primary Lesson with a reason for this module, and further discuss after the videos are shown.

Facilitators can use the following script

“Why are we doing this as a class? Your happiness is important to us. If you have contentment, no matter what else is happening in your life, you are better students and better people. However, we often focus on things that don’t allow us to be happy. For example, we often focus on things we don’t have, or compare ourselves to others. These are called happiness traps because they “trap” you from being happy. My approach is to help you increase your own happiness while avoiding these traps.

Let’s take a look at the following video, which discusses some of these happiness traps.

For Grades 3-5

Who is more happy? 

For Grades 6-12 (selected by facilitator)

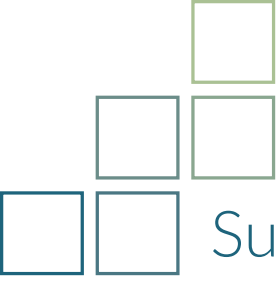
The contentment is an inexhaustible treasure 

Stop caring what people think 

More stuff won’t make you happy 

For older students, the following TED talk is a great example of how anyone can find contentment, regardless of their life circumstance (**presented by a 17-year-old diagnosed with Progeria**)

My philosophy for a happy life 




Supplemental Lesson (all ages)

Time: 15 minutes per exercise, either in class or outside of school

Materials: A private journal (for older students) or a worksheet/personalized jar (for younger students)

GRATITUDE EXERCISE

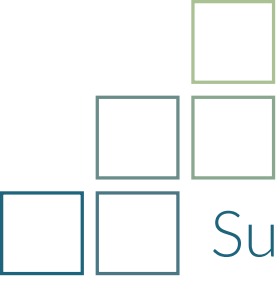
The facilitator may wish to use the video [An Experiment in Gratitude: The Science of Happiness for older adolescents](#) , but the exercise itself is appropriate for younger ages (with modifications).

There are many variations to this exercise but fundamentally, students simply write in their journal/worksheet people, places, objects, memories, or events they are grateful for. The entries can be made at a specific time each day (e.g., end of the school day; prior to going to bed) or it can be an ongoing record throughout the day. The event itself is less important than the effort to remember and record specific examples. For instance, rather than being grateful for a parent who has “worked hard to support me”, it is much better for the student to record a specific instance when this occurred. Students should be especially aware of unexpected gestures of goodwill from others, or experiences that led to an important “learning moment” that made them a better person.

For students who struggle with this exercise, the facilitator can suggest that they focus on areas in their life that “could be worse” (which by extension would elicit feelings of gratitude) or see the positive things in their lives, no matter how seemingly minor as a gift to be recognized.

Students keep this journal with them. Facilitators will check in with students every two weeks to assess their progress and compliance with the activity. Should points or grades be given, extra credit can be allotted to additional journal entries (i.e., beyond the end-of-week entry).

An alternative strategy for younger students is the “gratitude jar”. Each student will bring a mason jar to class and decorate it to their own tastes. Students write their gratitude experiences on a slip of paper and place it in the jar. At the end of the week, facilitators should have the students empty their jar and read their entries.



Supplemental Lesson (all ages)

WHAT WENT WELL (AKA “HAPPIEST PART OF MY DAY”) EXERCISE

At a designated period each afternoon, students are instructed to list on a sheet of paper three things that went well for them and explain why. These periods can rotate every day to involve as many educators as possible. As with the gratitude exercise, the quality of the experience is less important than writing down the event with details; the more details behind the event the better. Following each entry, the student should address the question, “why did this happen?” For example, if they wrote “my brother shared his drink with me”, they could write, “Because he knew that I was thirsty”.

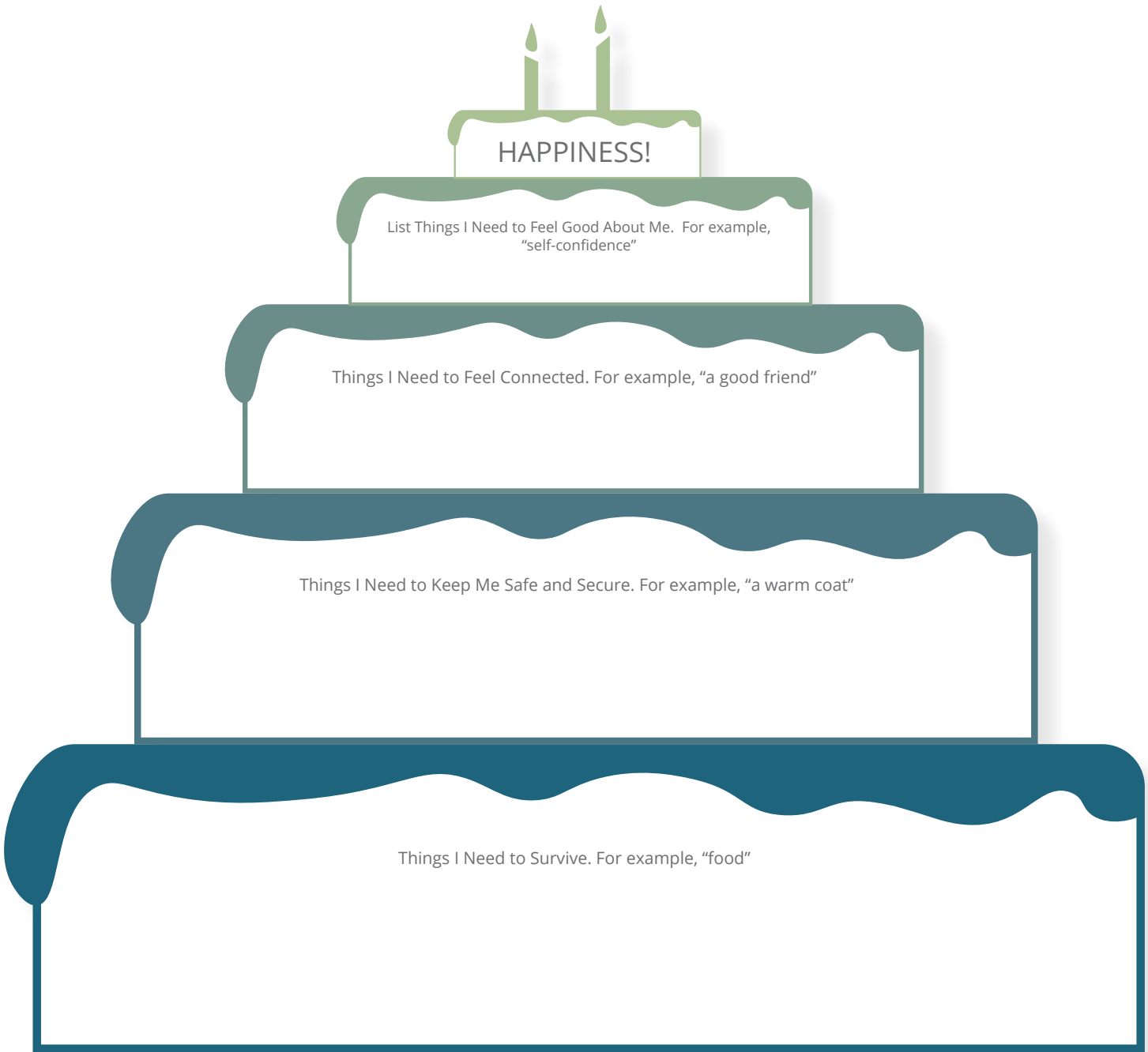
With time permitting, the educator can have students volunteer to share their entries so that the positive news can be acknowledged by others. These sheets should be kept by the student and placed in a special folder (filed, in order of entry). At the end of each week, the designated educator should have the students take out their folder and review their entries for that week.

DAILY “DO GOOD MOMENTS”

Students are instructed to do one kind thing for another person each day. Educators can start their first morning class period by having students think of 1-2 actions that they will perform during that day, and these actions must be in the spirit of doing something for others. The activity can be quite simple (initiating a conversation with an unfamiliar student) or more involved (tutoring a peer struggling in an academic area), but the key is to place the needs of the targeted person ahead of the student. Students enter this information in their journal, which can be shared with the educator at targeted times throughout the year. The educator can remind students of the areas that they listed in their Happiness Exercise, which can stimulate ideas for that day.



The Happiness Cake





Happiness Exercise

Name: _____

In the next 3-6 months, I will be happier in the following areas _____

How Will I Know I am Happier? _____

Date	Progress to Goal (circle one) <i>No Progress at All</i> <i>Very Slow Progress</i> <i>Steady Progress</i> <i>Goal Attained</i>	Am I Doing My Gratitude Exercise Regularly?	Am I Reviewing the Happiest Part of My Day Regularly?	Am I Finding Daily Moments to Do Good for Others?	If Yes to All and No Steady Progress, What is the Reason?



Gratitude Worksheet

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Name: _____

Date: _____

What Am I Grateful For?

Why Is This Important to Me?



What We Need To Be Happy?

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