Teaching Happiness and Well-being

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• Some believe happiness cannot be taught because it is a character trait, genetic disposition, and the condition of our lives.
  • 40% is within your power (Lyubomirsky)

• If we believe that happiness is an attitude of the mind that can be practiced and actions that can be performed then there is a place for it in education.
  • Reframe thinking (Seligman)
Beginning with Aristotle...

- A long process of learning how to be human, learning how to flourish
- Seneca, Epicurus, Buddhism
- Most recently Positive Psychology movement started by Martin Seligman
Positive Psychology

• (v) scientific study of human strengths and knowledge of what makes life worth living
• (n) a condition that leads to high levels of happiness and civic engagement
• studying the best humanity has to offer in hopes of applying it to those presently not living satisfying or optimal lives (Larson, 2000; Rich 2003).
Depression

• Becoming an epidemic
• 15% of people in the U.S. will become clinically depressed at some point during their lifetimes
• The age at which people experience their first depressive episode has decreased dramatically during the last several decades
• Of all diseases, depression places the largest burden on society
• The World Health Organization predicts that by the year 2020 depression will be the second leading cause of mortality in the entire world, affecting 30% of all adults
The Positive Experience

– Subjective well-being
– Optimal experience
– Optimism
– Happiness
– Self determination
– Positive emotions and physical health
This book was used as a framework for the presentation

Learning To Ride Elephants: Teaching Happiness and Well-Being in Schools

By Ian Morris
Objectives of Positive Education

• Increase positive emotion in children and adults
• Encourage children and adults to engage their character strengths for personal and community goals
• Engage children and adults to live meaningful lives and make a difference to our communities at large
• Encourage positive relationships
• Systematically teach skills of how to be a successful human being
Focus on Well-Being

• Stillness
• Awareness
• Values
• Relationships
• Wisdom
• Strengths
Well-being Curriculum

- Emotions
- Relationships
- Society
- Body and Mind
- Engagement and Strengths
- Resilience
- Meaning and Purpose
- Outlook and Philosophy
Curriculum Design & Research Documentation

- Emotions (Fredrickson)
- Gratitude (Diener)
- Strengths (Seligman & Peterson)
- Creativity (Csikszentmihalyi)
- Self-efficacy (Bandura)
- Resilience (Reivich)
- Mindfulness (Huppert) (Lopez)
The Process

Awareness......Notice
Intervention......Act
Evaluation......Reflect
Experience

- Lab
- Game playing
- Making
- Re-enacting
- Role playing
- Art
- Music
- Activity
Reflective

• Journaling
• Sharing
• Discussion
• Media
• Scenarios
• Biographies
• Testing
Strategy Fit

- Personalized approach
- Fit with the source of unhappiness
- Fit with your strengths
- Fit with your lifestyle
- Person-Activity Fit Diagnostic (Lyubomirsky)
Baseline data: Evaluating the circumstances of their lives

• Validated questionnaires: 
  [http://www.authentichappiness.sas.upenn.edu/Default.aspx](http://www.authentichappiness.sas.upenn.edu/Default.aspx)

• **Reflection:** recall and write about a time you felt truly happy. Share with the group and discover patterns.

• **Ingredients:** close relationships, accomplishments, optimism, education, health, altruism, meaning and purpose

• **Plan to flourish:** What would make you the best you could be?

• **Lessons from others:** Interview others, share happiness timelines

• **Films:** examples
Happiness Myths

• Happiness must be found
  ..................you create it intentionally
• Happiness lies in changing our circumstances
  ..................circumstances have little effect
• You either have it or you don’t
  ..................rise above set points just like weight and cholesterol
Happier people are....

- More sociable and energetic
- More charitable and cooperative
- Better liked by others
- Get married and stay married
- Flexible
- Creative in their thinking
- More productive in jobs
- Better leaders and negotiators
- Earn more money
- More resilient in the face of adversity
- Have stronger immune systems
- Physically healthier
- Live longer
Happiness formula: $H=S+C+V$

(Sonja Lyubomirsky)

- HAPPINESS = Set point + Circumstances + Voluntary activities
- Set point is your temperament (25-50%)
- Circumstances
- Voluntary activities
What Determines Happiness

(Sonja Lyubomirsky)
Circumstances’ Small Role

- Habituation: become used to the change
- Hedonistic: always want more

Intentional activity, what we voluntarily choose to do, has a significant impact on our happiness.
Grandmother’s Recipe

- Quite time: Mindfulness
- Take care of your body
- Positive relationships with others
- Practice gratitude, be thankful
- Be optimistic
- Help others
- Do what you’re good at
- Find meaning and purpose in your life
Well-being Curriculum
Fundamental Principle

• We must care for the organism that transports us from place to place, the extraordinary human body. (Ian Morris)
Keeping the body healthy

• Meditation
• Regular exercise
• Adequate sleep
• Good diet
• Avoid toxins
• Harmony with outside world
Practice Body Awareness

• **Body map:** Trace life size body show how to take care of it
• **Under the radar:** list body process we don’t usually think about
• **Specifics:** keep track over a week what your body does
• **Audit:** pick area of healthy living to investigate
• **Toxins:** substances and activities that are toxic to well-being
• **Films:** Supersize Me, Biggest Loser
• **Journal:** Track changes with exercise and sleep
The Brain

Why do we choose to abuse our body?

“Humans have the imagination to find things that will poison our bodies under the illusion of pleasure and the free will to chose to ignore our body’s pleas for the right fuel...” (Ian Morris)

Resource: Dr. Daniel Amen, Amen Clinic
Putting it into practice...

• Anatomy of a decision: students have to make a decision and break it down into parts
• Deliberate or accidental? Examine lives of other characters.
• Biography: Examples of good EF and decision making
• Fun Police: Arrest and punish people who take unhealthy risks
Stress

• We need stress to grow and learn
• Natural antidotes to stress: exercise and the company of others---PLAY
• Need time to recover
• Teach kids
  - Stress or stress? Two types of stressor in their lives
  - Audit- have kids keep track of stressors
  - Schedule-look at schedule to see if you are doing too much, time to recover?
  - Busy with strengths-plan ways of playing to their strengths on a regular basis
Manage Stress, Hardship, and Trauma

• Problem focused coping:
  - concentrate efforts on doing something about it
  - one step at a time
  - develop a strategy
  - make a plan of action
  - put aside other activities in order to concentrate
  - get advice from others
Manage Stress, Hardship, and Trauma

• Emotion focused coping: event is uncontrollable or you are too overwhelmed by negative emotions to begin to take action

- behavioral strategies: distraction or emotional support from others

- cognitive strategies: positively reinterpreting the situation, acceptance, or turning to spirituality
Well-being Curriculum

- Emotions
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- Society
- Body and Mind
- Engagement and Strengths
- Resilience
- Meaning and Purpose
- Outlook and Philosophy
Philosophy and Well-Being

• Question “why”
• Construction of sound arguments
• Equipped with philosophical tools you have the ability to challenge the bigoted, prejudiced and opinionated
• Philosophical questions often lead us to the question of what the fulfilled life is
• Weigh evidence for our beliefs and values
Values

• Values in Action (Peterson)
• [website link] VIA
• Images of values: Facebook groups, T-shirt slogans, graffiti, clubs
• Critical value: [website link] (16 guidelines for a happy life)
• Group values
• Values and authenticity: list five things that they value the most in life. How do they uphold those values in their everyday lives? (activity $3000 to spend on values)
• Testing values: how might your values be tested?
Teaching philosophy

- Philosophy is everywhere
- The right type of questions
- Debate and discussions
- Strategies for clear thinking
- Spot the difference of 3 objects
- Philosophical question journal
- Text and imagination (science and fantasy)
- Who’s right, who’s wrong? (newspaper, stories)
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Teaching emotional awareness

• Self awareness: PANAS
  [http://www.authentichappiness.sas.upenn.edu/questionnaires.aspx](http://www.authentichappiness.sas.upenn.edu/questionnaires.aspx)
• Identity parade: use images and diagnose emotional states
• Under pressure: perform timed test
• Sculpture: play dough, clay
• Emotions and morals: what relationships do they have
• Journal
• Games
• Curriculum
Emotional management

- HIGH ENERGY
  - Survival Zone
  - Performance Zone
- LOW ENERGY
  - Burnout Zone
  - Recovery Zone

- NEGATIVE ENERGY
  - Angry
  - Annoyed
  - Fearful
  - Anxious
  - Worried
- POSITIVE ENERGY
  - Optimistic
  - Confident
  - Engaged
  - Happy
  - Proud
  - Carefree
  - Calm
  - Content
  - Relaxed
  - At ease

Morris, p. 81
• Important to have the ability to recognize which zone you are in and act to either remain in it or take steps to get out of a one that is undesirable.

• Children can learn to manage their emotions and spend the right amount of time in the various zones.
Teaching Emotional Management

Positive actions
Broaden and build
Self soothing
Positive Actions

- Pleasures
- Exercise
- Accomplish
- Flow
- Stillness
- Altruism
- Random acts of kindness
Have You Filled a Bucket Today?
By Carol McCloud

• Share story
• Have classroom, work, or family bucket
• Individual buckets
• Bulletin board with picture of bucket and kids pin up notes
Broaden and Build
Barbara Fredrickson

• **Broaden:** when we experience a positive emotion our vision literally expands, allowing us to make creative connections, see our oneness with others, and face our problems with a clear perspective.

• **Build:** as we make a habit of seeking out these pleasing states, we change and grow, becoming better versions of ourselves, developing the tools we need to make the most out of life.

• When positive emotions outnumber negative emotions by at least 3 to 1, these benefits accrue, yet below this same ratio, they don't.
The BROADEN Effect

- Positive emotions momentarily expand people’s attention and thinking.
The BUILD Effect

• Over time, positive emotions prompt growth in personal and social resources that increases well-being.
Testing the BUILD Effect

- CONTEXT: Workplace Wellness Program
- RANDOM ASSIGNMENT: 7-week Loving-Kindness Meditation Workshop vs. Waitlist Control
- DAILY: Reports of Positive & Negative Emotions
- PRE-& POST-TESTS: Cognitive, Social, Psychological & Physical Resources

The UNDO Effect

• Positive emotions erase the lingering traces of negative emotions.
Self Soothing and Coping Strategies

• Distraction
• Touch
• Catch and write: when you notice write them down and dispute
• Angel’s Advocate: challenge it
• Re-frame: focus on the positive
• Channel: make a change
• Humor
Positivity Portfolios

• Barbara L. Fredrickson, Ph.D.

POSITIVITY

• http://www.positivityratio.com/
Well-being Box

- Objects
- Mementos
- Photos
- Quotes
- Poems
- Songs
- Video clips
- Scents
- Tastes
- Tactile
- Sensations
Well-being Curriculum

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Positive versus Negative

- Learned Optimism (Martin Seligman)
- The Resilience Factor (Karen Reivich & Andrew Shatte)
- Mindset (Carol Dweck)
Resilience

Optimism and resilience are two of the most important skills to teach young people to fend off depression, substance misuse, risky sexual behavior, and criminality. (Ian Morris)

• Learned helplessness vs Learned optimism
• Explanatory Styles
• Optimism
• Pessimism
Optimism

• Optimism is not about providing a recipe for self deception. The world can be a horrible, cruel place and at the same time it can be wonderful and abundant. These are both truths. There is not a halfway point; there is only choosing which truth to put in your personal foreground (Lee Ross in Lyubomirsky, p. 111)

• Optimists are more, not less, vigilant of risks and are aware that **positive outcomes are dependent on their efforts**.
Optimistic vs Pessimistic Style

- **Optimistic style** tend to use **active, adaptive coping strategies** such as **problem solving**, acknowledging and **attempting to change** uncontrollable situations, striving to **overcome adversity** and **perseverance** towards accomplishing goals (Hirsch & Conner, 2006).

- **Pessimistic explanatory style** are more likely to experience higher levels of intense **anger**, display **aggression**, and are more likely to resort to **destructive school behavior** (Boman et al., 2003; Hudley et al., 1998).
GOOD EVENTS

OPTIMISTIC
- Internal
- Pervasive
- Stable

PESSIMISTIC
- External
- Specific
- Unstable
BAD EVENTS

OPTIMISTIC
- External
- Specific
- Unstable

PESSIMISTIC
- Internal
- Pervasive
- Stable
Cultivate Optimism

• Your Best Possible Self-20 minutes writing a narrative description of their best possible future selves.
• Goals and subgoals diary
• Identify barrier thoughts and replace with optimistic thoughts
• The more you practice the more natural it becomes
Helping kids change

• Teaching coping skills to children as early as possible may help them develop effective strategies to deal with stress and minimize anxiety.

• Cognitively ready at age 7

• Optimistic Child, Martin Seligman

• Penn Resiliency Program
ABC

• ABC model developed by Albert Ellis
• Adversity, Belief, Consequence
• Can be used with children as young as seven if able to cognitively understand. Targeted for ages 8-14. Teens can use adult exercises.
• We encounter Adversity, we react by thinking about it, which leads to our Beliefs.
• Beliefs are the direct causes of our feelings and actions, thus leading to Consequences.
• Consequences can be dejection or constructive action.
Helping kids understand their ABCs

• Keep an ABC journal (ex: Seligman p.149)
Adversity: What is the problem?
Belief: Why do you think it happened?
Consequence: What was the result?

• Help them see the link between beliefs and actions

• Make their own ABC books about themselves

• Make posters showing the cycle to teach others

• Use story books to discuss character ABCs (Leo the Lightening Bug)
Disputation and Distraction
for dealing with pessimism

• Distraction
  – STOP!, rubber band snap, bell
  – Focus on something else (use all senses)

• Disputation
  – Works better in long run
  – Argue with negative thoughts
  – Difficult to distance from your self
  – Easier to distance from other’s accusations
Teaching kids to talk back to themselves
Evidence, Alternatives, Implications, and Usefulness

Evidence gathering: supportive and counteractive

Generate alternatives: List as many interpretations that you can

Implications: What is the worst possible thing that could happen? What is the best possible thing that could happen? What is the most likely outcome?

Plan of attack: How can you facilitate the best scenario happening?
Practice talking back: “Externalization of voices”

- Role play with children to learn how to talk back to negative thoughts
- Have them think of something really mean that an enemy said about them. What did they say or want to say?
- Use puppets and have kids dispute negative thoughts
- Pair up older students and have them take turns disputing negative situations
- Cue students to check for evidence, alternatives, implications, and usefulness
Thinking traps

Ian Morris

- Jumping to conclusions
- Tunnel vision
- Over generalization
- Magnification
- Minimization
- Personalizing
- Externalizing
- Mindreading
- Perfectionism
- Me! Me! Me!
- Comparing
- Arrogance
- Ruminating
ANTs
Automatic Negative Thoughts

Mind Coach by Dr. Daniel Amen

• All or Nothing
• “Always” thinking
• Focusing on the negative
• Fortune telling
• Mind reading
• Thinking with your feelings
• Guilt beatings
• Labeling
• Blame
Practice killing the ANTs

- Students make ants and write their ANTs on them to help them become aware
- Write them down and talk back to them
- Puppet practice
- Peer practice
• Make billboard for ANT killer
• Make a can of poison- list ingredients to kill the ANTs
• Make commercial for ANT killer using flip camera
• Perform role plays in other classrooms
Well-being Curriculum

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- Meaning and Purpose
Strengths and Flow

- Doing what you are good at
- Dispelling myths about talent-not just born with it
Mindset Research
Carol Dweck

• Fixed mindset-success depends on talent
• Growth mindset-success depends on effort
• As soon as we draw attention to ability rather than effort we cause that person to think that their success in a given area is due to factors beyond their control.

PRAISE THE EFFORT!
Teaching about flow

• Notice and reflect: When? What?
• Micro-flow: small task that is absorbing
• Motivation: list of intrinsic motivations

What motivates you?
When do you experience flow?
Well-being Curriculum

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Relationships

• Connections with people around you is the first of five ways to well-being and is a defining characteristic of people who function well in the world. (Government Office for Science, 2008)
Friendships

• Reflect: What are the ingredients that make them work? How do they change as you get older?
• Observe: write about their friends for 1 week. What makes it go and what makes it struggle?
• The Prophet by Khalil Gibran
• Stand By Me movie
• Role play
• Girls and boys: differences between friendships?
Empathy

- Emerges in the first 5 years of childhood
- Usually settled by middle childhood
- Structure of the brain that deals with our own emotional pain also deals with sensing the emotional pain of others
- Differences between the sexes: empathy towards those that wrong us. Females felt empathy even when wronged. Males did not. They actually enjoyed seeing people who had not played fair being punished.
Practice empathy

• **From me to you:** tell of a time you felt a particular emotion. Listener **reflects** the story back and then shares a time when they felt that similar emotion.

• **Empathy scenario:** show a scenario about a conflict. Have students empathize with all parties involved

• **Making connections:** think of different domains in life where empathy is of particular importance
Appreciation

• People that kept a daily journal of things they were grateful for were more optimistic, healthier, exercised more, more benevolent to others, and were more likely to achieve their goals (Emmons & McCullough)

• Gratitude Night (Seligman)

• Teach young people to take delight in small things

• Praise with sincerity. Insincere praise and appreciation is very de-motivating.
Practicing Gratitude

• Reflective Journaling-5 things you are thankful for
• “Even Happier” by Tal ben-Shahar
• Contemplate objects of gratitude
• Acknowledge one ungrateful thought and counter it with a grateful one (ex: My sister forgot my birthday. She’s always been there for me.)
• Express gratitude directly to another
Forgiveness

• Appreciate being forgiven-recall a time that you did harm to another and you were forgiven.
• Seek forgiveness-verbal or written
• Imagine forgiveness-try feeling empathy by viewing the situation through the offender’s eyes, role play
Forgiveness Activities

• Write a letter of forgiveness-describe in detail the injury or offense. Illustrate how it affected you. State what you wish the person had done instead. End with explicit statement of forgiveness and understanding. Don’t need to send it.

• Generate charitable attributions-Write the letter that you’d like to receive from the offender in response to your forgiveness letter. What explanation might they offer?
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Social Connections

• Make time
• Express admiration, appreciation, and affection
• Celebrate others’ successes
• Manage conflict
• Communicate
Social Comparison
(Keeping up with the Joneses)

• What is important for happiness is not our absolute level of wealth, but our wealth relative to those around us.
• Harvard study: $50,000 when others $25,000 or $100,000 when others $250,000
• If we intend to pit students against each other we must be very sure of their psychological resources before we do it.
• Not all students have a resilient mindset.
• Competition should be between the student and the objective criteria. There is no reason for students to compete against each other.
• Difference between sports and academics
Maximizers

• A person for whom the best is not good enough
• Agonize over every decision for fear that they might make the wrong choice and regret it for the rest of their lives
• Do not savor positive events
• Deal less well with adversity
• Take longer to recover after adversity
• Tend to brood or ruminate

(Psychologist Barry Schwartz)

Example: Whatever book
Satisficers

- Do not obsess over the choices they make
- Clear idea of what they want
- Happy with whatever best meets those criteria
Putting it into practice

• **Wants and needs:** Students do scan of their bedroom and categorize
• **Trip to shop:** choose five items. Maximizer or satisficer?
• **Choice:** small groups with budget shop for item. 4 options or 20 options. Discuss
• **Games:** Compete or cooperate
• I was happiest when....
• My life would be better if.....
• **Movie:** Wall-E. Consumerism
• **www.adbusters.org**
Avoiding Overthinking and Social Comparison

- Finish each day and be done with it. You have done what you could; some blunders and absurdities have crept in; forget them as soon as you can. Tomorrow is a new day; you shall begin it serenely and with too high a spirit to be encumbered with your old nonsense

- Ralph Waldo Emerson
Well-being Curriculum
Mindfulness, Meditation, Spirituality, and Meaning

• A major hurdle to well-being is negative relationships
• Simple solution is mindfulness
• Positive emotions draw us towards a person or thing and negative emotions cause us to withdraw from a person or thing
• Perceptions get in the way
Mindfulness

• Creating a refuge from being at the mercy of our emotional states
• Step back from endless “doing”
• Stay in the present moment
• Happiness lies in the present moment
• Reduction of stress and anxiety
• Brings about positive emotional states
• Develops feelings of compassion
Practicing Mindful Meditation

- Five to ten minutes
- Reflect after
- Experiment and write about it
- Multiple forms of meditation
Foster Savoring

- Relish ordinary experiences—take time to notice, write about it, what is different?
- Reminisce and savor with family and friends
- Transport yourself-practice reminiscing twice a day for a week (well-being box)
- Celebrate good news
- Be open to beauty and excellence
- Be mindful
- Take pleasure in senses
Writing to savor or relish the present

- Not advised—takes away from the present
- Structured process that forces a person to organize and integrate thoughts
- Consider systematic step by step solutions
- Helps you “get past” which is NOT what you want to do when savoring
Well-being Curriculum
H.O.P.E. Filled Resources
Humor, Optimism, Play, Engagement

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