

Student Activity

It Feels Good to Give



Happiness Skill: Generosity

Time

Session 1: 15 minutes

Session 2: 45 minutes

Overview

In this activity, students will explore the effects of generosity over the course of two class sessions. During the first session, students are introduced to the meaning of generosity and are challenged to be generous to an assigned peer over a period of one week. During the second session, held one week later, students discuss how it made them feel to both give and receive. In order to better understand the brain science behind the emotions that generosity evokes, students become experts on an assigned article and share their learnings with their peers in a Jigsaw Discussion. They then apply what they have learned as they create several compassionate goals for being generous at home, at school, and in their community.

Objectives

Students will:

- Explore, explain, and practice generosity
- Research and understand the brain science behind generosity
- Consider the connection between generosity and sustainable happiness
- Create attainable goals for application of this human connection skill

Materials

Session 1

- Device with the ability to play and project video
- Sticky notes, one per student
- Class roster or student names, cut out and placed in a bowl

Session 2

- Copies of the following articles, enough of each for one-quarter of the class:
 - [Is Kindness Really Its Own Reward?](#)
 - [How Our Brains Make Us Generous](#)
 - [Kindness Health Facts](#)
 - [Helper's High](#) (first section only: until *Cynicism* header) *

- Devices that can play video, at least two
- Generosity Jigsaw Handout, one per student
- Compassionate Generosity Goal handout, one per student

Differentiation Note: *The Helper's High* article is the most advanced of the four articles. You may choose to give this article to students who need a challenge, or you may choose not to assign this article if it does not fit the need of you students.

Standards

National Health Education Standards

- Standard 2: Students will analyze the influence of family, peers, culture, media, technology, and other factors on health behaviors.
- Standard 4: Students will demonstrate the ability to use interpersonal communication skills to enhance health and avoid or reduce health risks.
- Standard 6: Students will demonstrate the ability to use goal-setting skills to enhance health.

Next Generation Science Standards

- MS-LS1-8 From Molecules to Organisms
 - Structures and Processes: LS1.D: Information Processing: Each sense receptor responds to different inputs (electromagnetic, mechanical, chemical), transmitting them as signals that travel along nerve cells to the brain. The signals are then processed in the brain, resulting in immediate behaviors or memories.

Common Core English Language Arts Standards

Reading

- R.1: Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

Speaking & Listening

- SL.1: Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
- SL.2: Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

Procedure

Session 1

1. Begin by writing 'Generosity' in large letters on the board. Then distribute a sticky note to each student and encourage them to record what generosity means to them. Instruct them to stick their note on the board when they are done.
2. Take a few minutes to read through what students have brainstormed and discuss similarities among the students' ideas.
3. Then play the first 43 seconds of the Discover Your Happy Generosity [video](#), and instruct students to listen carefully for generosity definition. Invite students to share what they heard, and be sure they understand that generosity refers to giving time, attention, and acts of service just as much as gift-giving! Generosity is any kind of behavior that serves the welfare of someone else.
4. Based on this definition, encourage students to brainstorm specific ways to be generous. Record their ideas on the board around the sticky notes as they share.
5. Then explain that students are about to secretly select the name of one of their classmates. They will be challenged to be generous to this person over the next week. They can be generous by using some of the suggestions on the board, or they can come up with their own ideas. *They should not tell their peers who they have picked!*
6. Once students have each picked a name, encourage them to save it in a safe and secret spot. Remind them of their challenge throughout the week, and be ready to reconvene and complete Session 2 once a week has gone by.

Session 2

1. After a week has passed, bring the class back together. Knowing your students, you may choose to have them reveal who they selected or you may opt to have them continue to keep it a secret. No matter what, ask students to share how it felt to both give and receive.
2. Once students have shared their feelings, tell the class that there is actual brain science behind the positive emotions that are associated with being generous! Today, student groups will collaborate to investigate this more.
3. Divide students into four different groups*, and distribute one Generosity Jigsaw Handout to each student.
***Note:** *If groups are large, further divide each group into two.*
4. Prepare the class for the activity by explaining that students will first work to fill out the chart left column: *My Expert Group Notes*. Elaborate by explaining:
 - Each group will be responsible for reading one assigned article and/or watching an assigned video.
 - Students will first independently perform their research and jot notes to answer the focus question: *Based on brain science, why does generosity make us happy?*
 - Groups should then collaborate to answer the Group Work question.
 - It will be each group's responsibility to become an expert on their assigned research so they can share what they learned with others.

5. Then assign each of the following to one-quarter of the class. *
 - Is Kindness Really Its Own Reward? article + Generosity Video
 - How Our Brains Make Us Generous
 - Kindness Health Facts
 - Helper's High (first section only: until *Cynicism* Header)
6. Give students about 20 minutes to read their article/watch their video, jot notes independently, and then discuss their reading as a group. When time is up, each student should be ready to share what they have learned with their peers.
7. Then, form new student groups around the classroom so that each group consists of at least one student from each reading group.
8. Read through the questions in the right hand column of the handout and explain that the goal of the second part of this activity is for each group member to share what they learned about the brain science behind generosity from their research. As a student shares, the other group members should jot notes. Groups will then work together to develop a final answer to the focus question that takes all of their research into account.
9. Once it seems like most groups have finished, bring the class back together and invite groups to share their answer to the focus question: Based on brain science, why does generosity make us happy?

Be sure students understand:

- Generosity activates regions of the brain (such as parts of the frontal cortex and an area called the nucleus accumbens) that are associated with reward and pleasure. When these sections of the brain are activated, they create an internal warm glow and feelings of happiness in our bodies. This is known as a helper's high!
 - In addition, taking part in and witnessing acts of kindness causes the brain to produce the hormone oxytocin and the chemical serotonin, both of which increase our feelings of happiness and optimism.
10. Summarize that being generous really does benefit everyone! Now that students know the positive effects of generosity and the ways in which they can be generous, they can use this knowledge to help them act compassionately and bring happiness to others. Explain that when we act with compassion, we go out of the way to help those around us—especially those we know are experiencing emotional, mental, and/or physical pain.
 11. Pass out one Compassionate Generosity Goal to each student, and review the directions provided under Part 1 and 2. Then have students work independently or with a partner to complete their goals.
 12. Conclude by bringing the class back together and encouraging a few students to share one of their favorite goals. Challenge each student to work on achieving these goals over the next couple weeks. Remind them that by being generous at home, at school, and in their community, they are spreading happiness!

My Assigned Article or Video: _____

<p>My Expert Group Notes</p>	<p>My Jigsaw Group Notes</p>
<p>Independent Work: Based on brain science, why does generosity make us happy? Jot notes as you read:</p>	<p>Independent Work: Take notes as your group members share what they have learned about the brain science behind generosity:</p>
<p>Group Work: What are two or three of the most important facts about the brain science behind generosity that you think the rest of the class should know?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2. 3. 	<p>Group Work: Imagine you were asked to describe the brain science behind generosity wto a friend. In clear and scientific terms, explain: Based on brain science, why does generosity make us happy?</p>

Part One: Brainstorm ways you can be generous at home, at school, and in your community as you fill in the chart below. Think especially about how your generosity can help those who are having a hard time emotionally, mentally, or physically.

I can be generous at home by:
I can be generous at school by:
I can be generous in my community by:

Part Two: Then choose one idea from each category above that you think has the most potential to create happiness, and use it to form three generosity goals. Be sure each goal is realistic and clearly states *what* you will do and *when* you will do it.

Generosity at Home Goal:

Generosity at School Goal:

Generosity in My Community Goal:
