

## Educator Activity

# The Benefits of the Six Sustainable Happiness Skills

### Overview

After viewing the video *Benefits of The Six Sustainable Happiness Skills (Educators' Perspective)*, educators engage in a session of open dialogue and brainstorm ways to implement the Six Sustainable Happiness Skills in their classrooms and throughout their school. Educators analyze how the happiness skills might help them address specific academic, behavioral, and emotional issues occurring in their classrooms and school and identify intended outcomes for students and teachers for implementing the skills. Additional resources are provided to promote development and inspire creative thinking about initiatives and outcomes.

### Duration

60-minute session; Planning and implementation of Action Plan varies

### Outcomes

Participants will:

- Describe academic, behavioral, and emotional issues students commonly exhibit
- Create a plan for incorporating Six Sustainable Happiness Skills in daily/weekly practice
- Identify intended short-term and long-term benefits for students

### Materials

- Video: Benefits of the Six Sustainable Happiness Skills (Educators' Perspective)
- Handout: The Six Sustainable Happiness Skills
- Handout: The Six Sustainable Happiness Skills Action Plan Template

### Resources

- [Experience Happiness: Discover Your Happy](#)
- [Greater Good in Action: The Practices](#)
- [Nine Things Educators Need to Know about the Brain](#)
- [The Purpose of the Teenage Brain](#)
- [The Purpose Challenge](#)
- [Social-Emotional Learning Programs for Adolescents](#)

*Note: This educator activity is designed to be led by a facilitator (e.g. staff development teacher, department head, guidance counselor, administrator). However, if that is not possible at your site, consider approaching it as a collaborative exercise.*

*With minor modifications, this activity can be used with the school's leadership team, athletic department, PTA, etc. to promote and incorporate these skills as a whole-school approach.*

## Procedure

1. Organize participants into six groups in one of the following ways:
  - Self-selected
  - By grade level
  - By subject area
  - Randomly
2. Ask participants to collaborate with their colleagues to develop their own descriptions of happiness and each of the Six Sustainable Happiness Skills (e.g., What does happiness look like? What does generosity mean to you?).
3. Have each group share one definition/explanation they created until all Six Sustainable Happiness Skills have been discussed.
4. Engage participants in a discussion about the following questions:
  - How might each of these skills support sustained happiness?
  - How might you benefit from learning about and practicing these skills?
  - How might your students benefit from learning about and practicing these skills?
5. View the ***Benefits of the Six Sustainable Happiness Skills (Educators' Perspective)*** video.
6. After viewing the video, distribute **The Six Sustainable Happiness Skills** handout. Ask participants to review the information and compare it to the descriptions they developed in the critical thinking activity.
7. Ask participants to think about the Six Sustainable Happiness Skills and the video they just watched as you guide them through a discussion of the questions below. Make sure to provide enough time for participants to discuss all questions within their individual groups and report out to the whole group.
  - Have you noticed any changes in your students' levels of stress, anxiety, sadness, anger, or depression (in this specific school year or in general over multiple years)?
    - Has it affected your students' ability to focus, master content, or work with others?
  - In the video, Kerrin shared, "Students don't know how to quiet themselves. They don't know how to turn off." Do you observe this in your classroom?
    - If so, what are the effects of this behavior?
    - What role should teachers play in helping students manage their stress levels?
  - According to Siobhan's class, "A lot of the times we're not even worried about the present. We're thinking about what do we have to do to get to what's next."
    - Which of the Six Sustainable Happiness Skills could help them focus on the present?

- According to Siobhan, “Some people believe that happiness is just something that is or isn’t. And the fact is that there are skills that can be learned.”
    - Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Why or why not?
8. Direct participants to collaborate within their groups to review **The Six Sustainable Happiness Skills** handout to identify what they are already doing in their classrooms that help build these skills. (Many educators may already be implementing these skills without realizing it or naming it specifically.)
  9. A jigsaw approach provides an opportunity for participants to research specific activities that can be used to practice the Six Sustainable Happiness Skills. This approach also helps educators share that information with colleagues to build and expand expertise and understanding.
    - Assign each member of the individual groups one of the Six Sustainable Happiness Skills. Each will become an “expert” on their assigned happiness skill and will teach it to the other members of their group.
    - Each group member will use the [Greater Good in Action: The Practices](#) and [The Purpose Challenge](#) websites (additional resources are provided in this lesson) to complete the following:
      1. Review and select three activities that practice their assigned skill.
      2. Describe how to implement each activity.
        - a. What resources are needed?
        - b. What are we already doing that supports this happiness skill?
      3. Explain why colleagues should try the activities.
        - a. What are the benefits of using time that would otherwise be spent on content/subject area instruction?
        - b. How do we define student success? How can this activity help students achieve greater success?
      4. Describe the intended outcomes of the activities.
        - a. What do we hope to achieve as a result of implementing these activities?
    - When each group member has finished, provide time for each “expert” to share their happiness skill. Group members can write activity examples for each happiness skill on **The Six Sustainable Happiness Skills** handout.
  10. As a whole-group, have participants brainstorm a list of milestones, or concrete observations or tangible pieces of student work, that can be used as evidence of success. (Note: Teachers can set up peer observations to both monitor success and observe best practices within other classrooms.)
  11. Close the activity by providing time for participants to complete **The Six Sustainable Happiness Skills Action Plan Template**. The template will guide participants as they make







decisions around implementing the activities from the brainstorming session into their classrooms and/or throughout the school. Be sure to establish check-in dates to monitor progress, course-correct, and give participants an opportunity to share challenges and celebrate successes.

12. Before participants leave, provide time to reflect and have them share feedback in the form of an exit ticket.
  - What happiness skill have you selected and what activities will you incorporate into your instruction?
  - What will that look like?
  - How will you encourage and support student participation and buy-in?
  - How can we support continued application of a happiness skill in our school (grade/subject area) once it has been taught?
  - How will we measure success?
  - How will we communicate success and expand the reach of our program?

### Additional Resources

- "Mindfulness in Education Research Highlights." *Greater Good*, 16 Sept. 2014, [https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/mindfulness\\_in\\_education\\_research\\_highlights](https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/mindfulness_in_education_research_highlights).
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2009). *School connectedness: Strategies for increasing protective factors among youth*. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
- Layout, K., & Lyubomirsky, S. (2014). Benefits, mechanisms, and new directions for teaching gratitude to children. *School Psychology Review*, 43(2), 153-159. Link: <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/5vr4g18r>
- Fox, E. (2012). *Rainy brain, sunny brain: The new science of optimism and pessimism*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Bronk, K. C. (2013). *Purpose in life: A critical component of optimal youth development*. Dordrecht: Springer.
- Dunn, E. W., Aknin, L. B., & Norton, M. I. (2014). Prosocial spending and happiness: Using money to benefit others pays off. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 23(1), 41-47. DOI: [10.1177/0963721413512503](https://doi.org/10.1177/0963721413512503)
- Fowler, J. H., & Christakis, N. A. (2010). Cooperative behavior cascades in human social networks. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, 107(12), 5334-5338. DOI: [10.1073/pnas.0913149107](https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.0913149107)

**The Six Sustainable Happiness Skills**

 <b>Mindfulness</b>	 <b>Human Connection</b>	 <b>Gratitude</b>	 <b>Positive Outlook</b>	 <b>Purpose</b>	 <b>Generosity</b>
<p>Live in the moment. Be fully present NOW. The past is over, and the future hasn't happened yet, so don't worry so much about them. Mindfulness is being aware of your thoughts, feelings, and surroundings in the here and now. Be kind to yourself. Adopt a supportive stance toward yourself and others. When we practice mindfulness, we worry less, and opens us up to JOY!</p>	<p>We all want to feel loved, be comforted, and know that we belong. Strong relationships are critical to wellbeing. Significant others, friendships, and social engagement with peers are a huge predictor of happiness in life. People with close bonds are better able to overcome life's challenges, and less likely to experience depression, low self-esteem, or health problems.</p>	<p>Thank others for the goodness they contribute to your life. Thankfulness fuels optimism, reinforces trust, and is often reciprocated. It creates a benevolent loop and a sense of overall wellbeing. It adds to the quality of our relationships. Gratitude shows that we are aware of our own privilege, and thankful for the sources of goodness outside ourselves.</p>	<p>Find the good in others. Imagine the possibilities! Be open to the idea that everything turns out for the best, eventually. A positive outlook helps us be more hopeful, and bounce back from adversity. People are more creative, resilient, and likely to do better in school and in life when they're experiencing positive emotions. Embrace life's potential!</p>	<p>Live for something bigger than yourself. You matter! You can make a difference in the world, at school, at work, at home, for a team or a community, or in someone else's life. Purpose means living by your values and goals. It means having a vision for what your life's mission is about. Set out to do something meaningful. Strive to make a positive difference.</p>	<p>Hold the door for someone else. Help an elderly or disabled person get safely across the street. Generosity doesn't have to be about money. It can be about being helpful, supportive, or simply being kind. It's about giving of yourself to someone else. Generosity has been shown to boost your endorphins, giving you an increased sense of wellbeing.</p>

**The Six Sustainable Happiness Skills Action Plan Template**

<b>Who</b>	Individual / Grade Level Team / Content Team / Professional Learning Community / Other	
<b>Focus Area</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Mindfulness</li> <li>2. Human Connection</li> <li>3. Gratitude</li> <li>4. Positive Outlook</li> <li>5. Purpose</li> <li>6. Generosity</li> </ol>	Rationale / Observations / Data for Selecting Skill
<b>Expected Student Benefits</b>	Short-Term Benefits	Long-Term Benefits
<b>Implementation Plan</b>	How Often? (Daily, Weekly, etc.)	
	When? (Activator, Closure, etc.)	
	Activities	

**The Six Sustainable Happiness Skills Action Plan Template (Continued)**

<b>Monitoring Progress</b>	How will you monitor progress?	
	What data will you use to assess progress?	
	How often will you collect data?	
	If implementing as a team, how can you collaboratively analyze the data collected?	
	How will you celebrate and communicate successes?	
<b>Reflections / Modifications</b>		