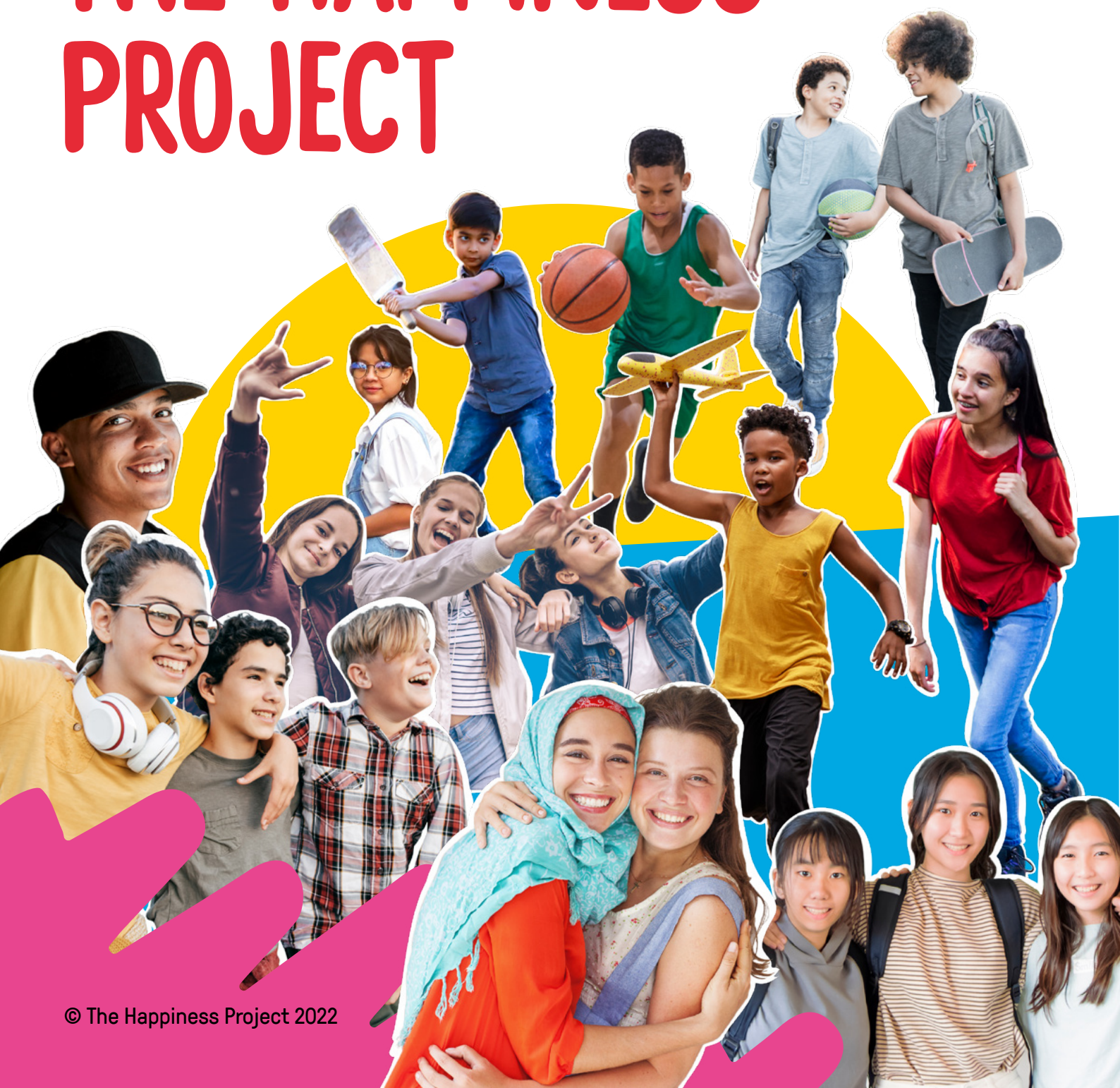


A HOW TO GUIDE FOR THE HAPPINESS PROJECT



WELCOME TO THE HAPPINESS PROJECT!

Thank you for your interest in helping children to find their happiness and share it with others. Please take a read through of the guidance below to help you and your students on your Happiness Project journey!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The following learning activities and resources have been created in consultation with children, teachers and happiness experts from around the world and we are so grateful to their time and dedication to the project.

Very many thanks to our Teacher Advisory Panel:

Francis Jim Tuscano, Cristina Lage de Francesco, Aashraya Seth, Ellery Diaz, Taiwo Ajayi, Ilkem Özding, Katherine Branco, Rabia Saqib, Mary Esther Rodríguez Núñez and Daniela Romeo.

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ABOUT THE HAPPINESS PROJECT

Now more than ever, as children face the challenges associated with the pandemic, it is important to think about how we can support children's wellbeing and happiness. The pandemic has impacted children's wellbeing in a number of ways, with less opportunities for connections or engagement with activities they enjoy and increased life stressors. Learning a set of practical tools to build happiness, equips children with skills they can use throughout their life to support their wellbeing and contribute positively to the happiness of the community around them.

Emotions are an inevitable part of life and helping children understand them is an important part of learning and development. However, emotions are not just individual, we share, react to and create emotions in others. We contribute to the happiness of those around us, and the people around us can impact our own happiness. Community wellbeing is about collectively building happiness to improve lives. Sharing their happiness with others and communicating what improves happiness can be beneficial for children's own wellbeing and enable them to become happiness activists in their own community, spreading happiness amongst others.

The five ingredients that make up The Happiness Project have good evidence that they can contribute to the improved happiness and positive well-being of others.

1. CONNECTIONS

Research shows that one of the most important things we need to be happy is strong relationships with others¹. These can be with friends, family as well as animals and the natural world. The more connections we have where we can be ourselves, where we feel safe, loved and valued for who we are, often the happier we feel.

2. CREATIVITY

Using our creativity, whether it be through art, drama, sport, imagination, reading or generating ideas through discussion is a powerful way to help us feel more content and happier. By learning new skills and sharing them with others, we can feel a sense of pride and self-worth.

3. MOVEMENT

Using our body to move is important for our happiness. By dancing, running, jumping, skipping, playing sport or games – however you want to move, do it! Get your heart pumping and clear your mind by moving your body.

4. KINDNESS

Doing something kind for someone else can make us feel happy and fulfilled. Sharing a smile, or a laugh or a joke with someone helps us to feel connected to others. Showing kindness to ourselves is also really important.

5. GRATITUDE

Gratitude can take many forms and shapes. Spending a few minutes thinking about what you are grateful for can really help you to focus on being present in the moment and what is positive and good in your life.

The Happiness Project enables children to learn about factors that contribute to happiness, what makes them feel good, and how they can bring this into their own lives. Learning as children, that happiness is a skill we can build through small daily activities provides a solid foundation for looking after their own well-being throughout their life, which in turn will help them to be happiness activists for the rest of their lives.

Written Dr Emma Hepburn, Clinical Psychologist, @thepsychologymum

¹ Robert Waldinger; Harvard Study of Adult Development, 2015 <https://www.adultdevelopmentstudy.org>. We also really recommend watching Robert Waldinger's TED Talk entitled "What makes a good life? Lessons from the longest study on happiness".

HOW TO HAVE CONVERSATIONS ABOUT HAPPINESS

Below are some tips on how to have conversations about happiness, emotions and feelings with students and young people.

- Explain that happiness is a process and journey – it is not possible to be happy all the time.
- Explain that happiness is about building daily habits that make us feel healthy and happier.
- Our brain is like a muscle and we can help to make it stronger by doing daily exercises that make us feel happier – (for example the Choose Happier Together Challenge Cards).
- For younger children, having a stuffed animal, toy or something for them to hold when talking about happiness and emotions can make them feel more comfortable.
- How you yourself talk about your own personal feelings and happiness is powerful to children. Model positive behaviour through your own words and demonstrate a growth mindset by using the word yet. E.g. “I’m not sure I have worked this out yet but I know if we work together we’ll be able to crack it!”
- Circle time, when students sit in a circle and share their thoughts on a topic, can be a great way of facilitating conversations about happiness. Tell students at the start that you will go around the circle twice. This allows students to pass on the first go and speak on the second round when they may be feeling more confident.
- Sometimes just listening is the most powerful gift you can give. It can be tempting to try and give advice but instead acknowledge how the student is feeling and make it known that you are there for them. In the event of a child disclosing a case of abuse or harm, reassure the child they did nothing wrong and that you take what they have said seriously. Follow the formal processes set out by your school setting.

HOW TO START THE HAPPINESS PROJECT

- Create a class charter at the start of The Happiness Project. Ask children how they would like others to behave and respond when talking about topics such as feelings and emotions. Write down the “rules” of the Class Charter using the language that the children themselves use. Ask all the children to sign their names at the bottom of the piece of paper. Display this in the classroom when learning about The Happiness Project. This gives children a sense of ownership in how students should behave whilst talking about these topics.
- It has to become a habit to talk about feelings and happiness – don’t worry if students seem stuck at the beginning. It can be really hard and overwhelming for students to do this for the first time. However, the more you have conversations about happiness the easier students will find them.
- Praise effort and teamwork from students and acknowledge that it can be difficult to talk about feelings.
- Always make sure that students know they do not have to share if they don’t want to.

HOW TO USE THE HAPPINESS PROJECT ACTIVITIES

All The Happiness Project activities have been designed to be modular, so you do not need to follow them in any particular order. Every activity comes with a specific activity guide to help you in delivering the lesson.

The activities may need to be adapted for your school setting. The timings suggested are just a guide and your students may need less or more time to complete activities.