

# Lessons In Happiness

Hello, nice to see you here!

This script is meant for everyone that wants to make others happy. You could for example give these lessons in your class if you are a teacher. The exercises described here can be used for several audiences, like primary schools, secondary school, universities, but also at old people's homes. You don't need any prior knowledge to give these lessons, you can just follow the exercises in this script.

If you have any other nice exercises on this theme or if you have any questions or remarks or want to translate this lesson to your own language, you can always send an e-mail to [opensourceteachings@gmail.com](mailto:opensourceteachings@gmail.com).

Let's make a happy, loving world together.  
Have fun and good luck!

**Duration of the workshop:** +- 3 hours.

**Beforehand:** 5 minutes.

Everyone gets a big sheet of paper for a couple of exercises. The participants are also allowed to draw whatever they like on it. When a participant does not feel like doing the exercises, he/she is also allowed to just draw on the paper. In these lessons it is important that there are a lot of physical activities, as physical exercise is a key element in learning, and it makes the lessons more fun (Hawley, R., & Reichert, M. 2009).

There are a couple of rules: Everyone will listen to each other and treat each other respectfully. The trainer only continues the story when everyone is quiet. When the trainer raises his/her hand it means everyone should get quiet. The participants can also raise their hand to ask for silence. When the participants feel out of energy, they can raise their finger and say so. Then a fun energizer will be started.

In the beginning the trainer asks the participants to write down how happy they feel on a scale from 1 to 10.

**Aim of the training:** Give the children guidelines on how to be happy and have them leave the classroom happier than at the beginning of the workshop.

## **Introductory exercise**

Time: 10 minutes

Aim: Participants and trainer get acquainted

Execution: Everyone stands in a circle and the trainer tells:

'Step into the circle if my statement applies to you:

Who loves sport?

Who makes music?

Who was on Whatsapp yesterday late in the evening?

Who is excited about this workshop?

Who is in love?

Who is insecure sometimes

Who sometimes takes a shower for half an hour?

Who is sad sometimes?

Who feels happy today?

Who here is very strong?'

Also ask the children to come up with questions.



## **What is happiness?**

Time: 7 minutes

Aim: Give insight on what happiness is

Execution: Trainer asks the children what happiness is. He lets some children tell their vision.

Trainer tells: 'Happiness is a feeling of meaning and satisfaction about your life in general. Happiness does not mean you have to be cheerful all the time. It is no problem to feel insecure or sad sometimes. We all do sometimes.'

Trainer asks: 'Who wants to become rich? Who wants to become famous? Do you think you will be happy if you are famous and rich?' Often children will tell that this is not the case. Trainer can tell: 'There are a lot of people that walk around with angry faces while they are rich and famous. Many people think they have to get rich and famous to become happy, but you need different things to be happy.'

Trainer asks the children what they need to be happy. Often the children have a pretty good idea of things that make them happy.

The following subjects are scientifically proven to make you happy:

Gratitude

Positivity

Good relationships

Giving

Being friendly

Meditation and yoga

Experiencing flow/ losing yourself in something you love to do.

Sports and exercise

Self-confidence and knowing your strengths

These subjects will be talked about more excessively during the training.

Source: Bohlmeijer, 2013, Seligman, 2013, Achor, 2010, Boniwell, 2012, Algoe, & Haidt, 2009.

### **Positive gossip about your classmate**

Time: 15 minutes

Aim: Give participants insight about their own qualities and have them experience what it's like to be kind to someone else.

Execution: Trainer Tells: 'It is nice to discover your strengths and qualities. Also, it is very important to give. We will do both with the next exercise. We'll make groups of four and three of the group members talk about the fourth person. That person looks and listens from a small distance. There is one rule: you can only say positive things about the others. Switch between gossip-subjects every two minutes.'

Source: Seligman, 2009, 2013.



### **This too will pass**

Time: 1 minute

Aim: Give the participants insight in the constantly changing nature of reality and give them insight in how they can deal with this.

Execution: The trainer tells the participants to write down: 'This too, will pass.' Trainer tells: 'Everything in life changes and passes. Remember this whenever you feel bothered by something or when you don't feel like doing something. And when life is very beautiful, you will enjoy it even more knowing it will pass. Just think about this.'

## **Love yourself/Energizer**

Time: 15 minutes.

Aim: Participants will know the importance of loving themselves. They will be able to say something positive about themselves.

Execution: Trainer asks: Who here loves him/herself? Why is it important to love yourself?

'Because you will be with yourself for the rest of your life. It's amazing if you have a great relationship with you and like to be with yourself.'

'We are going to sing a song and I like you to sing along. Everyone says a positive sentence about themselves. After someone said a sentence, we will applaud and cheer. If you cannot come up with a sentence, that's no problem. In that case we will also just applaud and cheer. This is the chorus that we will all sing together.' The first time the trainer shares one sentence at the time and asks the children to repeat the sentence.

It's oke to be me  
I am free  
To be who I want to be  
And I love me

Source: Neff, 2003.

## **Gratitude**

Time: 15 minutes

Aim: Participants will know the importance of gratitude. They will be able to name at least five things they are grateful for.

Execution: Trainer writes on purpose on the blackboard: 'Thak you'. Probably one of the children will already read the word out loud and say that it's spelled wrong. The teacher tells: 'People tend to focus on what they don't have instead of what they do have. Even though I wrote down Thak you. You can still understand what I meant right? So why do we always focus on the missing letter? Instead of the 7 letters that are spelled right.'

'Can you all write down at least five things you are thankful for?' The trainer lets the participants tell what they wrote down and asks: 'What is the importance of gratitude?'

Children will probably give some answers on the importance of thankfulness.

Trainer tells at the end: 'By looking at what you do have you can see you are actually doing quite good. Are there people that do not have the same things as you? Look at poorer countries for example: we have clean drinking water and food every day. Studies show that when people write

what they're thankful for every day, they are a lot happier. Often, they are also healthier and live longer.'

Sources: Emmons & McCullough, 2003, Algoe & Haidt, 2009, Chan, 2010 Fox, Kaplan, Damasio, Damasio, 2015.

### **You can do it**

Time: 5 minutes

Aim: Show participants the power of believing in yourself.

Execution: The class divides in couples of two. The first child stretches his/her hands to the front and says ten times: 'I am weak and I cannot do it.' Then the other tries to push the arms down. Then the first child says ten times: 'I am strong and I can do it'. The second child tries to push the arms down again. Do they notice the difference? Switch roles. What happens most of the time is that there is a very big difference between saying you can and saying you can't.

Conclusion: When you believe you can do it you are more successful than when you don't.

Source: Jeffers, 2007.

### **Positivity cap**

Time: 15 minutes

Material: For this exercise you are going to need two caps or two sunglasses etc. You can be as creative as you want with this. I made mine with paper mache. Make sure that one of them looks positive and the other one looks negative.

Aim: Participants will understand that the way they look at the world has influence on how they feel. They will be able to see a difficult situation in a positive way.

Execution: Trainer tells: 'Maybe you know people that always complain, even though there is not really a problem. People can choose how they look at the world. I brought two caps, a positive and a negative cap.' The trainer writes a few examples on the blackboard:

'It is raining outside.

I overslept.

I got two bad grades.

I broke my leg.

I lost my phone.

I am feeling sick.

I am blind.

My girlfriend/boyfriend broke up with me.

The trainer makes two groups. One group will express the positive aspects and the other group the negative. After a few examples the roles will be switched. At the end only the positivity cap will be used.

Sources: Clore, Huntsinger, 2008.

Seligman, 2009, Seligman, 2013.

## **Self-confidence**

Time: 5 minutes

Aim: Present participants ways to be confident about themselves.

Execution: Trainer tells: 'A study has shown that if you have a victorious attitude, you seem way more confident. If you are ever nervous about a class presentation for example, you could take on a powerful pose and you will look a lot more positive and confident. The same applies to laughing before you are even happy. You will become happy automatically. Let's try this: Go stand or sit in a powerful pose, for example with your legs on the table or with your hands in the air. When you do this two minutes before something that you are scared of you will feel less nervous and you will be better at it!

Source: Cuddy, (2012). For examples of powerful poses watch: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ks-Mh1QhMc>

## **The here and now/ Mindfulness meditation**

Time: 15 minutes

Aim: Participants will get insight about the here and now.

Execution: Trainer tells: 'When we experience problems in our lives this is often because we are in the future or in the past with our head. Maybe you are worried about something wrong you said the other day or you still have to make some homework and don't want to. In reality there is only one moment we are always living in. What moment is this? It is always the NOW'

The trainer will write the word 'now' on the blackboard.

The trainer tells: 'Meditation helps us to live in the moment and it benefits you in many ways. For example, it will help you sleep better, you will be less worried and have less stress and it has many many other benefits for your health!'

'We will all meditate for a moment.' This exercise can be difficult for children. People that find it difficult often start laughing. The trainer can tell in advance that if the children can't hold their laughing they will have to leave the class for a little while so they won't interrupt the other participants.'

The trainer asks the participants to put their feet firmly on the ground, maybe close their eyes and focus on their breathing. 'Notice that your breathing happens naturally, you don't have to do anything for it.'

'From there you continue to bring your attention to your feet, and slowly upwards towards your legs, stomach, chest, back, neck and finally your head.' Try as a trainer to move slowly from body part to body part.

Afterwards you reflect on the exercise by asking the participants to their reactions.

Source: Spijkerman, Pots & Bohlmeijer, 2016  
Achor, 2010, 2012



## **Flow**

Time: 3 minutes

Aim: Inspire participants to learn something they would like to learn.

Execution: Trainer tells: 'Do you know the feeling of forgetting the time when you are doing something? When you are playing or drawing for example? This is called flow. People that have a hobby or a job that can completely absorb them are often happier than people who don't have this. What activities give you this feeling? Write them down.'

'If you could pick something to be really great at, what would it be?

If you want to learn something, you'd better start now. Not only will this make it easier to reach a flow state with this particular thing. But the more your practice something the better you become at it!'

Source: Csikszentmihalyi, 2007.

## **Dream**

Time: 20 minutes

Aim: Participants get insight on what they want. They will take a step towards their own dream.

Execution: Trainer asks the participants: 'Close your eyes for a while and visualise yourself in the ideal situation. Where are you now? With whom are you and what are you doing? What skills do you have? How does the most fantastic life you can imagine for yourself look like? If you see it clearly, you may make a drawing of what your ideal life is like.'

Afterwards some children will be asked to talk about their dreams and show the drawing they made.

Source: Lyobomirsky, 2008.





## **Making mistakes is alright!**

Time: 10 minutes

Aim: Participants learn to make mistakes

Execution: Trainer tells: 'It is alright to make mistakes. Whatever you want to learn, you will make mistakes. Making a mistake is actually a great thing because you will learn very much from those mistakes.'

The trainer asks the participants to form a circle and makes them count. The first child will say one, the second says two etc. But instead of the number four or any given number that is part of the table of four, the rule is to say the word 'smile'. If the game isn't difficult enough the teacher can bring in new rules like: instead of 'three' the children should clap their hands and instead of 'five' they stamp their feet. When someone makes a mistake, the others applaud and the child that made the mistake gets to walk around victorious in the circle. This way the participants are stimulated to make mistakes.

Sources: Moser, Schroder, Heeter, Moran, Lee, 2011.

Downar, Bhatt, Montague, 2011.

## **Explanation about giving**

Time: 10 minutes

Aim: Give the children insight on the importance of giving.

Execution: Trainer asks: 'Why would you be kind to others? Why would you give something away to a stranger, if you could also keep it for yourself?' Children will probably respond by saying that it makes someone else happy. Trainers asks: 'and what happens with you when you make someone else happy?' Often one of the children will say: 'I will become happy as well.'

Trainer tells: 'Exactly giving makes you happy. So, if you give something to a stranger, you make two people happy at once.'

'Of course there are boundaries, since this should not happen at the expense of yourself. When you give away more than you can miss, you will not be happy anymore.'

'Who knows a nice good deed we could do this week? Who did something kind to someone recently?'

You can give by doing chores at home like washing the dishes or by drinking tea with a lonely neighbour. Possibilities are endless and maybe during lunchtime you will think about giving something to someone!'

Sources: Post, 2005. Algoe & Haidt, J. 2009.

Lyobomirsky, S. 2008.

## **Write a postcard and give it away**

Time: 20 minutes

Materials: Colored paper cut in postcard size. Make sure you have more than enough of them.

Aim: Participants give something positive to themselves. They share happiness with someone else and notice how this makes them feel.

Execution: Trainer tells: 'Finally we will write a postcard to ourselves. What did you learn during this workshop and what would you like to say to yourself for whenever you feel sad? When you are sad you can read this postcard and hopefully you'll feel better.'

'We will also write a kind postcard to someone else you want to be kind to. This could be someone at home, in your class or you can even leave it on a bench outside to have a stranger find it.' This is an exercise children really like. Most children will want to write a lot of post cards.

Sources: Post, 2005. Algoe & Haidt, J. 2009.

Lyobomirsky, S. 2008.

## **End**

Time: 10 minutes

Aim: Let the participants cool down and let the trainer get insight in how the children experienced the workshop.

Make the participants remember the things they learned better by talking about it again.

Execution: The trainer asks the participants to grade their happiness again. If the grade went up. The trainer reached his goal. The trainer thanks all the children for their participation and asks a few children how the children experienced it, what they have learned and if they will use something from the course in day to day life. The trainer also asks for feedback on the workshop. So he/she can make it even more fun and insightful for the children the next time!



## **Extra exercises:**

### **Gossip**

Time: 5 minutes

Aim: Participants understand that gossip will also hurt yourself.

Execution: Trainer tells: 'Who of you likes to gossip? Gossiping says more about yourself than about someone else.'

A child will be asked to come forward and read a note with a negative gossip about someone imaginary, like: 'Jacob is stupid. He never says anything in class.' Another child will come forward and says something kind: 'Jacob is really nice.'

The trainer asks the group how they liked both children. 'Who would you trust? Who seems most kind?'

Conclusion: Gossip will hurt yourself! You should say kind things.

### **Mirror**

Time: 2 minutes

Aim: Show children that you will get back what you radiate.

Material: Mirror

Execution: Trainer asks: 'Who ever looks in the mirror? What happens when you smile? What happens when you look angry?' The trainer will make the mirror go round in the class. So the children can look in it and experience this insight.

Conclusion: 'You will see a happy face or an angry face. Often the feeling you radiate works contagious. When you radiate friendliness, others will be more friendly to you. Think about this: What do you usually radiate yourself?'

### **Energizers for when energy is low**

Time: 5 minutes per energizer

Aim: Raise the energy levels of the participants.

### **Different characters**

The trainer says something and the children will imitate. For example: everyone is grumpy, or very happy, everyone is a mouse, or an old man, or a formula 1 driver. All children can walk around the classroom when playing their character.

### **Walking and standing still**

The children all walk around in the classroom and together they will decide without talking when to stand still.

### **Toss a ball**

The children toss a ball to each other. When you get it, you will have to name something you're grateful for as quick as possible.

### **Expression**

The children stand in a circle. The first person starts with a sentence that expresses a feeling. For example, if this feeling is enthusiasm, the person could say: 'I'm excited to do this'. The next people will repeat the sentence, but with more expression every time it is repeated. You continue until all the children in the circle have said the sentence.

### **Wave of gratitude**

The children stand in a circle and do the wave. At someone's turn to raise their hands, he/she names something he/she is grateful for.

## **Inspiring stories**

### **The Donkey**

Once there were an old man, a boy and a donkey. They were going to town and the boy was riding the donkey, with the old man walking alongside.

As they rambled along, they passed some old women sitting in the shade. One of the women called out, "Shame on you, a great lump of a boy, riding while your old father is walking."

The man and boy decided that maybe the critics were right so they changed positions.

Later they ambled by a group of mothers watching their young children play by the river. One cried out in protest, "How could you make your little boy walk in the hot sun while you ride!"

The two travellers decided that maybe they both should walk. Next they met some young men out for a stroll.

"How stupid you are to walk when you have a perfectly good donkey to ride!" one yelled derisively. So both father and son clambered onto the donkey, deciding they both should ride.

They were soon settled and underway again. They next encountered some children who were on their way home from school.

One girl shouted, "How mean to put such a load on a poor little animal." The old man and the boy saw no alternative. Maybe the critics were right. They now struggled to carry the donkey.

The father pushed the donkey a handful of straw into his mouth and laid his hand on his son's shoulder. "Regardless of what we do," he said, "there is someone who does not agree. I think we just need to decide what we think is right."

## **Socrates and the three filters**

One day, a student came up to the great greek philosopher. "Socrates, I have just heard some news about one of your friends." he excitedly exclaimed.

"Before you tell me this news, we need to make sure that it passes the triple filter test," responded Socrates.

"What's the triple filter test?" the man asked.

"The first test is that of **truth**. Tell me, do you know that what you're going to tell me is absolutely true?" asked Socrates.

After thinking for a moment, the man said, "I heard this news from someone else, so I'm not 100% sure if it's true."

"The second test is that of **goodness**," Socrates continued, "Is what you're about to tell me something good?"

"No, actually it's the opposite..."

Socrates interrupted the man, "So what you're going to tell me is neither true, nor good?"

The man was slightly embarrassed and shrugged his shoulders.

Socrates continued, "There is one final test which is **usefulness**. Is what you're about to tell me going to be useful?"

"Probably not," the man replied.

"Well, if you're going to tell me something that's not true, good or useful, then why tell me at all?" responded the philosopher.

The next time you gossip, pass the information through the triple filter test to see if you really should be telling others.

## **The art of letting go**

A senior monk and a junior monk were traveling together. At one point, they came to a river with a strong current. As the monks were preparing to cross the river, they saw a very young and beautiful woman also attempting to cross. The young woman asked if they could help her cross to the other side.

The two monks glanced at one another because they had taken vows not to touch a woman.

Then, without a word, the older monk picked up the woman, carried her across the river, placed her gently on the other side, and carried on his journey.

The younger monk couldn't believe what had just happened. After rejoining his companion, he was speechless, and an hour passed without a word between them.

Two more hours passed, then three, finally the younger monk could contain himself any longer, and blurted out "As monks, we are not permitted a woman, how could you then carry that woman on your shoulders?"

The older monk looked at him and replied, "Brother, I set her down on the other side of the river, why are you still carrying her?"



## **Judgement**

A farmer and his son had a beloved stallion who helped the family earn a living. One day, the horse ran away and their neighbors exclaimed, "Your horse ran away, what terrible luck!"

The farmer replied, "Maybe so, maybe not. We'll see."

A few days later, the horse returned home, leading a few wild mares back to the farm as well. The neighbors shouted out, "Your horse has returned, and brought several horses home with him. What great luck!"

The farmer replied, "Maybe so, maybe not. We'll see."

Later that week, the farmer's son was trying to break one of the mares and she threw him to the ground, breaking his leg. The villagers cried, "Your son broke his leg, what terrible luck!"

The farmer replied, "Maybe so, maybe not. We'll see."

A few weeks later, soldiers from the national army marched through town, recruiting all the able-bodied boys for the army. They did not take the farmer's son, still recovering from his injury. Friends shouted, "Your boy is spared, what tremendous luck!" To which the farmer replied, "Maybe so, maybe not. We'll see."

## **The House of 1000 Mirrors**

Long ago in a small, far away village, there was a place known as the House of 1000 Mirrors. A small, happy little dog learned of this place and decided to visit. When he arrived, he bounced happily up the stairs to the doorway of the house. He looked through the doorway with his ears lifted high and his tail wagging as fast as it could. To his great surprise, he found himself staring at 1000 other happy little dogs with their tails wagging just as fast as his. He smiled a great smile, and was answered with 1000 great smiles just as warm and friendly. As he left the house, he thought to himself, "This is a wonderful place. I will come back and visit it often."

In this same village, another little dog, who was not quite as happy as the first one, decided to visit the house. He slowly climbed the stairs and hung his head low as he looked into the door. When he saw the 1000 unfriendly looking dogs staring back at him, he growled at them and was horrified to see 1000 little dogs growling back at him. As he left, he thought

## **Nails In The Fence**

There once was a little boy who had a bad temper. His father gave him a bag of nails and told him that every time he lost his temper, he must hammer a nail into the back of the fence.

The first day the boy had driven 37 nails into the fence. Over the next few weeks, as he learned to control his anger, the number of nails hammered daily gradually dwindled down. He discovered it was easier to hold his temper than to drive those nails into the fence.

Finally the day came when the boy didn't lose his temper at all. He told his father about it and the father suggested that the boy now pull out one nail for each day that he was able to hold his temper. The days passed and the young boy was finally able to tell his father that all the nails were gone.

The father took his son by the hand and led him to the fence. He said, "You have done well, my son, but look at the holes in the fence. The fence will never be the same. When you say things in anger, they leave a scar just like this one. You can put a knife in a man and draw it out. It won't matter how many times you say I'm sorry, the wound is still there.

The little boy then understood how powerful his words were. He looked up at his father and said, "I hope you can forgive me father."

"Of course I can," said the father.

## **The Mexican fisher**

An American investment banker was at the pier of a small coastal Mexican village when a small boat with just one fisherman docked. Inside the small boat were several large yellowfin tuna. The American complimented the Mexican on the quality of his fish and asked how long it took to catch them. The Mexican replied, "only a little while. The American then asked why didn't he stay out longer and catch more fish? The Mexican said he had enough to support his family's immediate needs. The American then asked, "but what do you do with the rest of your time?"

The Mexican fisherman said, "I sleep late, fish a little, play with my children, take siestas with my wife, Maria, stroll into the village each evening where I sip wine, and play guitar with my amigos. I have a full and busy life."

The American scoffed, "I am a Harvard MBA and could help you. You should spend more time fishing and with the proceeds, buy a bigger boat. With the proceeds from the bigger boat, you could buy several boats, eventually you would have a fleet of fishing boats. Instead of selling your catch to a middleman you would sell directly to the processor, eventually opening your own cannery. You would control the product, processing, and distribution. You would need to leave this small coastal fishing village and move to Mexico City, then LA and eventually New York City, where you will run your expanding enterprise."

The Mexican fisherman asked, "But, how long will this all take?"

To which the American replied, "15 – 20 years."

"But what then?" Asked the Mexican.

The American laughed and said, "That's the best part. When the time is right you would announce an IPO and sell your company stock to the public and become very rich, you would make millions!"

"Millions – then what?"

The American said, "Then you would retire. Move to a small coastal fishing village where you would sleep late, fish a little, play with your kids, take siestas with your wife, stroll to the village in the evenings where you could sip wine and play your guitar with your amigos."

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