Happy Hour

FINDING HOPE THROUGH HAPPINESS
Welcome and Gratitude Activity
When they asked me to do this...

Ummmm....are you sure?

This is the middle of a pandemic!

People are scared

People are depressed

People don’t know what is coming
Which is exactly why we need this
Why Talk About Happiness?

Happiness is the balm that makes the tough stuff bearable - especially right now
- Need to find ways to get ourselves through this – happiness as a way to build hope

Laughter raises immunity
Humor as a coping mechanism

So today, just enjoy, have fun and hopefully add some happiness to your day.
Keeping our expectations low

It isn’t business as usual

Goal is getting through this

Managing expectations of ourselves or others
Activity #1 - What is happiness anyway?

How do you define happiness?

Take just a few minutes and write down what you believe happiness to be.
Definitions of Happiness

Happiness as an Emotion

Happiness as an Ever Changing State of Being

Happiness as a Sense of Satisfaction with a Life Well Lived
And also...

Happiness is a skill that can be learned
Can We Be Happier?

Genetics plays a role... but so does environment
- Naturally happy people
- Personality and happiness

Set Point Theories
- 50% of happiness is genetic
- 50% is up to us
Happiness as a Developmental Process

[Graph showing happiness levels across different age groups for men and women, with a peak in the 50s for both genders.]
Evolution Doesn’t Want You to be Happy

SO WE HAVE TO WORK AT IT...

Manage emotions
◦ Gratitude
◦ Meditation
◦ Fun

Make Changes in our Lives
◦ Getting through transitions and tough times

Well Lived Life
◦ Making Meaning/Spirituality/Purpose
◦ Relationships
Happiness Research

Multiple Research Studies over the years

- Informal discussions
- Small individualized surveys
- Large Scale multi-year, multi-site studies
- Brain Scans and fMRI studies
Things That DON’T Impact Happiness

Things that don’t influence happiness (with some caveats):

◦ Job title/type
  ◦ How you spend your days
◦ Environment
◦ Past History/Trauma/ Life Stressors
◦ Finances, Income, or SES
  ◦ Basic Needs + and Social Capital
◦ Health – physical or mental health conditions

Many of the things we think will make us happy or we believe “should” make us happy don’t
◦ Happily Ever After Syndrome
Things That DO Impact Happiness

- Relationships
- Purpose and Meaning - Ikigai
- Gratitude
- Service and Altruism
- Fun
- Being Outside/Nature
- “Do Nothing” Time
- Creativity and Flow
- Spirituality and personal belief systems
The Happy People Survey

Are you happy? Why or why not?
- Semi-structured Interviews and Personal Stories

145 people
- Ages ranged from 19-97
- People self-identified whether or not they were happy
- 65 happy people, ~45 unhappy
- ~30 who didn’t fall into either category
Findings from the Happy People Survey

**HAPPY PEOPLE**

Don’t worry = Be happy  
Relationships  
Spirituality  
Boundaries  
Emotional experiencing  
Resilience  
“working at it” & Happiness Check-ins

**UNHAPPY PEOPLE**

Wanting to control (or at least know) what will happen  
Relationships as a burden, not a benefit  
Expectations of others, feeling trapped by others’ needs  
Feeling stuck
What is the Difference?

“IT’S GOING TO BE OKAY”
It’s going to be okay... we’ll figure it out
It’s not business as usual

What can we do?

Focus on things that we know will increase happiness

Considerations for our Pandemic plans

- Social distancing
- More time/less time
- Access to resources
- Focusing on what works
Relationships

Personal Relationships
- In the house
- With close relatives not with you
- Friends, family, others you worry about

Community Integration
- Kids – classmates, teachers
- Parents – coworkers, kids’ friends parents, neighbors
- Those you interact with regularly, even if you don’t have a close relationship
Activities – focus on what works

Close Relationships - Varying Social Presence
- Technology as a bridge
- Making it fun (backgrounds, costumes, online games)
- Lower levels of presence – cards, pictures, letters

Community Strategies
- Front porch project – saying hello and staying connected
- Neighborhood Howls, Bear Hunts, Chalk Art
- Thank you to others in the community

Loving Kindness Practices
Ask not what your country can do for you

But what is the best way to help?

Unlike other crises, not as much you can do...
- When staying home doesn’t feel like enough

What can I do that would actually be helpful?
- Making donations
- Offering to buy meals for essential workers
- Offering to run errands for neighbors
- Checking in on others

Do I have any unique skills or interests to share?
- Online classes/webinars
Gratitude – finding the silver lining

Finding the silver lining
- Thinking about meaning
- What good can come from this
- How have you been forced to think or act differently (in ways that may be good for you?)

Noticing the Good
- In this moment...
- At least I...

Daily Gratitude Journal
- What was something good about the day
- Variation – what made me feel happy today?

Thank you note project
Do Nothing

The secret of happiness... is not found in seeking more, but in developing the capacity to enjoy less.

[Socrates]
Do Nothing Strategies

Meditation

Outside Time/Nature

Daydreaming
(or thinking about nothing)
Fun as the antidote

April fools!

Taking this seriously while also being light

Using this time differently
Fun as the Antidote
Where to we go from here?

Developing and refining our plans as the world changes

How can we best support you (and have some fun?)

Learning more – Digging Deeper

Where do we go next?
Upcoming happiness topics

Can you hear me now?
◦ Social Media, apps, and technology in relationships

Contagious Happiness
◦ An exploration of Empathetic Joy

Love in the time of Corona
◦ A look at relationships, social distancing, and quarantines

Do Nothing
◦ Mindfulness, Gratitude, and finding peace in the storm

Channeling your inner drama queen
◦ The joy of silliness through music, theater, and comedy
Keep encouraging each other