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OVERVIEW

This companion guide to the film HAPPY is designed to help 6th-12th grade educators and their students get the most out of the film. Organized around the five film chapters, it provides activity ideas for exploring happiness, as well as suggestions for focusing, discussing, and reflecting on the topics presented in the film. In addition, the guide includes background information for educators, relevant national content standards, a glossary, and resources.
ABOUT THE FILM

HAPPY is an award-winning feature-length documentary that takes us on a journey from the swamps of Louisiana to the slums of Kolkata in search of what really makes people happy. Combining real life stories of people from around the world and powerful interviews with the leading scientists in happiness research, HAPPY explores the secrets behind our most valued emotion.
ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

DIRECTOR: ROKO BELIC
Roko Belic’s directorial debut, Genghis Blues (1999), won the Sundance Audience Award and was nominated for an Academy Award® for best documentary feature. Belic recently directed the 44-minute documentary Dreams: Cinema of the Subconscious, which was released on the Inception Blu-Ray. For HAPPY, Belic teamed up with Hollywood heavyweight executive producer, Tom Shadyac.

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER: TOM SHADYAC
A onetime actor/comedian and the youngest writer to work for comedy legend Bob Hope, Tom Shadyac’s writing/directing career was launched in 1994 with the Jim Carrey smash hit Ace Ventura: Pet Detective. In the years that followed, Shadyac would establish himself as one of the most prolific comedy directors in Hollywood while working with some of the biggest names in the business. Huge hits such as Liar Liar, The Nutty Professor, Bruce Almighty, Patch Adams, Accepted and I Now Pronounce You Chuck and Larry, have helped establish Shadyac as one of Hollywood’s most successful writer/director/producers.

PRODUCER: EIJI HAN SHIMIZU
A filmmaker and publisher from Japan, Eiji Han Shimizu, is the creator of a highly acclaimed manga series Biographic Novels, which is published in 9 languages and in over 20 countries. His TED Talk about how his media projects are changing the world for the better is available on YouTube.

PRODUCER: FRANCES REID
Frances Reid has been working as a producer, director, and cinematographer of documentary films for over 30 years. In the 80’s she was the cinematographer of many notable documentaries including the Oscar-winning The Times of Harvey Milk. In 2000, she made the film Long Night’s Journey into Day about South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The film won the Grand Jury Award at the Sundance Film Festival and was nominated for an Academy Award®, an Emmy®, and a Directors Guild Best Documentary award. In 1994 she was nominated for an Academy Award® for her short documentary, Straight From the Heart. That same year she was the cinematographer for Deborah Hoffmann’s Complaints of a Dutiful Daughter, which was also nominated for an Academy Award®. Frances also served as co-director of the acclaimed documentary, Waging a Living, and executive producer of Lost Boys of Sudan.
EDITOR: VIVIAN HILGROVE
Vivian Hillgrove is a highly acclaimed editor whose extensive picture editing credits include Henry and June and The Unbearable Lightness of Being by Phil Kaufman. Her sound editing credits include Blue Velvet by David Lynch, Amadeus by Milos Forman, which won 11 Academy Awards® in 1984, and One from the Heart by Francis Coppola. Her documentary work includes Broken Rainbow by Victoria Mudd, which won an Academy Award® in 1985, six award-winning documentary films by Lourdes Portillo including The Devil Never Sleeps and Senorita Extraviada, which won a special jury prize at Sundance and the 2002 International Documentary Award. Her other documentary credits include First Person Plural, Heart of the Sea and The Future of Food by Deborah Garcia.

CINEMATOGRAPHER/ASSOCIATE PRODUCER: ADRIAN BELIC
Adrian and his brother, Roko, formed Wadi Rum Productions in 1996 and embarked on their first production, Genghis Blues, winner of the 1999 Sundance Audience Award and a 2000 Academy Award® Nominee for Best Feature Documentary. Adrian recently completed his latest project Beyond the Call, a feature documentary shot in Afghanistan and Asia about three Americans who travel to the world’s war zones delivering lifesaving humanitarian aid.
HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This guide is designed to help educators or youth group leaders use the film HAPPY with their 6th-12th grade students. It offers a variety of suggestions and resources for enabling students to explore the ideas presented in the film, and to consider ways to apply them to their own lives.

The 74-minute educational edition of the film is divided into five chapters. For each chapter, the guide offers several different ways to explore the chapter topics: brief Focusing exercises to prepare students for watching the film chapter; Discussion questions to promote a whole-class dialogue after viewing the chapter; hands-on Activities for delving more deeply into the chapter theme; and Reflection questions to prompt journal-writing or other personal reflection (Reflection exercises are not meant to be shared with the class or other students).

You may opt to show the film one chapter at a time, and do the activity and reflection suggested for each chapter. Or, you may show the whole film at once or over two days, and then select questions, activities, and reflections from throughout the guide that best fit your instructional goals.

The film and the guide aim to help students understand the many facets of happiness, to examine their own relationship with happiness, and to help them make changes in their lives so that they can be happier. These changes take time, so we would recommend doing the activities and reflections over the course of several days or even weeks.

While this guide is designed for use with secondary students, the activities, discussion questions, and reflections may be adapted for younger students and for adults. Suggested courses in middle or high school include: Health, English, Psychology, Social Studies, Guidance, and Economics (see the box on page 7 for some relevant national education content standards). They may also be used as a community-building program for an entire school or with youth groups within the community.
Both the film *HAPPY* and this guide may be used to address a number of education standards, including:

**Health 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.

Standard 7: Students will demonstrate the ability to practice health-enhancing behaviors and avoid or reduce health risks.

**Common Core English Language Arts College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards**

Writing Standard 4. Produce Clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

Writing Standard 7. Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

Listening and Speaking Standard 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.

Listening and Speaking Standard 2. Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

Listening and Speaking Standard 3. Evaluate a speaker’s point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric.

Listening and Speaking Standard 4. Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

Listening and Speaking Standard 5. Make strategic use of digital media and visual displays of data to express information and enhance understanding of presentations.

Listening and Speaking Standard 6. Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and communicative tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

**Psychology Curriculum Standards**

Scientific Inquiry Domain, 1.3: Describe perspectives employed to understand behavior and mental processes.

Biopsychological Domain, 2.2: Describe the effects of hormones on behavior and mental processes.

Individual Variation Domain, 3.2: Identify biological and environmental influences on the expression and experience of positive emotions, such as happiness.

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A NOTE TO EDUCATORS

The concepts presented in HAPPY affect all of us. We encourage you to take time to view the film in its entirety and reflect on your own happiness, before sharing with your students. By doing so it can not only be of benefit in your own life, but it will allow you to have the greatest impact for your students through modeling.

HAPPY contains emotional content and should be previewed in its entirety before sharing with students.
WHAT IS POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY?

In the film HAPPY, viewers are introduced to the topic of positive psychology. This is a relatively new field of science that studies happiness and well-being. Positive psychology looks at how people can become happier and more fulfilled, and what happens when they do. It is an applied science that examines optimal human functioning and creates interventions for developing positive, healthy, thriving individuals, relationships, and institutions.

As described in the film, psychologists have traditionally focused on people with mental illness or other psychological problems, and on how to care for them. These efforts have led to great advancements in the treatment of psychological disorders, but have done little to help us understand psychological wellness.

Positive psychology aims to understand mental health as opposed to mental illness. It asserts that human goodness and excellence are as much a part of the human condition as distress and disorder. It is concerned with making people’s lives more fulfilling, and encourages practices that can increase happiness and satisfaction.

Practices highlighted in the film include:

Expressing Your Gratitude. Feeling thankful and expressing thanks can make a person both happier and healthier. Studies have shown that people who cultivate gratitude sleep better, exercise more, and experience less stress, all of which also contribute to overall health. Being grateful helps turn the focus from what people don’t have to what they do, and helps them feel that they are loved and cared for.

Doing Something Kind. It turns out that being kind to someone else helps both the recipient and the giver. People who regularly practice kindness experience increased happiness, and also benefit from more self-acceptance and positive relationships. Research indicates kindness is valuable because it helps people feel that they are taking part in something that matters.

Connecting to Your Community. Having positive relationships and experiences with others in your community is an important element of happiness. Community connections contribute to peoples’ sense of self and psychological well-being. For young people, these connections also enhance academic performance and social competence.
Playing. Adding more play and laughter in your life can make you happier. Studies have shown that play has many additional benefits, including helping you think more creatively; reducing stress, struggle and worry; stimulating imagination and curiosity; and making you feel more energized.

Getting in the Flow. Flow is the experience of being so absorbed in a challenging and enjoyable activity that you lose track of time and lose self-awareness. People who regularly experience flow report greater happiness, motivation, and life satisfaction, as well as less stress and anxiety. Depending on a person’s skills and interest, flow can come from physical activities, hobbies, or work.

Trying Something New. People who regularly seek new experiences are happier and more fulfilled than those who don’t. Novelty challenges our views of ourselves, others, and the world, and stretches our knowledge and skills. Experiencing new things also helps us focus on the present, which enhances everyday life.

As the film explains, happiness is a skill that can be learned and practiced. By helping students recognize their potential for happiness, and giving them opportunities to cultivate and practice this skill, you will help them develop habits that can sustain them throughout their lives.
CHAPTER 1
THE STUDY OF HAPPINESS

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTER

The chapter opens with images of a rickshaw driver with his family in India. Though he doesn’t have much material wealth, the film reveals that he is as happy as the average American and points out that happiness isn’t necessarily related to our circumstances. Research is introduced from the field of positive psychology, which focuses on mental health, and studies what brings genuine happiness to people’s lives.

People who are happier have better relationships, make more money, and do better at work. By conducting studies of identical twins, researchers have learned that approximately 50% of the differences in our happiness levels is determined by our genetic makeup. Surprisingly, our circumstances—like how much money we have, our job, our status, or our health—account for only 10% of the differences. The remaining 40% comes from our intentional behavior, or things we can do to become happier.

As the film explains, feelings of happiness are caused in part by a chemical in the brain called dopamine. Dopamine is a neurotransmitter, so it enables communication between neurons by moving from one to another. Eating, physical activity, “flow,” and other rewarding activities trigger the release of dopamine, and lead to sensations of pleasure and happiness. The chapter profiles a fisherman, a surfer, and a cook, who talk about what makes them happy.

Run Time: 16:10 minutes

FOCUSING

To get students primed for watching the film chapter, have them take a quick poll about happiness, indicating whether they think the following statements are true or false. Revisit the poll after showing the film (see Discussion).

TRUE OR FALSE:

___ Having a lot of money and material things always leads to more happiness.
___ Happiness is genetic: You can’t change your level of happiness any more than you can change how tall you are.
___ Happiness is a result of good events that happen to people.
DISCUSSION

• Now that you know more after watching the film chapter, have your opinions changed to any of the statements in the poll? Did any of the information surprise you? In what way?
• How do you think it’s possible that someone as poor as a rickshaw driver can be as happy as the average American?
• What are some of the ways described in this chapter that people can increase their happiness? (Answers may include being in nature, variety, exercising, experiencing flow, and doing what you love.) What other ways can you think of?
• Have you ever experienced flow – being lost in an activity and unaware of time passing? What kinds of activities do you think might promote flow?
• Positive psychology has shifted focus from mental illness to mental wellness. How do you think that shift has influenced our understanding of the human experience?
• How does knowing that 40% of the differences in our happiness levels is determined by our intentional activities influence your perception of your own happiness?

FOLLOW UP ACTIVITIES

Give students copies of “What Makes You Happy” on page 12. Review and discuss individual differences in happiness levels, as shown in the film and in the pie chart. Then, give students a few minutes to answer the questions on the student page.
1. Using a large piece of chart paper or an online chart-making tool (such as Glogster), create a class chart showing the many different things that students in the class do that make them happy.
2. Post the chart somewhere prominent to remind students of the many ways they can increase their happiness. Invite them to add to the chart as they think of additional activities.

REFLECTION

Have students write their thoughts on the following:
What are three things that made you happy today? Yesterday? Last year? What’s one thing you could do today that would make you happier?
WHAT MAKES YOU HAPPY?

CIRCUMSTANCES — 10%: Many people believe that their life circumstances play a big role in how happy they are. But studies show that things like how much money you make, your health, or your popularity have only a small influence on your level of happiness.

GENETIC — 50%: Genes play a part in the general level of happiness you are likely to maintain throughout your life. Think about your friends. Do you have friends who usually have a sunny outlook — no matter what — and others who tend to be gloomier? We are all born with a certain range of happiness we fall within most of the time. Researchers call this our genetic set point.

On a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being most happy, where would you place your genetic set point? (should this be genetic set “range” instead, or in addition to?)

BEHAVIOR — 40%: We can’t really control our circumstances or genetic makeup, but there are lots of things we can do to increase our level of happiness. These are our intentional behaviors: expressing gratitude, doing something kind, connecting with your community, playing, getting in the flow, exercise. Describe 5 things you can do this week to increase your happiness.

1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 
5. 
WHAT REALLY MAKES US HAPPY?

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTER

People overestimate the impact of both good and bad events on their future happiness. In fact, as this chapter shows, people have a tremendous ability to bounce back from hardship, and can do really well over time even when bad things happen. Melissa Moody, profiled in HAPPY, survived a disfiguring accident, but is now happier than ever. As the film points out, there is no such thing as a life with only pleasure and no pain, and a key ingredient to happiness is being able to recover from adversity.

Most people in our society believe that more money will make them happier. But, as this chapter explains, once your basic needs are met, whatever level of wealth or material goods you have, you become used to it – and want more. This phenomenon is known as the hedonic treadmill or hedonic adaptation.

According to a study cited in the film, one thing that the happiest people have in common is a close network of family and friends. Happy people don’t necessarily love or get along with everyone, but they have a strong base of support—as depicted by the Blanchard family in the film.

The chapter also discusses the differences between extrinsic and intrinsic goals. Extrinsic goals focus on something outside the person (like money, financial success, status), while intrinsic goals fulfill basic psychological needs (like personal growth, relationships, or helping others). Research shows that intrinsically-oriented people are happier than extrinsically-oriented people.

Run Time: 12:32 minutes

FOCUSING

Before showing the film chapter, ask students to consider the following: If you won the lottery tomorrow, how much happier do you think you would be a year from now? Do you think good and bad events affect our long-term happiness?

Accept all of their answers for now, but plan to revisit the question again after showing the chapter (see Discussion).

4 It is important to note that family means different things to different people, and family members may not necessarily be biologically related.
DISCUSSION

- After seeing the film chapter, do you think you would be happier a year after winning the lottery? Why or why not? How does this compare with what you thought before?
- What do you think enabled Melissa Moody to overcome her devastating accident? What skills or resources did she need to draw on?
- Do you think there can be a life with only pleasure and no pain? If so, what would that life look like? If not, what does that mean about what it takes to be happy?
- Roy Blanchard and his family enjoy time together, and studies show that the happiest people have strong connections to others and their community. Why do you think connecting with people is so important for happiness?

FOLLOW UP ACTIVITIES

1. Point out that researchers continue to learn more about the field of happiness. Suggest that students could learn more about what makes people happy by conducting a survey of their families and friends.

2. Distribute copies to the class of the “Survey on Happiness” on page 16, and help students familiarize themselves with the questions. (Alternatively, you may guide students in creating their own survey.) Decide who and how many people students will ask to take the survey.

3. Collect the completed surveys, and help students tally and organize the results using charts or graphs.

4. Lead a discussion about what students can conclude from the results, such as: What does our survey tell us about what makes people happy? How do our results compare with the information in the film?

REFLECTION

Have students write their thoughts about the following:

Describe a happy time in your life in full detail. Don’t analyze the event, simply recount all of the aspects of it as if it were happening today. What aspects seem to be central to the experience (e.g., people, the environment, things)?
1. If 10 is the happiest you could ever imagine, and 1 is the least happy, how happy would you say are right now? (Place a check mark next to one number.)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

2. How much does your level of happiness change?

Over the course of a day?

☐ Stays about the same ☐ Changes a little ☐ Changes a lot

A week?

☐ Stays about the same ☐ Changes a little ☐ Changes a lot

A year?

☐ Stays about the same ☐ Changes a little ☐ Changes a lot

3. Number the following items from 1 through 10 in terms of how much you believe they contribute to your happiness, with 1 being the least and 10 the greatest.

☐ Money
☐ Close friends
☐ Supportive family
☐ Looking good
☐ Health
☐ Playing a game or other fun activity
☐ The latest phone or other device
☐ Exercise
☐ A hobby or passion
☐ Being popular

4. If you are having a bad day, what helps you feel better? (You may choose more than one response.)

☐ Listening to music
☐ Hanging out with friends
☐ Logging in
☐ Other (please describe): ________________________________

☐ Talking to a parent or other adult
☐ Working
☐ Volunteering
CHAPTER 3
VALUES AND HAPPINESS

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTER

This chapter explores some ways in which values can affect happiness. It first describes how economic growth and prosperity in Japan have led to a dangerous phenomenon called “karoshi,” or death from overwork. Many Japanese are working such long hours that an alarming number die each year of work stress, including Kenichi Uchino, who is profiled in the chapter.

The film then moves to Bhutan, a developing country with a fledgling economy, where the government has decided to implement “Gross National Happiness” as an indicator to drive policy decisions. Recognizing that growth and economic development can lead to people losing their culture, their environment, and their social system, Bhutan has decided to take a different path. Gross National Happiness is a way for the government to consider more holistically how its actions affect citizens.

Finally, the chapter profiles a Danish family living in a co-housing community, where multiple families live in close proximity and share certain chores and activities. According to researchers, Denmark ranks as the happiest country on Earth. Anne Bechsgaard talks about how co-housing has benefitted her family through its strong sense of community and daily support.

Run Time: 14:25 minutes

FOCUSING

Before showing the film, have students jot down their answers to the following:

• Which do you think is valued more in our culture - work or community?
• Do you think one leads to greater happiness?
• Which do you think leads to greater happiness?
• Are there different ways that these can increase happiness?

Tell them that the class will discuss their answers after watching the film chapter.


**DISCUSSION**

- Which did you say is valued more in our culture – work or community? (See Focusing.) What made you say that? Which did you think leads to greater happiness? After watching the chapter, did your opinion change?
- The film contrasts Japan, where material productivity is highly valued to Bhutan, where happiness is an important value. What features or qualities do you think are valued in your community?
- What do you think of the idea of using “Gross National Happiness” as a measure of success? How might that change decision-making in your community or state?
- Stress is a big problem for many people living in the modern age. What kinds of things stress you out? What healthy ways can you or others relieve stress?
- The film profiles a Danish family living in a co-housing community. What might be advantages and disadvantages of living so closely with other families? Would you like living in co-housing? Why or why not?

**FOLLOW UP ACTIVITIES**

1. Ask students to name things that they value about the community where they live and what they would miss if it wasn’t there. List their ideas on the board.
2. Then, ask students to think of ways their community could be even better, and list those ideas separately.
3. Divide the class into small groups, and give each group a piece of poster paper and marking pens. Explain that each group’s task is to design a community. Ask the students to include a list of five values that their community will focus on as well as proposed activities that their community members will participate in. Allow groups time to discuss their ideas and to find a way to incorporate each group member’s perspectives in their final plans.
4. Ask groups to present their posters to the class.

**REFLECTION**

Have students write their thoughts on the following:

- How would you define community and more specifically, your community?
- What do you value about your community?
- What could you do to make your community even better?
CHAPTER 4
THE SOCIAL SIDE OF HAPPINESS

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTER

This chapter explores how we all need something bigger than ourselves to care about, which also makes us happier. For many people, spending time with their community, practicing a religion, or volunteering provides a sense of meaning, and promotes feelings of compassion, caring, and gratitude that connect them to other people and the universe.

Research indicates that happy people are more productive and also live longer than others. The film visits the island of Okinawa, Japan, which has a disproportionately large percentage of the world’s oldest people. Despite the stress and unhappiness in other parts of Japan, Okinawan islanders live long, happy lives, buoyed by traditions that bind people together in a number of ways.

Humans are social creatures, and social bonding, social interaction, and cooperation are intrinsically rewarding for us. The film depicts comedian Michael Pritchard teaching middle school students about happiness by encouraging them to be more compassionate with each other. It also shows members of the San Bushmen in Namibia, who feel responsible for each other’s health and well-being, and recognize the importance of community.

Run Time: 18:36 minutes

FOCUSING

Before showing the film chapter, have students draw a picture or jot down words describing a happy time they had in the last month or year. (Make sure to tell them that they won’t be sharing this with anyone.) Ask them to think about who they were with, and what they were doing at the time. Then – using a show of hands – find out whether more of the students’ happy moments involved other people in some way or not.

DISCUSSION

• What are some examples from the film of how connecting with other people contributes to happiness? What are some examples from your everyday life?
• What types of events or organizations in your community help people become happier?
Thinking back on the film chapter, what do you think contributes to Okinawan elders living such long lives? What might we be able to learn from them?

What lessons do you think Michael Prichard is teaching middle school students through his comedy intervention? Do you have suggestions on how you would have taught these lessons? What other ways would you suggest encouraging more cooperation among students? What are some ways to “teach children to love” as Mr. Pritchard suggests?

Have you ever stood up or not stood up for someone being picked on? How did it make you feel?

How do laughter and play promote happiness? Do you think laughter and play come from happiness, or does happiness come from laughter and play? Explain your thoughts.

Why do you think social interactions are so important to human happiness?

FOLLOW UP ACTIVITIES

1. Invite a member of the community to come to your class and share some perspectives about what have been sources of happiness for him or her.
2. Before the visit, explain that you will ask this person to speak for a couple of minutes about his or her life story, and then to answer students’ questions. Help students prepare a list of possible questions, such as: What have been the best or happiest times in your life? Did you ever have a major setback? If so, how did you recover from it? What’s something really funny that happened to you?
3. After the visit, have students share some of their impressions. What did they learn from the visitor about happiness and about what is important in life?

REFLECTION

Have students write their thoughts on the following:

- What is one tradition or something that you do on a regular basis that connects you to your family, friends, or the larger community?
- What is something you could do today to strengthen your relationship with a family member, friend, or group in the community?
CHAPTER 5
PRACTICING HAPPINESS

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTER

This chapter focuses on things that individuals can do to become happier. The Dalai Lama speaks in the film about compassion, and research shows that people who perform meditations on compassion and loving kindness can significantly increase their happiness levels. Counting your blessings and committing acts of kindness are also effective ways to build happiness.

Showing compassion for others gives life meaning, as exemplified in the film by Andy Wimmer, a long-time volunteer at Mother Teresa’s Home for the Dying and Destitute in Kolkata, India. Experiencing what may be called “spiritual” emotions—gratitude, compassion, caring, and love—can help people care about, and feel connected to, things bigger than themselves.

As the film explains, happiness is a skill that can be learned, and there are practices we can do that not only make the world a better place, but transform our brains in positive ways. While the formula for happiness is not the same for everyone, the things we love to do—like play, having new experiences, being with friends and family, and doing things that are meaningful—are the building blocks of a happy life.

Run Time: 12:25 minutes

FOCUSING

Before showing the film chapter, have students think about the term happiness and what it means.

What is happiness? What does happiness feel like? How do we know when we are happy? Have students work in small groups or pairs to come up with a definition for happiness, and then ask a few groups to share their definitions.

DISCUSSION

• Although happiness is not explicitly defined in the film, how do you think the different individuals in the film would define it? Would their definition be the same as yours? (See Focusing.) Has your idea of happiness changed after watching the film?
• What practices described in this chapter increase happiness? (Answers include—but are not limited to—counting your blessings, being kind, showing compassion, playing, and having new experiences.)

• Have you, or someone you know, ever tried meditation? Why might the simple act of meditating on compassion and loving kindness increase happiness levels?

• Being around very poor and sick people may not seem like a happy experience, but Andy Wimmer in the film, has been volunteering to do just that for 17 years. What do you think he gains from the experience? What do the people he cares for gain? Why do you suppose volunteering there makes him feel happy?

• The film asserts that happiness is a skill that can be practiced. Do you think that’s true? What can you or others do to practice happiness?

FOLLOW UP ACTIVITIES

Before conducting the activity, read over “What is Positive Psychology?” on page 9, which explains the six practices students will explore.

1. Remind students how the film talked about happiness being a skill that can be learned and practiced. Point out that one tool for practicing happiness is an inventory that helps a person “take stock” of what they are doing to increase their level of happiness.

2. Give each student a copy of the “Happiness Inventory” on page 23, and go over the six practices listed, using information from “What is Positive Psychology” as appropriate. (For younger students, you may instead ask students to create a collage or poster that depicts what makes them happy.)

3. Allow time for students to complete the inventory. Then lead a discussion about the process, with questions like: How did the act of completing the inventory help you – or not help you – think about happiness in your life? For which of the practices did you find it easiest to find items? Which were more challenging? How might you share what you have learned through this process with others?

REFLECTION

Have students write their thoughts on the following:

Studies have found that doing “random acts of kindness” not only makes the recipient of the kindness happier, but you as well. In the next 24 hours, do something kind for someone – with or without them knowing (it can be more effective if they know). Reflect on what you did and how it made you feel.
For each practice below, consider the things in your life/you have experienced recently that are related to the practice. Be mindful of the areas that are particularly easy to complete and those that nothing comes to mind. Fill in any blank spaces with additional things you could do to develop that practice. It’s okay if you don’t complete every blank and have more than three for others.

**Expressing Your Gratitude**
Things or people you are grateful for:
1. 
2. 
3. 

**Doing Something Kind**
Kind things you have done for someone else, or that someone else has done for you:
1. 
2. 
3. 

**Connecting to Your Community**
People who are there for you, or other connections to your community:
1. 
2. 
3. 

**Playing**
Things that bring play, joy, and laughter in your life:
1. 
2. 
3. 

**Getting in the Flow**
Activities that absorb your attention so completely that you lose track of time:
1. 
2. 
3. 

**Trying Something New**
New experiences have you had recently, or that you would like to try:
1. 
2. 
3.
HAPPY STORIES

The following stories are featured in HAPPY and are listed with their corresponding chapter. You may use them to highlight your class discussion on a particular chapter, or to illustrate one of the six positive psychology practices featured in this guide.

See below for more suggestions for using them with the six practices.

Chapter 1
• Manoj Singh—Rickshaw driver
• Roy Blanchard, Sr.—Fisherman
• Ronaldo Fadul—Surfer
• Jamal—Diner cook

Chapter 2
• Melissa Moody—Accident survivor
• Blanchard Family

Chapter 3
• Hiroko Uchino—Widow
• Anne Bechsgaard—Co-housing resident

Chapter 4
• People of Okinawa
• Michael Pritchard—Educator / Comedian
• San Bushmen—Namibia

Chapter 5
• Andy Wimmer—Volunteer

HAPPY STORIES AND POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY PRACTICES

Whether or not you choose to show the entire film – or chapters of it – to your students, you may use the HAPPY stories to explore the six positive psychology practices featured in this guide. We offer a few suggestions for making the most of these stories.

First, you may want to read the “What is Positive Psychology?” section on page 9, which describes the benefits of each of the practices. Then, choose one of the practices for your focus of study. Describe the practice to your students, and then present one or more of the stories, shown in the box on page 25.

After presenting the story clip, pose the questions and actions listed in the box to explore that practice with your students. You may also use the Student Pages and Reflections throughout this guide to deepen their thinking about the practice even more.
# Using Happy Stories to Explore Positive Psychology Practices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive Psychology Practice</th>
<th>Happy Stories That Reflect Practice</th>
<th>Ways to Explore Practice</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| **Expressing Your Gratitude.** | Manoj Ingh—Rickshaw Driver Melissa Moody—Accident Survivor Anne Bechsgaard—Co-Housing Resident | • In what ways does the person in the story express gratitude?  
• Think of someone you are grateful for, and write a letter to that person, expressing your gratitude. |
| **Doing Something Kind.** | Michael Pritchard—Comedian Andy Wimmer—Volunteer | • In what ways does the person in the story express kindness or compassion?  
• How does kindness help the giver and the receiver?  
• Think of someone you will see today that you could do something kind for – and do it. |
| **Connecting To Your Community.** | Blanchard Family Hiroko Uchino—Widow Anne Bechsgaard—Co-Housing Resident People Of Okinawa Michael Pritchard—Comedian Dalai Lama Andy Wimmer—Volunteer | • In what ways does this story show the importance of community?  
• How much time do you spend with people you feel close to? How could you make that time more meaningful?  
• How can you build friendships at school or within your community?  
• What group in your community could use a helping hand? |
| **Playing.** | Ronaldo Fadul—Surfer Blanchard Family Hiroko Uchino—Widow People Of Okinawa San Bushmen—Namibia | • In what ways does this story reflect play?  
• What were your favorite games when you were young? What are your favorite ways to play now?  
• Think of a playful activity and arrange to do it this week. |
| **Getting In The Flow.** | Ronaldo Fadul—Surfer Ray Blanchard—Fisherman Jamal—Diner cook | • In what ways do the people in the story benefit from flow?  
• When was the last time you were lost in an activity, unaware of time passing? What were you doing?  
• What are three possible activities that would put you into a state of flow? Try one this week. |
| **Trying Something New.** | Andy Wimmer—Volunteer Ray Blanchard - Fisherman | • How might novelty fuel happiness?  
• What surprising thing caught your eye recently that made you laugh or smile? |
GLOSSARY

Terms used in the film and this guide:

**COMPASSION** – a feeling of deep empathy for others; a desire to relieve others’ suffering.

**COMMUNITY** – a group of people who reside in the same particular locale or who share common cultures, interests, or concerns.

**CO-HOUSING** – an intentional community with common areas that facilitate interactions among neighbors who share certain responsibilities and experiences.

**CULTURE** – the behaviors, beliefs, and values characteristic of a specific group of people.

**EXTRINSIC** – coming from an external source.

**FLOW** – the mental state in which a person is fully immersed in an activity with energized focus.

**GENETIC SET POINT OR SET RANGE** – a genetically determined level of happiness, to which one generally returns after positive or negative emotional experiences.

**HAPPINESS** – state of well-being characterized by feelings of contentment and joy.

**HEDONICS** – the study of pleasure and pleasant and unpleasant sensations.

**HEDONIC TREADMILL (OR HEDONIC ADAPTION)** – the tendency of a person to remain at a relatively stable level of happiness, even with changes in fortune or the attainment of major life goals.

**INTRINSIC** – coming from within.

**KAROSHI** – (Japanese) death by overwork.

**KINDNESS** – the quality of being friendly and considerate.

**MEDITATION** – a practice of concentrated focus on a sound, phrase, idea, sensation, intention, object, or the breath.

**NOVELTY** – the quality of being new or unfamiliar.

**ICHARIBA CHODE** – (Okinawan) an expression meaning “though we have just met, we are family.”

**POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY** – the scientific study of what enables individuals and communities to thrive.

**VALUE** – something regarded as worthy or important.
RESOURCES

BOOKS

*The Emotional Life of Your Brain* by Richard Davidson
*The Essence of Happiness* by Dalai Lama
*Flow* by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi
*Happiness: A Guide to Developing Life’s Most Important Skill* by Matthieu Ricard
*Happiness: Unlocking the Mysteries of Psychological Wealth* by Ed and Robert Diener
*Happy for No Reason* by Marci Shimoff
*The How of Happiness* by Sonja Lyubomirsky
*Satisfaction* by Gregory Berns
*Stumbling on Happiness* by Daniel Gilbert

WEBSITES

HAPPY – www.TheHappyMovie.com
Action for Happiness – www.actionforhappiness.org
Center for Consciousness and Transformation – www.cct.gmu.edu
Center for Positive Psychology – www.ppc.sas.upenn.edu
Psychology Today Blogs (Find happiness-related blogs) – www.psychologytoday.com/blog/index
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This guide was written by Leslie Comnes, an education writer specializing in science and environmental education. She has authored or co-authored over seventy activity and curriculum guides, including the Food, Inc. Discussion Guide, FRONTLINE teacher guides, and Project Learning Tree’s Forests of the World.

Consultation and assistance with positive psychology content and activities provided by:

Dr. Biswas-Diener is a leading authority on strengths, culture, courage, and happiness. He has published dozens of scholarly articles and multiple books on diverse psychological topics. He is best known for his pioneering work in the application of positive psychology.

Mary Judd Communications’ happiness building expertise has reached students, farmers, executives and even delegates at the United Nations meeting on Happiness and Well-Being.

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