Day 2: Appreciation

SPECIFIC GOAL(S):
1. Define “gratitude” and practice experiencing and expressing gratitude.
2. Using principles of neuroscience, engage students in activities to create new neuropathways to happiness in the brain.
3. Define, model, and practice appreciation for another person.

PREPARATION AND MATERIALS:
1. page 10 from Project Happiness Handbook
2. student journals
3. paper and pencil
4. optional: Appendix B-“Gratitude” pages

PROCEDURE:
Introduction to Gratitude
1. Read “Waves of Appreciation” on page 10 of the Project Happiness Handbook.
2. Discuss: Gratitude is: “feeling thankful or grateful for something or someone.”
   a. Have students write/draw in their journals three specific things they appreciate or
      are grateful for. Explain that gratitude can be for something physical (“my soft
      pillow”), a relationship (“my best friend”), or a state of being (“having a good day”).
      Encourage creativity and things that include others (see Appendix B for ideas).
   b. Have students share their three things with the class, or in small groups.
      Neuroscience: Research shows that doing this for 28 days results in noticeable changes
      (new neuropathways) in the brain (Lyubomirsky, 2006).

Introduction to Appreciation
1. Discuss “appreciation” and give examples of feeling appreciation for another person.
2. Sitting in a circle, have the students speak out loud one thing they appreciate about the
   person to their right. Then move clockwise around the circle so that the student who just
   spoke is the next person to receive appreciation.
3. Have your students write a letter (or draw a picture) of thanks to someone who has
   made a difference in his/her life, letting this person know what they mean to him/her. If
   possible, have the student be there when the other person reads the letter or receives the
   drawing. They can also write to someone who has passed away, or is otherwise not
   available to them in person. This may be a homework assignment.

ADDITIONAL IDEAS:
1. Make “Gratitude Journaling” a daily practice through the rest of the Project, and consider
   continuing it as a daily exercise throughout the year.
2. Practice using “Appreciation Circles” when there is conflict in the class.
3. Use “Appreciation Circles” for birthdays, with the birthday child in the center, receiving
   appreciations from his/her classmates.
Appendix B

Today I am grateful for:

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Nature:
Sunshine
Trees
Rain
Rivers/Lakes
Mountains
Ocean
Flowers
Forest
Weather
Animals
Birds
Earth
Planets/Universe
Dinosaurs

Relationships:
Teachers
Coaches
Friends
Family members
Classroom/Schoolyard helpers
Busdriver
Cafeteria workers
Doctors/nurses
Babysitter/nanny
Pets
Therapist

Modern-day Technology:
Television
Video games
Cellphone
Internet
Skype/Facetime

Learning/Creativity:
Books
The library
Making art
Homework
Writing/drawing in my journal
School subject(s)
Making music
I learned how to_________

Activities:
Sports
Playing
Recess
Playing video games
Playing board/card games
Eating
Sleeping
Taking a bath/shower
Dancing
Listening to music

Conveniences:
Zippers/buttons/Velcro/shoelaces

Physical Items:
Clothing items
Bed/pillow/blankets
Favorite toy(s)
Rainboots/umbrellas to keep dry
Jacket to stay warm
Backpack
Lunch box
Trains/trucks/cars/buses/airplanes

Food:
Specific food (i.e. pizza, pasta, icecream)
Clean water to drink
Had breakfast today

State of Being:
Feeling good today
Understood today's [math] lesson
My [mom] was in a good mood today
My [dad] was home to read to me last night
I got to see __________ [name of relative/friend]
Being alive

Miscellaneous:
Safety
Recovery from illness
A place to live
Having own room
Parent working
Moving from unsafe neighborhood
Waves of Appreciation

If your thoughts are like boomerangs, why not use this to your advantage? Why not intentionally attract more good things in your life? Start a Journal where you can reflect on and write about what is good in your life - more of it might show up! Some people call this a Gratitude Journal® or call it what you like. We like to think of it as Waves of Appreciation! Here are a couple of ways you might ride the wave:

1. During the day, take 5 minutes to look around you and notice anything at all, however insignificant, that makes you feel good. It might be, “I’m having a great hair day”, “That T-shirt looks cool on her”, “I like how Paul treats his friends”, “I don’t feel angry right now”, “I love how my dog is always happy to see me”… Have fun! You can either do this privately in your own mind (no one would even notice), or you can write in your journal.

2. Commit time each night or morning to write 3 things you appreciate or you’re grateful for.

Over time, you might stop and think about how these simple forms of appreciation feel and how they affect your experience of happiness.