

ELT & the science of happiness tasks

Marc Helgesen

march@mgu.ac.jp

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I made this short handout to save paper.

For more “ELT & the science of happiness” activities and copiable worksheets, please visit: <http://ELTandhappiness.terapad.com>

(Note: Do NOT use “www”. It will take you to the wrong page.)

Happiness dictation. Copy the sentences.

Each student gets one. They dictate to each other.

① Remember good things in your life.

② Do kind things.

③ Say “thank you” to people who help you.

④ Take time for your friends and family.

⑤ Forgive people who make you feel bad.

⑥ Take care of your health and your body.

⑦ Notice good things as they happen.

⑧ Learn to work with your problems and your stress.



More information about these at: <http://tinyurl.com/2qarww>

① Remember good things in your life.

Language Focus: *Past simple* and other past tense forms.

• **My top 5.** Students list 5 good things from the past year (month, etc.). They explain. Partners listen and “shadow” (repeat key ideas) and ask follow-up questions.

• **Happiness Journal.** Each week, students write down 4-5 good things that have happened in their lives. This helps them notice and focus on the positive.

② Do kind things.

Language Focus: *habitual present, imperatives.*

• **Compliments.** Groups of 4-5. Each person compliments each other person. The partner just says, “Thank you.” At the end, they mentally review. (“(Name) said I...”).

• **Random acts of kindness.** Brainstorm “kind things” that people can easily do. Write them on the board. Have students decide which they will do. It is a promise to themselves. Ideas: • Say “thank you” to someone at school (the cleaning people, the office staff, etc.), • Give up your bus/train seat to an old person or someone with a baby • Smile at someone who is not smiling. • Pick up a bicycle that fell over. • Compliment someone (say something nice) • Pick up some garbage outside. Throw it away (It is kind to the earth). • Turn off a light that isn’t needed. (Also kind to the earth). • Send an email to friends. Tell them how much appreciate them

③ Say “thank you” to people who help you.

Language Focus: expressing gratitude, giving reasons, narrative

• **Thank you to the world.** In pairs/groups, students see how many languages they can say, “thank you” in. Then they think of countries and reasons. Examples:

I want to say “shukran” to Egypt because they invented mathematics.

I want to say “grazie” to Italy because they gave the world great art. And pizza.

• **Awards.** (Near the end of the year/term) Groups of 4-5. Each student makes an award for all the other members of their group.

• **Someone special.** Students think about someone who has helped them in their lives. They explain to partners why they want to thank them. (Hint: Have them change partners and repeat their story 3-4 times. Both fluency and accuracy improve).

• Also see **Thank you letter**, below.

④ **Take time for your friends and family.**

Language Focus: Talking about family. expressing gratitude, narrative

• **Thank you letter.** Students write a thank you letter to someone in their family (or a friend, or someone who has helped them). They write once in their first language and once in English. Encourage them to give/send the L1 version to the person.

• **My family.** Groups of 4-5. Students use toothpicks or other small objects to describe their family. They say at least 3-4 sentences about each person, including one saying why the person is special. Then partners try to remember what was said.

⑤ **Forgive people who make you feel bad.**

Language Focus: Understanding metaphor

• **Metaphor.** Students think of something/someone they have not forgiven yet. They hold something heavy (e.g., a dictionary) with their arm extended. Read them a longish passage like this. The weight becomes a metaphor for not forgiving. Sample text (• = pause) *Someone did something bad to you. • Forgiveness does NOT mean it was OK. Forgiveness does NOT mean that person can do it again. • Forgiveness is important for things that must NOT be done again. • When you do not forgive, who is hurt? • The person who did the bad thing usually doesn't know. Or doesn't remember. Or doesn't care. • The anger is in your heart. • You carry the weight. • It does not help to know why the person did the bad thing. Usually that person doesn't know. • You carry the weight. • You have the power to let it go.*

• **A story.** Students listen to a story about forgiveness. Optional: they draw pictures. There are many versions of this on the Internet. Search for: *monks carry her*

⑥ **Take care of your health and your body.**

Language Focus: introductions/greetings, establishing a good class atmosphere/culture

• **Smile introductions.** Talk about the health benefits of smiling (See: <http://longevity.about.com/od/lifelongbeauty/tp/smiling.htm>). They students stand, circulate and greet each other with a big smile: *Hi, I'm (name). How are you? I'm great/wonderful/super, etc.*

• **Laughter circles.** Students stand in circles and change “Ho. Ho. Ha-ha-ha” until they spontaneously start laughing. (*Fake it 'til you make it.*)

• **Smile writing.** Students put a pencil in their mouth horizontally, they write the sentence, “*(Own name) is great, wonderful, brilliant, a super student, fantastic.*” Holding the mouth in this position releases endorphins (positive chemicals) in the brain.

⑦ **Notice good things as they happen.**

Language Focus: Present simple, imperatives

• **Good things, right now.** In pairs, students list as many positive things in their lives as possible in one minute. Then change partners and do this again.

• **Experiencing a blueberry.** Give each student a blueberry or other piece of fruit. In a slow, even voice, narrate them eating it mindfully. Example: *You are going to eat this (blueberry) and as you do, really notice it. You'll get to know this piece of fruit better than any fruit you've eaten before. • Hold it in your hand. Look at it. • Notice the color. Notice the wrinkles. I wonder if they are like finger prints. I wonder if each one is different than other ones. • And smell it. You can notice that slight, sweet flavor. • And put it in your mouth but don't eat it just yet. • Notice how your tongue knows just where to put it. • And notice how your mouth is wet with saliva. Your body automatically knows you are going to eat something good. • And now, very slowly start to chew it. • As you chew, you taste and smell the flavor. • Take your time. It is good and you want it to last as long as possible. • Think about how wonderful it tasted, because you took the time to notice.*

⑧ **Learn to work with your problems and your stress.**

Language Focus: Past tenses.

• **Moving on.** Students think of a problem they had in the past. I must be one they overcame. They tell their partner(s) what it was and what they did to get past it. Again, this is good to do with 2-3 different partners to increase fluency and accuracy.

• **Successful learner self-talk/neck massage**

Students stand in a circle of 8-12. They walk slowly, massaging the neck of the person in front of them, repeating the one of the positive sentences to the person in front of them. Note:they say it in the first person (*I am*) as they are both their own and other person's *innervoice*. Positive sentences: • *Learning English makes me feel good.* • *Learning English is my passion.* • *I believe I'm a good student.* • *I'm hungry for English.*