

Happiness and Education



SUPERTEACH WEBINAR MARCH 2021

TEODOR NITU

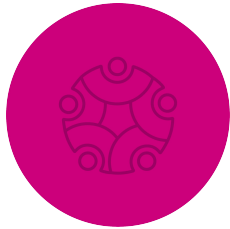
Six Sustainable Happiness Skills



1. Mindfulness



4. Purpose



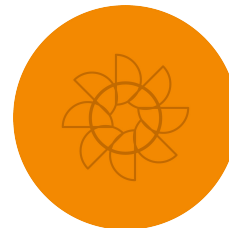
**2. Human
Connection**



5. Generosity









**3. Positive
Outlook**



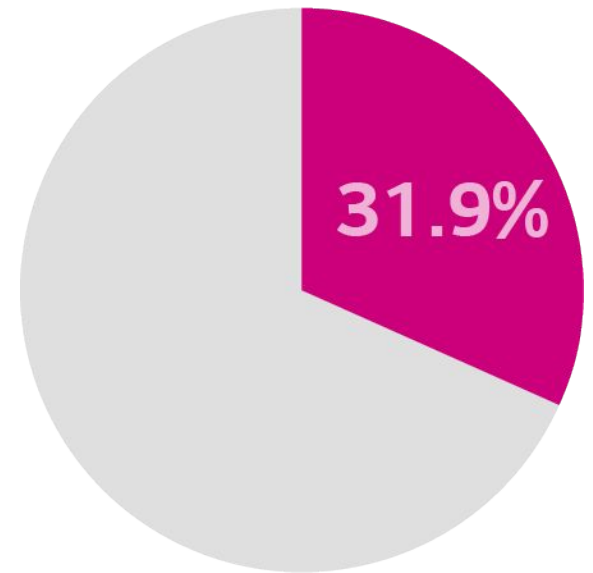
6. Gratitude

Six Sustainable Happiness Skills

 Mindfulness	 Human Connection	 Gratitude	 Positive Outlook	 Purpose	 Generosity
<p>Live in the moment. Be fully present NOW. The past is over, and the future hasn't happened yet, so don't worry so much about them. Mindfulness is being aware of your thoughts, feelings, and surroundings in the here and now. Be kind to yourself. Adopt a supportive stance toward yourself and others. When we practice mindfulness, we worry less, and opens us up to JOY!</p>	<p>We all want to feel loved, be comforted, and know that we belong. Strong relationships are critical to wellbeing. Significant others, friendships, and social engagement with peers are a huge predictor of happiness in life. People with close bonds are better able to overcome life's challenges, and less likely to experience depression, low self-esteem, or health problems.</p>	<p>Thank others for the goodness they contribute to your life. Thankfulness fuels optimism, reinforces trust, and is often reciprocated. It creates a benevolent loop and a sense of overall wellbeing. It adds to the quality of our relationships. Gratitude shows that we are aware of our own privilege, and thankful for the sources of goodness outside ourselves.</p>	<p>Find the good in others. Imagine the possibilities! Be open to the idea that everything turns out for the best, eventually. A positive outlook helps us be more hopeful, and bounce back from adversity. People are more creative, resilient, and likely to do better in school and in life when they're experiencing positive emotions. Embrace life's potential!</p>	<p>Live for something bigger than yourself. You matter! You can make a difference in the world, at school, at work, at home, for a team or a community, or in someone else's life. Purpose means living by your values and goals. It means having a vision for what your life's mission is about. Set out to do something meaningful. Strive to make a positive difference.</p>	<p>Hold the door for someone else. Help an elderly or disabled person get safely across the street. Generosity doesn't have to be about money. It can be about being helpful, supportive, or simply being kind. It's about giving of yourself to someone else. Generosity has been shown to boost your endorphins, giving you an increased sense of wellbeing.</p>

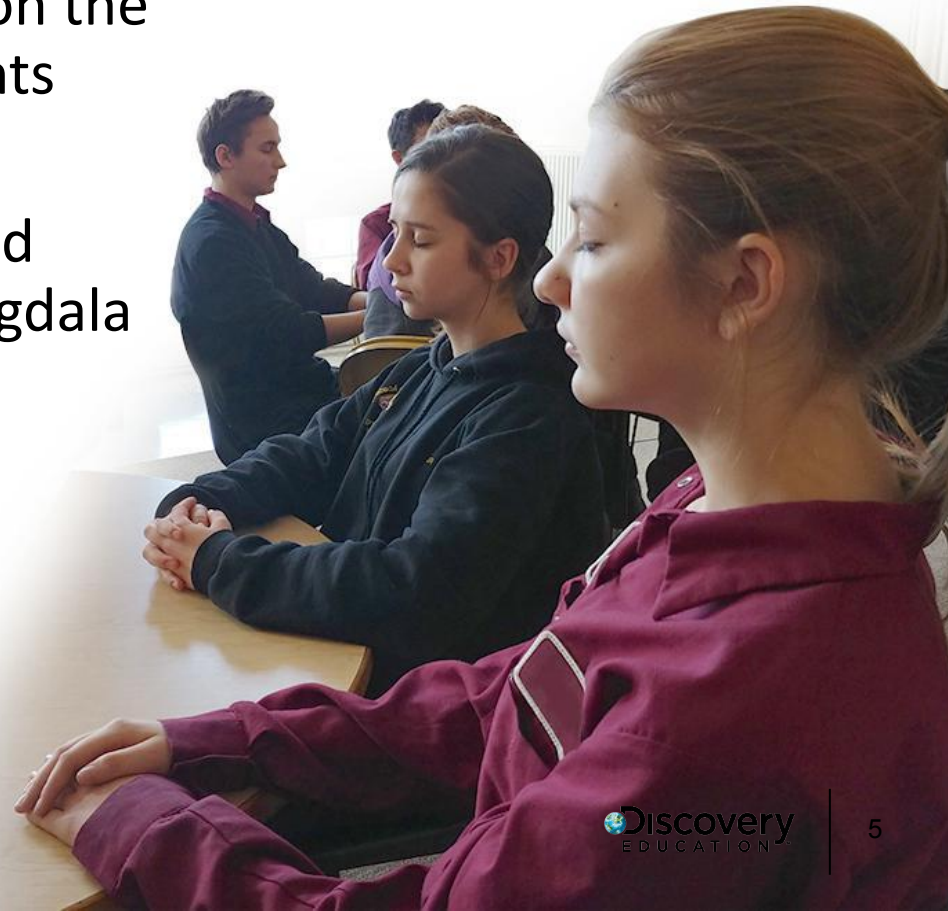
The Need for Mindfulness

- An estimated 31.9% of adolescents have an anxiety disorder.
- When our minds are full of stressful or anxious thoughts, how might that affect our awareness, concentration, & decision-making?



The Effects of Mindfulness

- **Mindfulness** is the practice of focusing non-judgmental awareness on the present moment and thoughts
- Increase ability to activate pre-frontal cortex regions and decrease the use of the amygdala
- Decreases stress, anxiety, fatigue, and anger



Practicing Mindfulness

- Decrease your stress and anxiety
- Minimize the amount of time you spend feeling overwhelmed
- Help you appreciate each small moment as it happens



The Importance of Human Connection

- Researchers have found that students with strong social support, both at school and at home, tend to be happier and better at dealing with stress.
- Students who report being happier have higher grades.



The Effects of Human Connection

People with close bonds are happier, less lonely, and have higher self-esteem.

Intimate relationships, a loving childhood, empathy, and warm relationships as a young adult, are the best predictors of economic success, physical health, and flourishing in life.

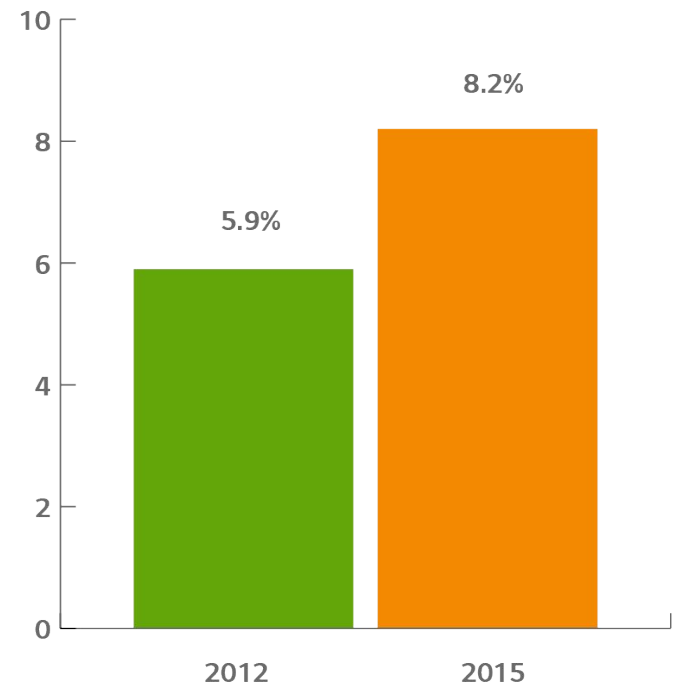


Practice Finding Human Connections

1. Find a partner who seems to be very different from yourself.
2. Make a list of the things that you both have in common with one another.

The Need for a Positive Outlook

- Youth mental health is worsening.
- Rates of youth with severe depression increased from 5.9% in 2012 to 8.2% in 2015.
- What can we do about this?



The Effects of A Positive Outlook

Negative thoughts make the brain prepare the body for fight or flight.

Stress creates changes in the brain that may increase anxiety, depression, or ADHD.

The body experiences stress symptoms like a rapid heartbeat, muscular tension, and elevated blood pressure.



The Effects of A Positive Outlook

- Thinking happy thoughts releases serotonin in the brain, creating feelings of pleasure.
- Practicing a positive outlook keeps the brain on a steady diet of self-rewarding pleasure.
- Positive emotions can equal greater creativity, resilience to adversity, better academic performance, and stronger social connections.



Practicing a Positive Outlook

Setting aside time to reflect on positive events in life may help your brain recognize sources of goodness in your life.

The Need for Gratitude

A 4-year study on 700 kids ages 10–14 over four years showed that the most grateful teens had:

A 15% increase in feeling like they had **meaning for life**

15%

A 15% increase in **life satisfaction**

15%

A 17% boost in happiness and **hopefulness**

17%

A 15% decrease in feeling symptoms of **depression**

15%

Those who experienced the greatest increase in gratitude exhibited the greatest reductions in unhealthy behaviors.

The Effects of Gratitude

Gratitude is being thankful and identifying the sources of goodness in your life.

Gratitude can:

- Decrease depression
- Improve sleep
- Reduce aches and pains
- Increase physical activity
- Help students feel better about school
- Make teachers feel more accomplished and less emotionally exhausted



Practicing Gratitude

What are you grateful
for in your life?



The Power of Purpose

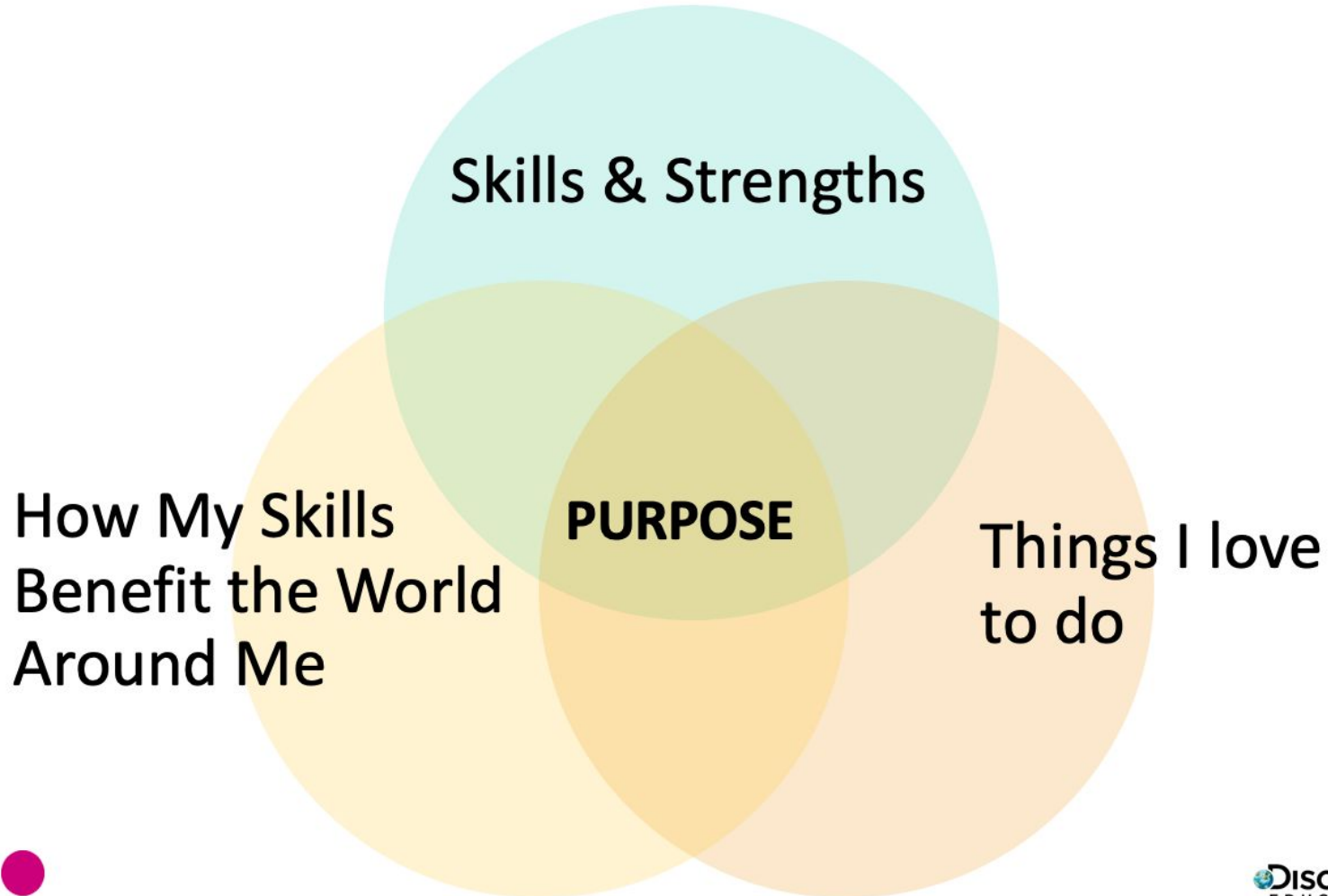
- Self-concept plays a central role in emotional well-being.
- When people have a difficult time determining their purpose, it is often a symptom of isolation.

Everyone has special gifts and talents that set them apart from others, but once you find your path, you will find others along the way hoping to reach the same goal.

The Effects of Purpose

- Purpose is an intention to accomplish something that is meaningful to the self and consequential for the world beyond the self.
- Understanding our ability to make a difference in the world leads to a finer sense of purpose and increases our physical and mental health.
- A sense of purpose appears to have evolved in humans. Why?

Determining My Purpose



The Need for Generosity

A 4-year study of 681 U.S. adolescents (ages 11–14) revealed:

- Adolescents who were kind and helpful in general had higher self-esteem
- Adolescents who directed their generosity toward strangers tended to grow in self-esteem.

The Effects of Generosity

Research suggests that generosity is intrinsically rewarding. Long-term happiness is higher when you are the giver. Generosity is giving without expecting anything in return. Helping others without an obligation to do so activates regions of the brain that release endorphins, giving the feeling of a "helper's high."



Exercising Generosity

Reflection Questions:

1. How did it feel when you handed the person the compliment? Compare this to when you received a compliment.
2. Does a compliment that comes from a stranger or someone who is not a close friend feel the same as one coming from a close friend?