

KEYS TO HAPPIER LIVING

ACTIVITY BOOKLET

General activities to introduce younger children (age 4/5) to the GREAT DREAM framework



Giving: Do things for others

‘Be kind whenever possible.
It is always possible.’

H.H. Dalai Lama

Science shows that being kind boosts our ‘feel good’ brain chemicals, reduces stress, improves mood and is associated with a decrease in pain and an increase in energy.

Repeated, regular acts of kindness increase compassion and have the capacity to impact on many more people than the giver and receiver.

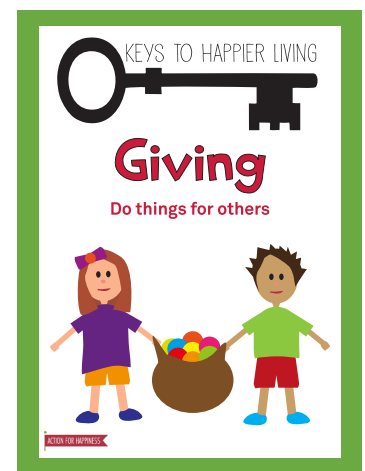
Giving connects us, creating stronger communities and helps to build a better society.

Helping others:

- increases our life satisfaction
- provides a sense of meaning
- increases our own sense of competence
- boosts happiness

Kindness and caring are contagious!

There are many ways to give: smiles, kind words and thoughtful gestures. Giving can be small and unplanned or regular activities– they all count. Giving can be to strangers, family, friends, colleagues or neighbours: old, young, nearby or far away.



Classroom activities

Doing things for others is not only good for others but it is good for us too.

Talk about doing kind things:

- How many ideas can the children think of?
- When they are 'giving' what do they feel?

Use these ideas to create a 'Kindness Wall' in the classroom. This could include the names of the children and their acts of kindness

Smiles are powerful gestures.

'When you smile the whole world smiles with you.'

Joe Goodwin and Larry Shay

Encourage the children to spend the day using as many smiles as possible. This could be a 'Smile Collecting Mission!'

You could keep a tally of all the smiles that you see.

Kindness and caring are contagious!

Read 'Ordinary Mary's Extraordinary Deed' by Emily Pearson which illustrates how kindness spreads.

Discuss how Mary's kind deed started a "ripple of kindness."

Can the children think of any examples where they have seen kindness spreading?

There are many ways to give and be kind. Even telling a simple joke can make someone laugh.

E.g. What do you get when you cross an insect with a rabbit?
Bugs Bunny!

1. Choose a joke
2. Decide who to tell it to
3. Practice telling the joke
4. Pick a good moment
5. Relax and act confidently
6. Tell your joke with a smile

Relating: Connect with others

‘For happiness, remember...
other people matter.’

Dr Chris Peterson

Relationships are important for our happiness as they promote a sense of belonging and security. Positive relationships provide love, meaning and support and increase our sense of self-worth.

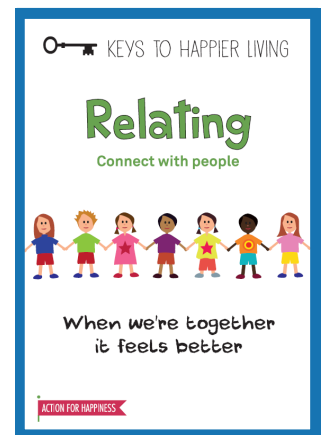
Spending time with someone who is happy will increase our own happiness – their happiness is contagious!

Building positive relationships takes time and effort, and good communication skills.

Making time for the people who matter to us, listening carefully and being positive is good for our relationships.

Be an active and respectful listener by focusing on what the person is saying to you, giving them your full attention, maintaining eye contact and responding to them with positive verbal and non-verbal cues.

Say “thank you” – it shows the other person that you value them and have noticed and appreciated what they have done for you.



Classroom activities

Listening is a skill which can be learned

Model active listening behaviour and encourage it in the classroom.

- Look at the person who is talking to you – maintain eye contact.
- Don't fidget
- Listen without interrupting
- Maintain an interested facial expression
- Nod, smile or say something to show that you are listening and are interested

Play a game where the children identify what makes a specific noise. Collect items that make a distinctive noise from the children's environment. Create the noise discreetly or make a playlist. Ask the children to figure out what makes the noise.

Some ideas:

- Rattling Keys
- Cutting with scissors
- Crumpling paper
- Playing a musical instrument
- Ringing a doorbell
- A barking dog

Positive relationships are built on respect, trust, active listening and empathy.

Ask the children what they think it means to be a good friend? Guide the discussion to include the characteristics mentioned above and identify examples of being a good friend.

Listening skills improve with practice!

Play 'Simon Says', encouraging the children to listen carefully before taking an action. The teacher gives an action for the children to do. If it starts with 'Simon Says' then the children complete the action. If not, they should do nothing. This encourages active listening!

Exercising: Take care of your body

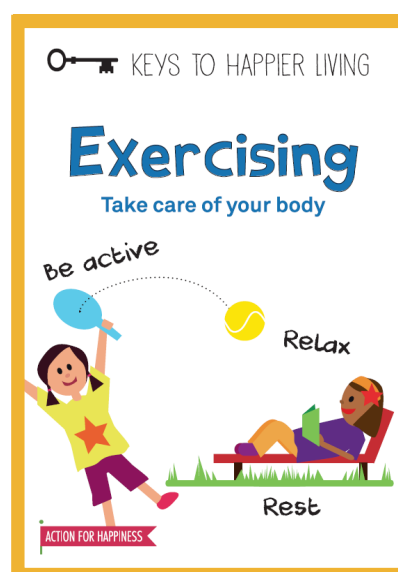
‘True enjoyment comes from activity of the mind and exercise of the body; the two are ever united.’

Wilhelm Von Humboldt

Human beings are designed to be active and doing so boosts our happiness and is good for our mental and physical health.

Exercise releases noradrenalin and endorphins which reduce stress and trigger a positive feeling in the body. In children, it helps to build strong bones, a healthy heart and stronger muscles. It also improves balance, coordination and flexibility.

Taking care of your body includes getting adequate sleep, eating a balanced diet, keeping hydrated and making time for relaxation.



Classroom activities

Red light, green light

The children move around a space and when the teacher says 'red light' they freeze. 'Green light' allows them to move again. When they have mastered this include 'orange light' to move slowly.

Specify additional movements by using other colours:

Purple light – hop

Yellow light – skip

You are what you eat!

Talk about the kinds of food that we need to eat to stay healthy, discussing the importance of a balanced diet.

Give the children a paper plate, (or paper circle) and magazines. Allow them to cut out pictures of food and glue them onto the circle to create a plate of healthy foods.

The importance of hand washing!

Take two slices of bread and pass one around the class for each child to touch. Do this when they have been working or playing outside and have not yet washed their hands.

Pass the second slice around after they have washed their hands. Seal each slice in a Ziploc bag and observe what happens over the next few days. This is a wonderful way to show them the effect of germs and the importance of hand washing!

Froggy, Froggy may we cross your golden river?

Children line up on one side and one is chosen to be Froggy in the middle. They ask to cross the river and Froggy specifies who may cross

- If you're wearing shorts
- If you're wearing blue, etc.

Froggy tries to catch them as they try to get to the other side. If caught, they join Froggy in the middle. Let each Froggy have a turn to specify who may cross. Ensure the game is inclusive.

Awareness: Live life mindfully

“The mind and ego slow down to follow the breath and the body follows the mind. If you teach kids the tools of deep breathing, you are imprinting the skills of allowing them to create space in their mind, body and soul for inner peace and calmness.”

Tejal Patel

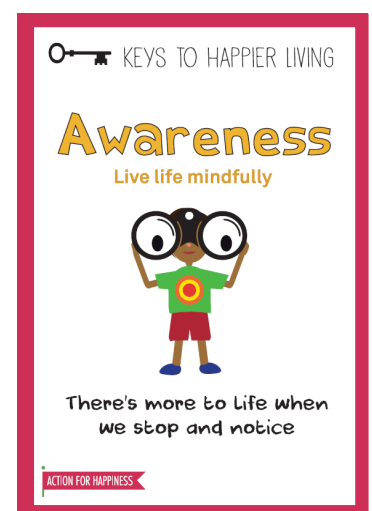
What does it mean to live mindfully?

Mindful living requires paying attention in a particular way:

- On purpose – setting our attention to something specific
- In the present moment – focusing our minds on the present and not allowing our minds to wander
- Non-judgmental – Being a compassionate observer, accepting what happens as it is and not reacting to feelings and thoughts that present themselves.

Meditation is a great way to begin learning mindfulness as it teaches us to focus our attention on something, particularly the breath.

In today’s world where we have more competing for our attention than ever before, it’s not surprising that our brains go into overdrive, leaving us feeling stressed and unhappy.



Classroom activities

A touch of mindfulness

Sit in a circle, allowing enough space for the children to raise their arms. 'Take a deep breath, raising your arms as you do so. Slowly let the air out making a noise and lowering your arms as you do.'

- Buzz like a bee
- Hiss like a snake
- Ssshhhh
- Mmmmmm

Ask the children to close their eyes and picture a giant balloon of their favourite colour.

Ask them to take a slow, deep breath in through the nose, filling their tummies with air and filling the balloon in their minds. When the balloon is totally full, ask them to hold their breath and "pop the balloon" (but gesturing towards their bellies as they breathe out.)

What's missing / What's changed

Use items that the children are familiar with – stationery, plastic animals etc. Start with a line of 3 items and let the children look at them and identify each one. Then have them close their eyes.

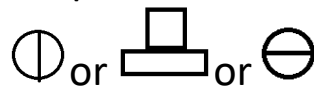
Either:

- Add something
- Remove something
- Change the order

Ask the children to open their eyes and tell you what has changed. As they become more adept you can increase the number of items.

Pay attention to what you see

Create a series of simple drawings using various shapes. Make them simple to start with:



Show the children the picture. Give them a little time to study it. Remove it from sight and ask them to draw what they remember seeing. As they become more adept, decrease the time given to study it and/or increase the complexity of the designs.

Trying out: Keep learning new things

‘Everything starts with one step, or one brick, or one word or one day’

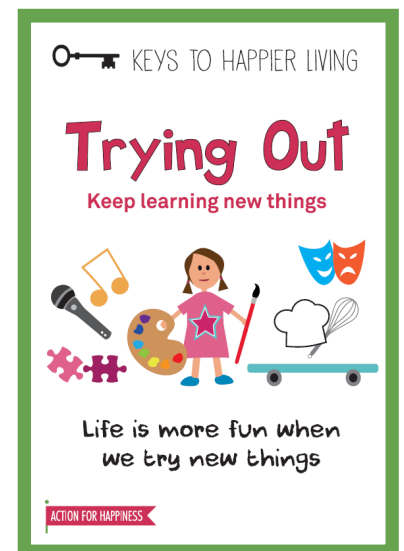
Jeremy Gilley

Humans are hardwired to be curious and creative.

Learning something new affects our wellbeing in positive ways, giving us a sense of accomplishment and boosting our self-confidence and resilience.

If we foster a love of learning in children, this will stay with them into their adult years. What a wonderful gift!

- Encourage curiosity and creativity in the classroom.
- Give children the space to explore and discover through play and investigation.
- Allow opportunities for them to share their creativity.
- Foster a growth mindset in each child, encouraging them to believe that we can all learn. (This doesn't mean that it will be easy, but we can always find ways to improve.)



Help them to see difficulties as a normal part of the learning process and as opportunities to understand and build better skills.

Classroom activities

'There are no secrets to success. It is the result of preparation, hard work and learning from failure.'

Colin Powell

Have a discussion using the following activities as a guide:

1. Identify:

- One thing that you found hard to learn but eventually succeeded in doing?
- One thing that you've tried for the first time recently?

2. What do you feel when you've succeeded at something new?

Learning something new!

Encourage the children to make a list of new things to try out– see how many they can think of.

- New food / drink
- New game
- Play with someone new
- Learn a new skill / hobby
- Learn a new song

The list is endless!

'Look at usual things with unusual eyes.'

Vico Magistretti

Choose a game, indoor or outdoor, that the children know well. Ask them for ideas on how the game could be changed to create a new game.

If you have time, test out some of the suggested variations!

We are all teachers

Split children into pairs. Ask them to chat until they've each identified one thing they don't know how to do that their partner does know how to do. Ask them to explain to each other how to do the thing and give suggestions on how to learn. The activity can be rounded off by asking the children to draw a picture of the new skill they plan to learn.

Direction: Have goals to look forward to

‘Setting goals is the first step in turning the invisible into the visible.’

Tony Robbins

Goals can give us direction. Establishing stepping stones to get to our goals, identifying potential obstacles, and visualizing how we will overcome them, is more likely to lead to success.

Goals can motivate and give us a sense of control as we take responsibility for achieving them.

Having a goal helps to structure our time and plan our actions to achieve the goal.

Goals can also build our confidence, as we complete each step getting closer towards reaching our eventual goal.



‘People with goals succeed because they know where they’re going.’

Earl Nightingale

Classroom activities

When I grow up...

Ask the children to:

1. Find and cut out a picture from magazines representing what they want to be when they grow up.
2. Say what they want to be when they grow up.
3. State one thing they would need to do between now and then to reach that goal (e.g. learn how to fly a plane, grow taller, etc.)

Direction wall

Create a space where students can add pictures of things they want to be when they grow up, places they want to visit over their lifetimes, things they want to do, etc.

Talk about having visual reminders of goals as motivation to take steps towards achieving them.

Know where you are going, and it will be easier to get there...

For any lesson or activity, start by stating and writing a simple list of things you want to achieve. For example, for story time:

1. We will all sit down quietly on the mat.
2. The teacher will read the story.
3. The class will discuss the book, listening carefully to what each person says.

As tasks are completed, mark them off. When all the items have been completed, celebrate with a big round of applause, or have students turn to each other and say, "Well done!"

Breaking down tasks

When talking to children individually about what they are doing, get into the habit of asking them what steps they must accomplish to complete the task and what their end goal is. For example:

"So, after you cut it out, what are you going to do with it? Stick it on the poster? Good! And then what? When will you be finished?"

Encourage the children to adopt this strategy and notice when they are using it.

Resilience: Find ways to bounce back

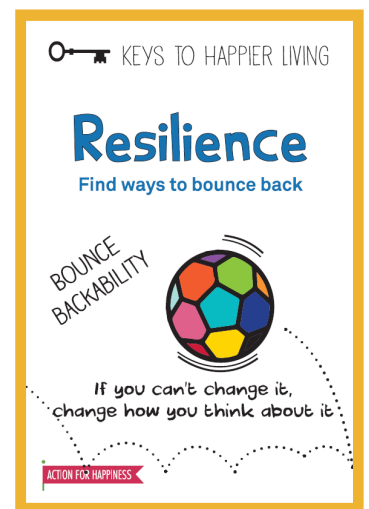
‘Do not judge me by my success, judge me by how many times I fell down and got back up again.’

Nelson Mandela

Resilience is a skill that can be enhanced. Life is tough, but the skills to manage difficulties is a key life skill.

Allowing children to experience discomfort and failures offers the opportunity to learn to ‘work through’ their feelings and develop their own problem-solving skills. Without this skill set, children are more likely to experience anxiety and ‘shut down’ in the face of adversity.

By confronting and working through adversity and challenges, (with guidance and support), children can learn and grow their strengths. The more they bounce back on their own, the more they will internalize their strengths and capabilities.



“Persistence and resilience only come from having been given the chance to work through difficult problems.”

Gever Tulley

Classroom activities

Recognising emotions takes practice!

Gather pictures of faces showing various emotions. Can the children identify each one?

“What do you think this person is feeling? How can you tell that they are feeling (sad)?”

Discuss ways to manage some of the more difficult ones – anger, fear, disappointment, allowing the children to share strategies for dealing with them.

“If you’re feeling sad, what could you do to change what you feel?”

I can’t do it YET!

In your daily interactions with children, be aware of how they talk about the things they find difficult and steer them away from the negative and toward the positive. Remind them of everything they have learned to do so far. Was it easy to learn to walk? To talk? What did they have to do to accomplish these goals?

For example:

“I can’t do this!”

“You can’t do it *yet*, but you will learn soon – let’s try again.”

Guided problem solving

Children need to develop their own problem-solving strategies. Encouraging them to identify their strengths and how they can use these when facing different challenges will equip them far more effectively than solving problems for them.

Change the way you think!

Teach the children how to positively reframe their thoughts. To build this skill, acknowledge their disappointment, then gently steer them away from looking at what the problem has cost them, towards the opportunities it might also offer them. The objective is to learn that there is almost always a positive side to a challenging situation.

Emotions: Look for what's good

“If you think you can, you can. If you think you can't, you can't. Either way, you are right.”

Henry Ford

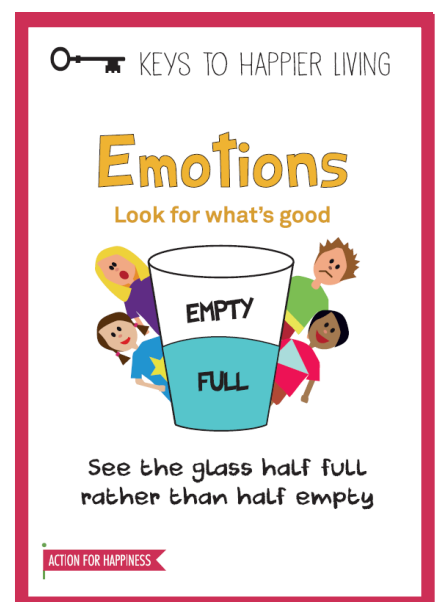
The human brain has a built-in negativity bias but can also be trained to notice positive or good things in our lives.

This doesn't mean we should ignore difficult feelings, but that we can simultaneously think positively and decide where to invest our energy.

Recognising and appreciating the good things in life (Gratitude practice) is likely to lead to increased optimism and satisfaction in life.

“Once you replace negative thoughts with positive ones, you'll start having positive results.”

Willie Nelson



Classroom activities

Change the way you view the world

Try to make a time each day for the children to share an “awe moment” with the class. This could be something that they have seen or experienced:

- A rainbow
- An act of kindness
- The smell of cookies baking

Allow them to record these moments through a drawing to create an “Awe Journal.”

‘Don’t forget to tell yourself positive things daily! You must love yourself internally to glow externally.’

Hannah Bronfman

At the beginning of the day, during circle time, allow each child to share one positive thing about themselves or their day so far. (I can jump very high, I am good at painting, I had a delicious breakfast.) Sharing this positive information will help them to start the day on a positive note.

Develop an attitude of gratitude

Encourage the children to identify as many things as possible that they are thankful for. Write these down and create a classroom display that can be added to day by day as more gratitudes are identified.

Acceptance: Be comfortable with who you are

‘If you begin to understand what you are without trying to change it, then what you are undergoes a transformation.’

Jiddu Krishnamurti

Accepting who we are is no easy task, but we can guide and assist children (and ourselves) towards self-acceptance, by recognising their feelings and being empathic. Model empathy and give them permission to feel what they are feeling. Encourage them to plan what to do next when things are not going their way.

Some of the previous Keys provide the foundation for acceptance:

- Giving – make a difference by showing kindness to others
- Relating – create meaningful interactions by giving your full attention
- Trying out – opportunities to move out of your comfort zone
- Awareness – noticing; being non-judgmental.



“Happiness can exist only in acceptance.”

George Orwell

Classroom activities

I can, you can

This follows on from the “sharing positives” activity in the previous key.

Start with the first child in the circle. Ask them to say something positive about themselves, e.g. “I can jump really high!”. The next student says, “I am good at painting, and he/she can jump really high” pointing at the previous child. Each child says what they can do and what the previous child can do, ending with the child who started, who reiterates his/her initial statement.

My differences

Each child states something that is unique about them (e.g. I am the tallest/shortest in the class, I am the only one with a red top, etc.). The rest of the class choruses back “We like your red top/long hair/tall height/etc.”.

This teaches children to feel good about what makes them different and teaches the group as a whole to be accepting of differences in others.

‘Success is achieved by developing our strengths, not by eliminating our weaknesses.’

GG Allin

Create a poster showing all the strengths that the children can identify in their classmates.

Discuss how these can be used when facing a problem or when you are ‘knocked down’ by something. Encourage the children to refer to the strengths poster for ideas when they are feeling challenged.

Meaning: Be part of something bigger

‘The greatest rewards come when you give of yourself. It’s about bettering the lives of others, being part of something bigger than yourself, and making a positive difference.’

Nick Vujicic

Being part of something bigger than oneself is not an easy concept to explain, but it is one that can be modeled. Look for times when the children work on something together, assist each other with something or are discussing a task. Guide them to talk about how it feels to work on something with peers, as opposed to working alone. Encourage them to consider what it would be like to always work alone and how much more can be achieved when we work together, share ideas and encourage each other.



Perhaps they can identify skills from each Key that will assist them in being part of something bigger than themselves.

‘Purpose is that feeling that you are a part of something bigger than yourself. Purpose is what creates true happiness.’

Anjan Chandra

Classroom activities

Where are we?

Ask the children where they are, right now. Answers will probably be “At school”, “In class”. Draw a circle on the board and place a pre-prepared image of the classroom/school in the centre. Ask, “Where is the school?” to elicit the neighbourhood or city name. Draw a bigger circle around the first one, and place a pre-prepared image representing the neighbourhood, town, or city. Keep going with bigger and bigger circles showing the state/province/county, country, continent, and ending with a picture of the world in the biggest circle. Say, “Even though we are just at school right now, we are part of something bigger! The whole world!”

We impact each other

Ask the children to stand in a circle. Tell them that they’ll each get a turn to be the “leader”. The leader will say or do something to the child to their right (E.g. Say, “You’re a girl!” or squeeze her hand). The child passes it on to the next, all around the circle. Talk to the children about how what you do has a chain reaction that impacts others and, eventually, can even return to impact you. Encourage them to identify additional examples.

My team

Talk to the class about teams and groups. Give examples of groups or teams they might belong to (e.g. after school care, craft groups, clubs, etc.). Ask them to think about the ‘teams’ they belong to, and then have them draw/cut out pictures depicting their favorite things about being part of a bigger group. Create a “Part of Something Bigger” space in the classroom to display these.

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This information leaflet gives guidance to teachers and Early Years staff to introduce younger children (age 4/5) to the GREAT DREAM framework in preparation for the full programme.

Important information is provided for each Key with example activities that can be undertaken with younger children to help begin to embed the actions that they can take to promote their own happier living.



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