The primary goal of *"POP!"* *(Proclamation of Positivity): A Guidebook of Activities and Exercises to Enhance Flourishing at School* is to empower educators with practical tools and strategies to enhance the happiness and well-being of students within the school environment. By integrating positive psychological activities grounded in the PERMA model, the book aims to cultivate a positive school culture where students thrive emotionally, socially, and academically. Ultimately, the goal is to equip educators with the knowledge and resources they need to create supportive learning environments that promote student flourishing and long-term success.

What sets this book apart is its foundation in real-world application, as all activities have been rigorously tried and piloted with actual teachers and classes, ensuring their effectiveness and feasibility in diverse educational environments. Each activity is carefully crafted to promote student flourishing and create a positive school culture, so it is not just a resource, it's a roadmap for teachers committed to nurturing the holistic development of their students.

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pop!

Proclamation of Positivity

A Guidebook of Activities and Exercises to Enhance Flourishing at School

"POP!" (Proclamation of Positivity):
A Guidebook of Activities and Exercises to Enhance Flourishing at School

Tokaj, Hungary
2024

Foreword

Welcome to *"POP!" (Proclamation of Positivity): A Guidebook of Activities and Exercises to Enhance Flourishing at School.* Within these pages, you'll embark on a journey rooted in the depths of positive psychology, traversing the landscapes of well-being and educational enhancement. This book, the culmination of a collaborative effort among four schools supported by an Erasmus grant, is not merely a collection of activities; it stands as an innovative endeavour grounded in positive psychology, aimed at K12 teachers seeking evidence-based approaches to enhance well-being in educational settings.

At its core, *"POP!"* is grounded in the foundational principles of positive psychology, a field that has emerged in the early 2000s to illuminate the pathways to human flourishing. As educators, we bear witness to the profound impact of our educational environments on the mental health and well-being of our students. It is with this recognition that *"POP!"* aspires to equip K12 teachers with evidence-based strategies to cultivate environments that foster not only academic achievement but also holistic flourishing.

The central framework guiding our exploration within these pages is the PERMA model, a conceptualization of well-being developed by psychologist Martin Seligman (2011). This model posits five key elements – Positive Emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment – as the pillars of a fulfilling life. Through the lens of the PERMA model, *"POP!"* offers a roadmap for educators to integrate positive psychological principles into their daily practices, thereby nurturing the flourishing of both students and educators alike.

What distinguishes *"POP!"* is its synthesis of theory and practice, bridging the gap between scientific inquiry and classroom application. Each chapter of this guide-book is crafted to provide educators with a deeper understanding of positive psychology concepts while offering practical, actionable strategies for implementation. From fostering positive emotions to cultivating a sense of meaning and purpose, *"POP!"* empowers educators to create environments that promote resilience, well-being, and academic success.

Furthermore, *"POP!"* is designed to be accessible and adaptable, catering to the diverse needs and contexts of educational settings worldwide. The activities and exercises presented require minimal resources, ensuring that educators can readily incorporate them into their classrooms. Moreover, the structured format of each activity – encompassing overview, goal, description, discussion and

subjective remarks – facilitates seamless implementation, empowering educators to focus their energies on nurturing the well-being of their students.

In closing, let *"POP!" (Proclamation of Positivity)* serve as a guiding light in your journey towards creating flourishing educational environments. May its pages inspire you to embrace positivity, cultivate resilience, and empower the next generation to thrive in both mind and spirit.

With warm regards,

Szilvia Fodor, PhD, Mária Derecskeiné Nagy and Sándor Derecskei

Editors of the book

Introduction

Project Description

The hectic world we live in, with the widespread use of the internet, smartphones and social media, and with extraordinary circumstances, such as the Covid-19 pandemic situation, the constant and restrictive lockdowns, natural disasters like earthquakes, and all kinds of other tension from environmental issues to war conflicts make us face new challenges as teachers and educators, while our own lives are also largely affected, both in the professional and the private spheres.

As a result, we wanted to find new solutions for the classrooms, where we can adapt to the new surroundings and needs of our students. We believe that the insights of psychology and especially positive psychology can provide us with the answer to the question of how to promote school well-being and feeling of happiness, so essential on the level of individual, but also on the level of communities. It seems obvious that even if the ultimate aim is to help the community prosper and be strengthened by positivity and happiness, there need to be places and sources where they can turn to for support. Therefore, it is the schools, starting with their leaders and teachers that need to be strengthened this way in order to enable them to provide this support for their community. In most cases it is not the vocation of these professionals or the idea of supporting the general well-being of the community of their students and everyone else involved that teachers and others in the field lack, rather the know-how of doing it in a valid and effective way.

Therefore, our 2021-1-HU01-KA220-SCH-000024717 Erasmus+ KA2 International Project has primarily aimed to support teachers and other professionals involved to equip them with theoretical background and approaches as well as skills and practices that help them first learn and embed these positive ideas in their own lives, then implement them in their everyday practices. Thus, educators are able to learn a new approach to their own lives, or to refresh it if they already share these positive views and gain more insight on beneficial practices, they can further develop themselves through discussions and brainstorming in international groups on several fields of education, not just as teaches of their own subjects. They can not only learn about the concepts, but also embed them, so that in the end they will be able to live their lives with the ideas and methods of positivity as well as show to others their benefits and teach it to their students and even colleagues, with the ultimate aim of making schools

more enjoyable places, where the well-being of teachers and students are just as important as their academic success and achievement.

The implementation of the project is deeply rooted in the positive focus of the psychological research that emerged with the 21st century. Its novelty is still evident, especially as far as learning and teaching methods and approaches are concerned. In the last decades, experts were focusing on how to help make life worth living and how to define, quantify, and create wellbeing. In 2012 Dr. Martin E. Seligman selected five components that people pursue because they are intrinsically motivating and they contribute to wellbeing, and he created the so called PERMA model what we decided to use as a backbone of our project. The five elements or components in **PERMA** are:

- **P**ositive emotion
- **E**ngagement
- **R**elationships
- **M**eaning
- **A**ccomplishments.

In our project our objectives included learning more about these elements and other useful aspects of positivity from our expert of this new psychological field in about 50 hours of teacher training. Then we created our own teaching content which has been tested first in our own school environments, then with international groups of teachers and students to be able to prove their usability, and if necessary improve or adjust them, so that in the future they can be used not only in real-life teaching situations, but also in teacher training.

So after learning the theory behind this new approach we saw examples of teaching and learning methods, became able to create our own materials that by the end of the project could be documented, tested and finally edited and published in the form of this booklet for the reference of future educators, students or even teacher trainers who are interested in the topic and share our vision. According to this vision we strive to build resilience, wellbeing, and optimism as part of preserving and promoting mental health of participants and enable them to be able to teach the learned methods and approaches to others. The aims include equipping teachers individually and in teams with practical skills, as well as their organizations with information to be able to improve quality of life, first of all for themselves, then for their students, thus reducing the chances of mental health issues like depression or burn-out.

We share the view that the time has come for a new prosperity, one that takes flourishing seriously as the goal of education, just as much as that of parenting.

Learning to value and to attain flourishing must start in the formative years of schooling, and it is this new prosperity, supported by positive education that the world needs, especially after the hardships we have had to endure recently. Therefore, we would like to achieve a general improvement of the school environment, starting with our own schools, where all the participants enjoy being present instead of just suffering it as a necessary means to a higher purpose.

If we can achieve that all people working and studying in the school can experience positive emotions during the time they are connected with it, it will not only help them as individuals, but also the institute and its service to the community, which can start from including the immediate surroundings and partner organizations, but may further be developed until reaching out to other institutes of education, promoting positivity even on international levels. For that reason, we wanted to ensure that this new approach is evident and clearly understood by the participants and their schools, so we issued a Proclamation of Positivity in which we proclaim that our schools take a stand for implementing changes towards positive education and we are reaching out to others to invite them to learn more about this new approach and join us in our efforts to develop it further in the future. Therefore, in case anyone is interested in further details about our Proclamation and/or our project, we welcome all visitors to our website bellow:

https://poppositivepsychology.wordpress.com/

Introduction of the Partner Schools

SzSzC Tokaji Ferenc Technikum, Szakgimnázium és Gimnázium,

Tokaj, Hungary

https://www.tfg.hu/

The school, informally often referred to as TFG, educates approximately 700 students between the ages 14-20, from more than 100 different settlements, all of them from unbenefited micro-regions. The world heritage status protects the present, unspoiled conditions of the environment, and the building is basically in the centre of this unique wine region's name-giving settlement.

We have a variety of classes specialized in foreign languages, biology, environment protection, pedagogy, tourism, law enforcement and sports. The high number of under-privileged students calls for special attention and purposeful education in order to avoid social exclusion and to enable them to catch up with the more developed regions of Hungary and other parts of the European Union. Currently, the number of teaching staff is 65, and they are proactive and open to professional challenges. With the participation of our staff members, our school has numerous activities that may be related to the aims of the current project.

We normally carry out programs that train students how to learn and manage their lives constructively, and a specially devised happiness focused project is also part of this program. The development of acceptance and understanding others (e.g. ethnic or religious minorities, students with special needs and disabled ones) is also vital in our school's pedagogical program, so we have regular cooperation with homeless centres, special schools, retirement homes, which students visit and work at. Furthermore, the formation of the common European thinking, multicultural education while respecting national values and traditions is also essential for us.

Nevertheless, our main motivating factor to participate in this project has been to enable our students to face the latest challenges of the 21st century. Handling

the various issues that students face may hinder their learning at school, their motivation and even their teachers' motivation as well, so we created this project to help them through involvement. Most importantly, we want to be a part of a group of forward thinking educators, who create useful educational materials and activities to promote not only their own students' but potentially every student's wellbeing on the continent.

Team members of the coordinating team:
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Liceo Scientifico Statale Aristotele,
Rome, Italy

https://www.liceoaristotele.edu.it/

Liceo Aristotele is situated in Rome, in a modern area inhabited mostly by middle-class families, but pupils come from more peripheral areas as well, where the number of immigrant families is relevant, as they find a welcoming community in the school. The institute hosts around 1100 pupils and 95 teachers. The presence of a few pupils with special needs (at risk of social exclusion, recently immigrated students, different ability pupils, hospitalized students) makes it essential to offer them a variety of methodologies and teaching technique suitable for every personal need and their active involvement in the learning process.

Together with the regular curriculum of Italian Scientific Secondary Schools (which includes Math, Physics, Chemistry Biology together with Philosophy, History, Language and Literature), they have specific courses where students are taught some subjects in English with the help of native speaker lecturers.

The school is also considered to be a cultural and social centre, where students and their families can find entertainment and cultural activities while feeling being a part of a multifaceted community. This vocation is also well-represented by the large range of cultural activities open to all the students in the afternoon, such as a school newspaper, ICT courses, musical practice, photography, painting and sports activities. One of the main aims has always been to introduce students to a wide range of extracurricular activities, to give them the possibility to find some new interests and to socialize.

Moreover, the wellbeing of the community has always been an important issue for the school. They organize informative talks about disease prevention, seminars about addictions (drugs, alcohol, betting and gaming) but also create occasions for sharing pleasant life experiences, such as school trips, sport camps or school concerts. This attention to the students' wellbeing springs from noticing how often they face situations of stress, anxiety, depression, sometimes leading up to a few cases of behavioural disorders and eating disorders, also due to the frequent situation of families where excessive workloads or separation between parents make the youngsters feel neglected and lonely.

Team members of the partner school:
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G.F. Abela Junior College,
Msida, Malta

https://www.jc.um.edu.mt/

The G.F. Abela Junior College is a post-secondary educational institution forming part of the University of Malta since 1995. The Junior College offers a number of educational programmes which are specifically designed to suit different student learning requirements, to ensure that every student is given the opportunity to continue their education. These include programmes intended for students who have just completed compulsory education, 18+ students, as

well as for others who would like to restart their education at this level.

Courses being offered at Junior College range from the arts, sciences, languages, business subjects to humanities. In addition, as from 2020 there are newly introduced specifically structured study programmes for student athletes, for medicine and science oriented students, for students aged over 18, and for students with disability, as well as evening courses (intended for 18+ applicants who are unable to enrol in a recognized educational institution).

The school currently hosts around 1980 full time enrolled students, mostly between the age of 16 and 18. It is the major post-secondary education institution in Malta which prepares students for tertiary education, and forms part of the University of Malta. There are also around 200 full time members of staff (including academic and non-academic).

Inclusion is one of the College's major tenets. In fact, students attending the College come from various socio-economic backgrounds. This also includes students with less opportunity such as migrants, refugees, as well as pupils with special needs. The College is committed to offering a holistic education through various extracurricular Enrichment Programs, social and cultural activities, as well as intercultural education.

Team members of the partner school:
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IES Sabinar,
Roquetas de Mar, Spain

https://www.ies-sabinar.com/

IES Sabinar is a public secondary school located in Roquetas de Mar. Among other things it offers Compulsory Secondary Education (ESO), Bachillerato (Post-compulsory Secondary Education), Lifelong Learning and Adult Education courses, in Roquetas de Mar, in the province of Almería (south-east of Spain).

Compulsory Secondary Education (ESO) is mandatory for every student, and is taught between 12 and 16. Post-compulsory education is provided for 16-18-year-old students, where they study the Baccalaureate prerequisite for admission to the University. As it is a bilingual and ICT-centred school, students are expected to improve their linguistic and technological skills, among other competences.

Many of the students are immigrant children from mainly Eastern Europe as well as South America and North Africa. The students are used to living together with people of different origins and backgrounds (in fact, there are more than 30 nationalities represented). This is one of their most cherished values, an example of integration which is worth exporting to other EU countries.

In addition to this model of integration of cultural diversity, favoured by an organisational model of school management that supports, among other initiatives, the internationalisation of the school, they have other strengths, i.e. the effort directed at interdisciplinary work among different areas, the use of self- training formulas through work groups, the bilingual programme and the development of the school library and a reading plan.

The school follows a special educational programme called 'Forma Joven' (i.e. 'Youth wellness' or 'Fit youth') addressed to students aged 12-16, that is fundamentally based on mandatory emotional education and healthy lifestyles, related to waste reduction and environmental awareness. Some of the extra-curricular activities organised along the 'Forma Joven' programme can involve inviting experts to talk to the students on certain topics, such as the ones outlined above. In another vein, teachers can also attend special courses and workshops on mindfulness and emotional intelligence at the teaching training centre in Almería (15 km from the school).

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Introducing the Expert of the Project

Szilvia Fodor, PhD is a psychologist and an associate professor at the Department of Counselling and School Psychology, Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, Hungary. Her main research topics are positive psychological aspects of gifted education, the psychology of optimal/high achievement, and school organizational psychology. She is also active as a consultant for whole-school positive psychological interventions aiming to enhance well-being, mental health, and high performance among students and staff. Also, she works as a lecturer for different trainings and workshops both in Hungary and internationally. Dr. Fodor is a regular consultant of the European Talent Centre, Budapest, a member of the international advisory board of the European Talent Support Network, leads the National Methodological Centre of School Psychology in Hungary, and serves as the vice-president of the ECHA (European Council for High Ability).

Introducing the Guidebook

The primary goal of "*POP!*" *(Proclamation of Positivity): A Guidebook of Activities and Exercises to Enhance Flourishing at School* is to empower educators with practical tools and strategies to enhance the happiness and wellbeing of students within the school environment. By integrating positive psychological activities grounded in the PERMA model, the book aims to cultivate a positive school culture where students thrive emotionally, socially, and academically. Ultimately, the goal is to equip educators with the knowledge and resources they need to create supportive learning environments that promote student flourishing and long-term success.

In the book, following a brief theoretical overview, we show activities that promote the development of well-being, along six main chapters. First, an overview of the general topic of well-being and positive psychology is presented, and then, according to the elements of the PERMA model, the areas of positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning and accomplishment are presented in separate chapters. In each chapter, there are 9-14 exercises compiled by the institutions cooperating in the project based on the materials studied during the project and their own research. For the sake of adaptability, we introduce all the activities along the same structure: the goal of the activity, the recommended age group, a brief description of the task, the possibilities of interpretation and discussion, as well as subjective remarks and insights that came to us during the piloting and that can be especially useful for teachers who use this collection to adapt it to their own classroom needs.

What sets this book apart is its foundation in real-world application; all activities have been rigorously tried and piloted with actual teachers and classes, ensuring their effectiveness and feasibility in diverse educational environments. From gratitude jars to storytelling or mindfulness exercises, each activity is carefully crafted to promote student flourishing and create a positive school culture. It is not just a resource—it's a roadmap for educators committed to nurturing the holistic development of their students.

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Proclamation on the Importance of Positive Psychology in Education

WHEREAS, the education of our youth is paramount to the growth and prosperity of our society; and

WHEREAS, the holistic development of students goes beyond the acquisition of knowledge and necessitates a focus on their overall well-being and flourishing; and

WHEREAS, positive psychology offers valuable insights and practices that promote the optimal functioning of individuals, fostering resilience, motivation, and mental well-being; and

WHEREAS, positive psychology emphasizes the identification and cultivation of individual strengths, enabling students to harness their unique talents and abilities, thereby empowering them to overcome challenges and contribute positively to society; and

WHEREAS, the cultivation of positive emotions, such as joy, gratitude, and hope, within educational settings promotes a constructive and conducive atmosphere for learning, fostering students' well-being and enhancing their cognitive abilities; and

WHEREAS, student engagement, which involves active participation, curiosity, and a sense of purpose, is crucial for effective learning, and positive psychology provides strategies and interventions to foster engagement in educational environments; and

WHEREAS, positive relationships between students, teachers, and the wider school community are vital for creating a supportive and inclusive learning environment, enhancing student well-being, motivation, and academic achievement; and

WHEREAS, fostering a sense of meaningfulness in education, by connecting students' learning experiences to real-world applications and emphasizing the value and relevance of their education, enhances student motivation and engagement, leading to improved academic outcomes; and

WHEREAS, academic achievement is not solely measured by grades but also by the holistic development of students, including their social, emotional, and character development, as advocated by positive psychology; and

WHEREAS, the well-being of teachers is fundamental to their ability to provide quality education, and integrating positive psychology principles and interventions into teacher training and support systems can contribute to their professional fulfillment, job satisfaction, and overall well-being; and

WHEREAS, fostering a positive school culture that promotes well-being, inclusivity, and respect for diversity not only enhances the learning environment but also cultivates a sense of belonging, self-efficacy, and positive mental health among students and staff alike; and

WHEREAS, the dissemination of positive psychology principles at the political level is crucial for ensuring that educational policies, programs, and resources align with the promotion of well-being, positive relationships, and the development of character strengths within educational institutions.

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THEREFORE, we, the undersigned, hereby proclaim the significance of positive psychology in education and call upon educational institutions, policymakers, teachers, parents, and communities to:

1. Prioritize the holistic well-being of students, including their mental, emotional, and physical health, as an integral part of the educational experience.

2. Recognize and nurture the unique strengths and talents of each student, empowering them to reach their full potential and make meaningful contributions to society.

3. Foster positive emotions and cultivate a positive emotional climate within educational settings, promoting joy, gratitude, and hope to enhance learning outcomes and well-being.

4. Promote student engagement by providing opportunities for active learning, hands-on experiences, and connections to real-world contexts, encouraging curiosity, exploration, and a sense of purpose.

5. Foster positive relationships among students, teachers, and the wider school community, emphasizing empathy, respect, and cooperation to create a supportive and inclusive learning environment.

6. Embed meaningfulness in education by connecting learning experiences to real-world applications and emphasizing the relevance and value of education for students' lives and future aspirations.

7. Recognize academic achievement as multidimensional, encompassing not only cognitive development but also social, emotional, and character growth, nurturing the whole child.

8. Prioritize the well-being of teachers by providing professional development opportunities, support networks, and resources that promote their job satisfaction, mental health, and overall well-being.

9. Foster a positive school culture that values well-being, inclusivity, and diversity, promoting a sense of belonging, self-efficacy, and positive mental health for all members of the school community.

IO. Advocate for the integration of positive psychology principles and practices into educational policies, programs, and resources, ensuring a systemic and sustained focus on well-being, positive relationships, and character development within educational institutions.

In witness whereof, we have set our hands on this day, acknowledging the importance of positive psychology in education and committing ourselves to its principles and practices for the betterment of current and future generations.

Signed,

Theoretical background: basic concepts of positive psychology in education

Positive psychology involves the scientific exploration of human flourishing and well-being. Its focus lies in identifying and nurturing positive emotions, strengths, and experiences within individuals and communities, addressing the age-old inquiry into the components of happiness and a meaningful existence. Emerging in 2000, positive psychology signalled a paradigm shift in the study of human behaviour, prioritizing the developmental facets of human experience. Its roots trace back to precursors such as Abraham Maslow and the humanistic psychology movement, which underscored the significance of self-actualization and personal development. Martin Seligman, a prominent psychologist, championed this field during his presidency of the American Psychological Association, catalysing its formal recognition and dissemination through influential publications. With its inception, positive psychology introduced novel avenues for research and intervention, evolving into a prominent discipline within psychology.

What is positive psychology?

According to Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000), positive psychology is "the study of positive emotions, positive character traits, and enabling institutions" (p. 5), while Peterson (2008) claims that "positive psychology is the scientific study of what makes life most worth living" (para.4). The APA definition of positive psychology says that it is „a field of psychological theory and research that focuses on the psychological states (e.g., contentment, joy), individual traits or character strengths (e.g., intimacy, integrity, altruism, wisdom), and social institutions that enhance subjective well-being and make life most worth living" (APA dictionary, 2023), or it can be defined also as „the study of the conditions and processes that contribute to the flourishing or optimal functioning of people, groups, and institutions" (Gable & Haidt, 2005, p. 103).

In educational contexts, positive psychology finds application in fostering an enriching learning atmosphere and empowering students to harness their strengths. By prioritizing positive interventions, educators can elevate students' engagement, motivation, and academic achievement. Extensive research underscores the significant benefits of integrating positive psychology into educational frameworks, enhancing students' overall well-being and academic outcomes. Moreover, this approach enables educators to tailor support according to students' strengths, interests, and values, fostering their resilience and self-assurance. The latest edition of the *Handbook of Positive Psychology in Schools* (Allen et al., 2022) provides comprehensive insights into the application of positive psychology within educational settings, serving as a valuable resource for practitioners and scholars alike and it offers the most current and comprehensive insights about this topic.

The sailboat metaphor

The sailboat metaphor is a common way of illustrating the principles of positive psychology and wellbeing in general (Biswas-Diener, 2010). In this metaphor, the boat represents the individual, the sail represents the individual's strengths and virtues, such as wisdom, courage, and compassion, and the wind represents the positive forces in the individual's life. The rudder represents the individual's ability to navigate and make choices in life, while the holes in the boat represent the individual's traumas and weaknesses. When the individual is able to harness their strengths, it provides them with the power to navigate the waters of life. The wind represents the positive forces in the individual's life, such as positive relationships, experiences, and circumstances. When the wind is strong, it can push the individual forward. The rudder represents the individual's ability to make choices and navigate their path in life. The rudder enables the individual to steer the boat in the direction they want to go, even in the face of challenges and obstacles. Finally, the weaknesses, represented by the holes can cause the boat to take on water and sink if not addressed. Overall, the sailboat metaphor emphasizes the importance of identifying and utilizing one's strengths, and serves as a powerful reminder that we all have strengths and weaknesses, and that by focusing on our strengths and building our resources, we can navigate the challenges of life and achieve our goals.

Positive psychology places great importance on well-being, signifying a departure from the traditional medical model of psychology, which primarily focuses on treating mental illness. Instead, it advocates for a proactive approach centred on promoting mental health and well-being. Well-being encompasses an individual's overall state of physical, emotional, and social health, extending beyond mere absence of negative experiences to include positive emotions, life satisfaction, and a sense of purpose or meaning (Diener et al., 2002).

The PERMA framework of well-being

The PERMA model of well-being is a theoretical framework for understanding and promoting human flourishing, proposed by Martin Seligman (2011), the founder of positive psychology. The acronym PERMA stands for Positive Emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment, which are considered to be the five key elements of well-being.

Positive emotion refers to experiencing positive feelings such as happiness, joy, and contentment. Engagement, often referred to as flow, is the experience of

being fully immersed in and enjoying an activity. Relationships involve positive connections with others, including social support, intimacy, and love. Meaning is the sense of purpose and belonging derived from engaging in activities that have personal significance. Accomplishment refers to the attainment of goals and the resulting sense of achievement. In applying this model to youth, Kern and her colleagues (2015) adjusted the model to be developmentally appropriate. The resulting EPOCH model consists of five different positive characteristics that together support higher levels of well-being: Engagement (being absorbed, interested, and involved in an activity or the world itself), Perseverance (the tenacity to stick with things and pursue a goal, despite any challenges that occur), Optimism (a sense of hope and confidence about the future), Connectedness (feeling of being loved, supported, and valued by others), and Happiness (a general feeling of happiness, cheer, and contentment with life).

The PERMA model suggests that a balance of these five elements is essential for optimal well-being, and that each element contributes to the overall experience of flourishing. Seligman argues that by intentionally cultivating and enhancing these components of well-being, individuals can improve their overall quality of life.

The PERMA model is more than a simple definition of happiness because it acknowledges that human well-being is multidimensional and involves more than just experiencing positive emotions or pleasure. While positive emotions are an important aspect of well-being, they are not sufficient on their own. Instead, the PERMA model identifies five key elements that are essential for promoting human flourishing and achieving a sense of meaning and purpose in life. For example, engaging in activities that provide a sense of accomplishment can enhance well-being, even if those activities are not always pleasurable in the moment. Similarly, having positive relationships with others can provide a sense of connection and belonging that contributes to overall well-being, even during difficult times.

In addition, the PERMA model recognizes that well-being is a dynamic process that evolves over time, and that different people may prioritize different elements of well-being at different times in

Positive psychology interventions in schools

Positive psychology interventions (PPIs) encompass psychological techniques aimed at nurturing positive psychological states. They are defined as "treatment methods or intentional activities that aim to cultivate positive feelings, behaviours, or cognitions" (Sin, Lyubomirsky, 2009, p. 468). Within school environments, PPIs serve to bolster positive emotions, cognitive skills, social competencies, and character strengths, thereby contributing to enhanced academic achievement, improved mental health, and overall well-being (Mendes de Oliveira et al., 2022).

Research indicates that PPIs effectively mitigate negative emotions like depression, anxiety, and stress while fostering positive emotions such as happiness and life satisfaction (Sin & Lyubomirsky, 2009; Seligman et al., 2005). Additionally, PPIs have been linked to improvements in academic performance, student engagement, and social skills (Waters, 2011).

Brief positive psychology interventions (BPIs) constitute a subset of psychological interventions designed for swift implementation, often requiring only a few minutes or hours. They aim to promote positive emotions, well-being, and resilience and are characterized by their cost-effectiveness and scalability, rendering them suitable for adoption in schools, workplaces, and community settings (Shankland & Rosset, 2017). It's crucial to tailor these interventions to meet the unique needs and objectives of each school community.

The *whole-school approach* involves embedding positive psychology interventions within the school culture and curriculum rather than targeting individuals. This approach recognizes that students and teachers function as part of a system, where a positive change in the system can yield improved individual outcomes. According to Goldberg et al. (2019), the whole-school approach entails integrating skill development into daily interactions and practices through collaboration among staff, teachers, families, and children. Aligned with the World Health Organization's definition of a Health Promoting School (WHO, 1998), this approach views the entire school community as the unit of change, involving coordinated action across curriculum, school ethos and environment, and family and community partnerships.

The whole-school positive psychological approach fosters a positive and supportive school culture, imparting key competencies like resilience, agency, and positive relationships. These competencies serve as protective factors against adversity, particularly benefiting students facing challenges beyond the school environment (Coulombe et al., 2020; Roffey, 2016).

1. Wellbeing

Background

Various approaches to understanding well-being exist. Diener's subjective well-being model centres on an individual's personal evaluation of their life, encompassing happiness, life satisfaction, and overall well-being, defining well-being as "a person's cognitive and affective evaluations of his or her life" (Diener et al., 2002, p. 63). Ryff's multidimensional model of psychological well-being introduces six dimensions: autonomy, personal growth, self-acceptance, purpose in life, positive relationships, and environmental mastery (Ryff & Keyes, 1995), emphasizing personal growth and self-awareness in a more nuanced understanding of well-being. Recent models by Huppert & So (2013) and Seligman (2011) underscore the significance of social and environmental factors, such as social support, community connectedness, and access to resources and opportunities. The World Health Organization's (2021) definition aligns with this perspective.

Well-being is a positive state experienced by individuals and societies. Similar to health, it is a resource for daily life and is determined by social, economic, and environmental conditions. Well-being encompasses quality of life, as well as the ability of people and societies to contribute to the world in accordance with a sense of meaning and purpose. Focusing on well-being supports the tracking of the equitable distribution of resources, overall thriving, and sustainability. A society's well-being can be observed by the extent to which they are resilient, build capacity for action, and are prepared to transcend challenges. (WHO, 2021, p. 10)

Enhancing wellbeing in an educational context is essential for fostering not just academic success, but also personal growth and resilience. Educating students about basic concepts of psychology equips them with invaluable tools to understand and manage their emotions, thoughts, and behaviours. By teaching concepts like well-being, stress management, and growth mindset, educators empower students to navigate life's challenges with greater ease and confidence. Moreover, shifting perspectives in everyday experiences can significantly impact wellbeing. Encouraging positive psychology practices cultivates a more positive outlook, while promoting empathy and understanding fosters stronger interpersonal connections. By integrating psychology education and perspective-changing techniques into the curriculum, schools can create a nurturing environment where students not only excel academically but also thrive emotionally and socially.

Activities

1.1 Positive Psychology for Us

Overview: padlet collection of class exercises

https://it.padlet.com/claudia_fontana_marsan/ynbh9ncfnxg9e4mw

Goal: to arise self-awareness on mechanism in positive psychology, to enhance communication

Age group: 16-18, a good competence in English is needed, if done in a foreign language.

Instruction: Divide the students in international groups of 4/5 members, ask them to discuss on possible answers to the given activities and write down a shared answer. Give them 10 minutes to discuss and collect answers.

Discussion: Collect group answers and read aloud, or ask each group to upload their answer on the padlet; compare answers, find common trends, elicit follow up conversation and meaningful exchange of opinions.

Subjective remarks: At the beginning the students were shy, thinking that all answers were obvious, but then they opened up and shared their ideas. It depends on the communicative abilities of the instructor and the atmosphere created by the class.

Suggested Exercises to use on the Padlet, to be done in the order given below:

https://padlet.com/claudia_fontana_marsan/positive-psychology-for-us-ynbh9ncfnxg9e4mw

Activity 1: What is your idea of happiness? Visualize and describe it to others

Activity 2: What triggers in you the best positive emotions? The answers may sometime differ according to the nation of the group members or to the past experiences of the students.

Activity 5: Sensations of joy: analyse joy through all the senses: sight, smell, hearing, sight, touch; underline the "sensory memory" we all have about a song, a flavour, a smell

Activity 13: Strength and weakness: see how recognizing them brings to self-acceptance and serenity

Activity 14 Your body speaks: visualize and analyse how your body reacts in case of fear or anxiety. Seeing everybody has a psychosomatic week point helps

keeping reactions under control

Activity 18 Growing Mindset: read the quotations, discuss with the group and choose which ones you prefer.

Activity 19: Direct your thoughts: create your own inspirational bubbles and show them on wall

Activity 15: the 5 pillars of Well-being: Read the ideas on the themes and write yours:
· Connect
· Keep Learning
· Take notice
· Give to Others
· Be Thankful

1.2 What is "being positive" for you?

Overview: through the completion of online surveys, the students reflect on positivity

Goal: to reflect on what it means to be a positive person and have positive thoughts

Age group: 13+

Instructions: Firstly, as a warming up activity, students will be asked if they consider themselves optimistic or pessimistic:

Do you consider yourself a positive or negative person, an optimistic or a pessimistic person?
Do you usually see the glass half full or half empty?
Do you usually see the dark side of any situation rather than the bright side of things?

This survey will be done by using the presentation tool Mentimeter.

Then, we will continue by eliciting the meaning of some concepts as "resilience" or "what is for them to be a positive person". This survey will be also taken with the presentation tool Mentimeter in order to preserve the students' anonymity.

Finally, they will be provided with a definition of a "positive person" which will be compared to their previous ideas.

Discussion: *Do you consider yourself a positive or a negative person, an optimistic or a pessimistic person? / do you usually see the glass half full or half empty? / do you usually see the dark side of any situation rather than the bright side of things? /*

what is for you to be a positive person?

Subjective remarks: To make students feel more comfortable and to preserve their anonymity, the Mentimeter application has been used

1.3 The Measure of Happiness

Overview: a simple explanation of the Global Happiness Index

Video: National Geography: How to measure happiness around the world

https://youtu.be/FfVrYX6dhDw

For a rendering of the Global Happiness index 2021, see the animated map representing also the first 140 countries in the Happiness Record

https://youtu.be/IDv6zb_HDI8

Goal: it underlines how happiness is not built on money and possessions, but on other elements, such as:
- Health
- Social network
- Family affection
- Freedom to make life choices
- Generosity and selfishness
- Perceptions of corruption
- Personal safety

Age group: 14-17

Instruction: Watch the video, ask pupils to answer the questions, read the text below with them.

Discussion: Which of the mentioned elements do you think are more important for your personal Happiness Score?

Subjective remarks: easy and visually effective

Global Happiness Index

This animated map pulls data from the World Happiness Report to uncover the average scores of 149 countries between 2018-2020, and which ones emerged the happiest or unhappiest (least happy). The World Happiness Report is a publication of the United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network.

It contains articles and rankings of national happiness, based on respondent ratings of their own lives, which the report also correlates with various (quality of) life factors.

As of March 2021, Finland had been ranked the happiest country in the world four times in a row. The report primarily uses data from the Gallup World Poll.

How is Happiness Measured? Some clear indicators are health and wealth, both metrics that have been steadily on the rise worldwide. The report takes these into account, weighting GDP per capita and life expectancy at birth into the scores. The report also looks at more intangible aspects, collecting survey responses around: Social support Freedom to make life choices Generosity Perceptions of government/ business corruption

Data: World Happiness Report 2021

https://worldhappiness.report/ed/2021/

1.4 Ted Video - The Happiness Index

On YouTube:

https://www.ted.com/talks/nic_marks_the_happy_planet_index

Total duration: 16:33 minutes, use only from minute 1 to 10

Overview: an inspiring analysis on the economic factors connecting happiness and wealth and on how we must learn to connect happiness and climate awareness

Goal: deepen themes connected to individual happiness, national wealth and environmental protections, which are usually seen as distant and not connected

Age group: 16-18, good understanding abilities in English and good control of the language

Instruction: Divide the students in groups and give them paper and pens.

Go through the first 10 minutes of the video and stop at the end of each sequence to explain content and to give time to students to fill up the questionnaire

Discussion: Analyse every question as it is completed, elicit observations and point of discussion; compare different goals of life, different ideas of wealth, different models of development.

Underline that the happiness of people can be fulfilled only together with the happiness of the planet and not with the deprivation of its resources

Subjective remarks: difficult in themes, complex vocabulary, can also be used

---

individually

Timing and questions:

1. Minutes 1-3: What the future holds
- What idea of the future is communicated by most of the contemporary films?
- What feeling do these films arise in us about the future?

2. 3:30 Robert Kennedy's revolutionary idea
- What does the gross domestic product GDP measure?
- Is it a good measure for people's happiness?

3. 4:30 What do people want in life?
- What are the 4 things people want more? List them in order according to the tower.

4. 5:30 The Happy planet index
- What does the Happy Planet Index measure? What are the two variables?

5. Minute 7: The Happy Planet Graph
- Bring an example of a country with a high standard of living and high resource consumption
- Bring an example of a country with a low standard of living and low consume of resource
- What is the happiest nation on the planet?
- Where is your nation positioned in the graph?
- What has this nation done to better life conditions for their citizens.

6. STOP at minute 10
- Conclusions: the video wants to make a connection between happiness and environment awareness: why? What can be done to better the Happy Planet index?

Subjective remarks: difficult in themes, complex vocabulary; can also be used individually.

1.5 The Wheel of Well-being

Overview: writing a short journal entry after a discussion of personal life satisfaction and room for improvement

Goal: to realize their present state of well-being and self-reflection on ways for possible improvement

Age group: 14+

Preparation: A presentation of the wheel of well-being bellow either in the form

of photocopies for each student or presented on an interactive board.

Introduction: Students are shown the wheel of well-being, and first the whole group discusses its parts and what they can mean for an individual.

Discussion and follow-up activity: In small groups of 3 or in pairs people reflect on their own present state in a discussion. Finally, the write a "journal entry" of about 150 words about their present states and their wishes and future goals.

Subjective remarks: We can use these insights to turn these wishes and goals into SMART goals and make a plan for changes they see as necessary or useful.

1.6 What Makes Me Happy

Overview: students are invited to work in groups and produce a presentation where they explain what makes them happy and where they feel serene.

Goal: to improve creativity, digital skills or manual skills and to create discussion on the idea of happiness and develop a sense of gratitude

Age group: 14-18

Instruction: Students are asked to create a digital presentation with pictures of their daily life together with friends and families.

Discussion: A discussion about the places and ways to be happy may arise, comparing different lifestyles and different reactions.

Subjective remarks: Students liked the possibility to be creative and to express their ideas, the results gave us an insight on similarities and differences among participants.

1.7 Secret Angel

Overview: an ongoing game for a longer period of time, when students become somebody else's "secret angels" by repeatedly doing something kind for them without revealing their identity

Goal: community building, by focusing on acts of kindness in the view of different love languages

Age group: 10+

Preparation:
1. Print or write all the participants' names on same sized pieces of paper and fold them in the same way so that nobody could see whose name is written on them
2. Put the names in a hat or a jar that makes it easy to pick one

Instruction:
1. Explain that the purpose of the game is being kind to each other without the others knowing whose Secret Angel you are
2. You can discuss ideas about how to be kind to others, even grouping the ideas according to the 5 love languages (i.e. words of affirmation, quality time, physical touch, acts of service, gifts), or you just let them use their creativity
3. You set a time frame that is suitable for their age to play the game (e. g. a week)
4. Students pick the names and don't show it to anyone (with younger students, the teacher can be an exception and can even take the pieces of papers back so they wouldn't leave it anywhere where others can find it)
5. They perform acts of kindness in the timeframe while trying not to reveal their identity

Discussion: After the given time the group discusses their experiences, can try to guess the identity of their secret angels, and the angels finally reveal themselves. The group can discuss what ideas were the best, how the game made them feel as "Angels" and as recipients, and can even make a collection of their ideas (maybe there were some unused or unrevealed ones). You can also ask if they would like to play it again (in the near future).

Subjective remarks: In the beginning you can tell the students that it will be harder to find out their identity if they are kind to more than one person and you can definitely have a discussion about love languages and how different people may feel loved in different ways. During the activity you can ask them to write about it in their journals and in the end you can ask them to write a (short) composition about the experience, their positive emotions and what they have learnt from it.

1.8 A Weekly Challenge on Positive Behaviours

Overview: students are asked to keep a sort of weekly diary and write down if they have performed a particular activity

Goal: to reflect on positive behaviours which encourage well-being

Age group: 15-18

Instruction: Explain the challenge, tell them that every performed activity gives them points: when they reach a minimum score, they can move to the next level, ask questions to see if they think the challenge is going to be difficult, set a date for checking the results after a week.

Discussion: At the end of each week, elicit responses, collect experiences and sensations and set the date for the next level. It can be introduced in class, then it is revised after 7 days to see if the students have completed and noted down their tasks.

Subjective remarks: It gives the students a sense of purpose, the idea that they are working on themselves. Some students might disregard it as silly and refuse to take part because they don't want to challenge themselves.

1.9 Identifying automatic positive and negative thoughts

Overview: by doing a couple of activities, the students will become aware of their own negative thoughts and will be provided with information to classify them according to their nature

Goal: to make students reflect on the negative thoughts they have and be able to classify them according to their nature

Age group: 13+

Instruction: The students will be given a list of positive and negative thoughts that they will have to separate in two different columns.

Later, by using the application Mentimeter in order to preserve their anonymity,

they students will be asked to identify their own negative thoughts and write them down.

Finally, students will be handed in a chart with some of the most usual types of negative feelings and a description of each one (minimization/magnification, all or nothing reasoning, personalization, etc. They will have to identify the previous negative thoughts and recognize themselves with one of them.

Discussion: The teacher will explain the 9 different types of negative thoughts from the photocopy they will be provided with which includes examples to make easier their identification.

Subjective remarks: As talking about our own negative thoughts in front of other people can be very hard, the Mentimeter application has been used. This activity should be done in a safe scenario where students feel comfortable because it might be too hard for them.

IDENTIFYING AUTOMATIC NEGATIVE THOUGHTS: CHALLENGING DIFFERENT TYPES OF AUTOMATIC THOUGHTS

TYPE	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLE 1	EXAMPLE 2
"All or nothing" reasoning	Viewing things as either black or white.	*He's either being entirely honest or he's lying.*	
Arbitrary inference	Drawing conclusions without all the facts.	*My phone has been silent all day, I haven't got the job.*	
Minimization/ magnification	Over-emphasizing the negative situational attributes while playing down the positive ones.	*The road trip was not super because the car was slightly scratched.*	
Personalization	Blaming yourself for things which are beyond your control.	*I'm the reason you didn't get your homework done.*	
Discounting the positive	Identifying negative things in positive situations or events, or turning positive results into negative ones.	*They are only saying that because they want money.*	
Overgeneralization	Drawing broad conclusions from isolated events: using singular cases to draw conclusions about other events.	*I was late because I am bad at time management.*	
Global judgements	Applying negative labels to unique incidents or people.	*She's absolutely useless at everything.*	
Moral imperatives	Applying a strict set of standards to everyone and everything, including oneself.	*It's not okay to cancel plans, ever.*	
Emotional reasoning	Using one's feelings about something to rationalize one's thoughts.	*I was nervous, therefore the class was badly run.*	

1.10 Challenging Negative Automatic Thoughts

Overview: automatic thougth record to change their negativity with positive responses to any situation and even learn something positive from a negative scenario

Goal: to help students recognize that their own negative emotions may affect their mental health as well as their overall quality of life

Age: 13+

Instruction: The students will be given a handout where they will have to write down for a couple of days the negative thoughts they have experienced, when and where they occurred, the emotions they felt, what their response was towards that situation, if there is any other possible way to view this situation in a positive way.

Discussion: Our students will share the results obtained by fulfilling the Automatic Thought Record photocopy. Their classmates will provide them with a piece of advice to counteract those negative feelings.

Subjective remarks: if our students do not feel comfortable with the activity, the teacher could be the one responsible for collecting these worksheets and selecting what negative thoughts should be read aloud anonymously.

AUTOMATIC THOUGHT RECORD

Date/Time	Situation	Automatic thoughts that you had	Emotions you felt	Your response	A more adaptive response

1.11 Getting Rid of ANTS - Automatic Negative Thoughts

Overview: offers insight about automatic thoughts and their consequences, reflections about ways how to replace negative thoughts with positive thoughts

Goal: to focus on specific negative automatic thoughts, one at a time, and examine what triggers them, as well as their consequences, to help people understand their negative automatic thoughts and replace them with positive thoughts

Age Group: 14+

Instructions: For practical ways to challenge and dispute negative automatic thinking, worksheets are distributed to students. The worksheet is split into

three columns: *Trigger, Automatic Negative Thought (ANT)*, and *Adaptive Thought*, and aims to help people understand and dispute (if necessary) their automatic thoughts. This worksheet is a great introduction to automatic thoughts.

Discussion: While these thoughts can seem impossible to avoid, it's possible to use positive thinking to counteract them. At times, "the power of positive thinking" sounds like it is just a pseudo-inspirational cliché. In this case, though, having healthy beliefs about oneself can lead to more positive automatic thoughts, which can indeed be beneficial. Most importantly, thinking positive thoughts and having positive beliefs is absolutely free of cost, so it doesn't hurt to try it out.

Subjective remarks: Higher levels of positive automatic thoughts are correlated with higher levels of happiness (Lightsey, 1994). This indicates that in order to have better mental health outcomes, one should reduce their negative automatic negative thoughts and increase their positive automatic thoughts. This is because negative thinking is natural and it is impossible to completely eliminate it, but outweighing negative thoughts with positive thoughts is possible. With continued use of this activity, it will get you into the habit of using positive self-talk instead of putting yourself down. Students were reminding each other that that one must make a conscious effort to try to eliminate these ANTs and also that this may take time. Students at the end made a promise to themselves to make sure that after doing this activity, they enlist close friends and/or family members to help them reframe their thinking when they get stuck.

2. Positive emotions

Background

Emotions play a pivotal role in the learning process, exerting influence on both the quantity and quality of learning outcomes. Their impact extends to crucial components such as attention, memory, and motivation. Recognizing the significance of emotions in learning, educators are actively exploring methods to integrate emotional learning into the curriculum. This entails imparting skills to students for regulating their emotions, cultivating positive emotional experiences, and providing support to those grappling with negative emotions.

Positive emotions, such as curiosity, interest, and enthusiasm, have been identified as catalysts for heightened motivation and engagement, ultimately contributing to improved learning outcomes (Fredrickson, 2001). When students experience genuine interest and engagement in a subject, they are more inclined to pay closer attention and process information at a deeper level, resulting in enhanced retention and recall. Barbara Fredrickson's broaden-and-build theory (2001) posits that positive emotions expand an individual's thought-action repertoire and build psychological, intellectual, and social resources. Joy, interest, contentment, and love are among the positive emotions highlighted, with Fredrickson asserting that they serve as the driving force for flourishing and resilience, enabling individuals to broaden their awareness, embrace new ideas, and fortify personal resources. Empirical evidence supports this notion, as demonstrated by a study conducted by Lyubomirsky, King, and Diener (2005), revealing a positive association between positive emotions and academic performance in college students. Additionally, research by Tugade and Fredrickson (2007) indicates that positive emotions can facilitate adaptive coping strategies in the face of academic stress.

Educators can enhance student performance by cultivating a positive classroom environment and incorporating positive emotions into learning experiences. Strategies such as infusing humour, providing positive feedback, and celebrating student achievements contribute to fostering an atmosphere conducive to learning (Fredrickson, 2001).

Activities

2.1 How are you today?

Overview: a simple warm-up exercise to focus on students' emotional (and physical) state

Goal: focusing on our students' current emotional state, not only to draw their attention to their own emotions, but also for others present, thus also creating an opportunity for sharing problems or asking for help

Age group: 6+

Instruction:

1. Students sit in a circle in the classroom – preferably without any objects between them, or at least in a way that makes it possible for everyone to see everyone else's body language and facial expressions
2. The teacher asks the questions: *How are you today? Can you say a number from 1 to 10 with 10 being the best and 1 being the worst?*
3. Students give their answers in the "order" they sit
4. Teacher takes (mental) notes and can also provide opportunity for a short explanation on the spot or after class (*Would you like to talk about it (after class)?*)

Subjective remarks: Alternatively, you can make the whole lesson about discussing emotions (maybe connected to a problem that is very important to most of the students), letting them express their feelings but making sure that they listen to and accept each member of the circle, also letting them point out possible solutions for each other. Or you can repeatedly take notes of the numbers they say and if you can see a disturbingly negative pattern, you can talk to the student in need individually. (Don't be surprised, if you get "zero" or a negative number as an answer, but think about the possible reasons and act accordingly.)

2.2 Speed Date

Overview: a fast-paced game of timed verbal interactions, that once participants start to enjoy can be a lot of fun

Goal: community building and improvement of verbal interactions by focusing attention

Age group: 6+

Preparation: You will need a device for measuring time (e.g. mobile phone) and

a bell or something else (e.g. a thick glass and a spoon) to make a noise that is loud enough to hear even when everybody is talking in the room. The space in the middle of the room needs to be big enough for everybody to stand and move around.

Instruction:

1. Ask the students if they have ever heard about "speed dating", when you spend only a short time with one partner, then after a couple of minutes you hear a bell and you need to move on.

2. Show them the sound that they will hear to signal that their time is up. You can agree on a time-frame, but 2-3 minutes generally work well. (If you feel that your group needs more or less, you can even adjust the time during the activity.)

3. You can let them talk about whatever they want to, maybe help out with some guiding questions or topics for conversation. (e.g. How are you today? What has been the best in your day so far? Have you ever...? What's your favourite ...? What are you going to do ...?)

4. Tell them that the only rule during the conversations is to make eye-contact and smile! (**Useful tip**: You can tell them that the most beautiful thing they can wear is a smile – this usually makes them smile.☺)

5. And every time they meet someone new, they are to (if necessary, introduce themselves and) shake hands (while keeping eye-contact). (**Useful tips for students**: 1. While you are shaking hands, take a mental note of the other person's eye colour. You don't have to say anything about it, it is just for you to make sure that you are looking them in the eye. 2. Also, remember the polite ways of self-introduction: e.g. first the man (or the younger one) says their name, then the woman (or the senior) initiates a handshake. More tips can be found online, even with videos e. g.

https://www.gentlemansgazette.com/shake-hands-like-gentleman/

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ILBsS8ZQlL4&t=13s)

6. After telling them to start with the people they haven't talked to yet, or just very little, you measure the time and can help out if needed. Monitor the activity, and adjust the time, if necessary.

7. Make sure that everyone talks to at least 3 people, but after that you can let the activity go on as long as there is enough interest.

Discussion and follow-up activity: After the activity, give small pieces of paper to students (e. g. heart-shaped sticky notes, or let them use each other's notebooks) and ask them to write short and kind messages to each person they

talked to, maybe inviting them to talk or do something later or expressing positive feelings (e.g. it was fun to discover that we both like… / thank you for … / you have a beautiful smile) or just wishing them something nice (e. g. have a great day / good luck with …) .

Subjective remarks: It works especially well as an ice-breaker in a group where most of the people hardly know one another. Students tend to treasure the kind words on the sticky notes for a long time, and they also appreciate the opportunity to talk to people whom they wouldn't talk to (much) otherwise. Plus, for some it feels nice to get up and be active after sitting for a while.

2.3 Flipped Classroom for Having Fun in a Zoo

Overview: although it involves thorough preparation, this activity structures having fun in a zoo while learning about interesting animals from short student presentations

Goal: finding beauty, excitement as well as relaxation in nature while learning about it

Age group: 10+

Preparation: After choosing a suitable and accessible zoo for your group, you need to (find the financial resources and) organize a visit as well as help the students prepare for presentations that they are going to give standing next to their chosen animal.

Instruction: Explain that they are to do a little research and then give a short presentation based on some guiding questions, like the following:

1.   What does your animal look like?
2.   How big is it?
3.   Where does it live?
4.   Does it live alone or with others?
5.   What is typical behaviour for it?
6.   What does it eat?
7.   How much does it eat per day?
8.   How many young ones does it usually have?
9.   What else do you know about it?
10.   What is the most interesting/surprising for you?

The flipped classroom works best if you ask them to hand in the (digital version of their notes for their) presentations beforehand and give them your suggestions or corrections in time for them to prepare well. By the day of the visit

you want to have a complete plan including the order of the animals to be visited, the exact route and the time needed. Make sure that it is doable (e.g. they can walk and talk that much in the given time) and everyone can do what they prepared for but it is not too tiring for the given group! When you are there, remember, that the point of the activity is for them to have fun! (**Useful tip**: if you feel that it might be too much, ask students to prepare in pairs or small groups, so that everyone can participate but it won't take so much time.)

Discussion and follow-up activity: During the activity encourage them to notice and memorize (maybe also take notes and/or photos of) everything they find interesting, exciting or relaxing (e.g. while walking in a beautiful, quiet, green environment) then you can ask them to write a journal entry or an article for the school magazine about the experience.

Subjective remarks: Although it seems to take a lot of effort from the teachers and the students as well, and you may need assistance from other teachers and parents depending on the size of the group and age of the students, you are likely not only to help them learn and practice useful skills but also create a memory of a lifetime.

2.4 Ice Breaking Activity: „Find Someone Who....″

Overview: with the help of prompts on a leaflet students walk around and make conversation

Goal: to make the students get to know each other and to set the theme of the meeting; the questions are done to elicit a sense of confidence and to remind positive moments

Age group: 16-18

Instruction: Give a leaflet of the questions to each participant and a pen. They will walk around interviewing people and collecting info. Collect after 10 minutes or when people start to slow down.

Discussion: No discussion, maybe a quick review on which activities are more common and which are stranger. Also, some activities might be more connected to one country than others.

Subjective remarks: The students must be willing to move around, smile, address strangers and communicate. Usually this is not a problem.

The leaflet:

Find Someone Who...

	Name	Country	Where? When? Why? How often?
Sings in the shower			
Likes walking in the rain			
Talks with his dog/cat			
Dances when he/ she is alone			
Enjoys summer sunbathing			
Sleeps with his/her dog			
Shares his snacks with friends			
Makes cakes for friends			
Loves relaxing on the grass			
Enjoys a good mountain walk			
Is crazy about travelling			
Loves being in water			

2.5 Hymn to Joy

Overview: starting from the consideration that European Union's Anthem is Beethoven's Hymn to Joy, students are asked to prepare their own lyrics for the famous tune, on the theme of joy and friendship

Goal: to make students aware of the importance of joy in one's life and to teach them how joy can be found in little things, just like singing together

Age group: 14-18

Instruction: Students are given the music, possibly finding someone who can actually play the Hymn to Joy, they are given time to create some easy lyrics and to exercise.

Discussion: Students are asked to explain their sensations and feelings.

Subjective remarks: In our case students from different nations prepared their lyrics at home and performed all together accompanied by music. It was a heart-warming experience.

2.6 Colour Breath Activity

Overview: a short breathing activity

Goal: to focus the mind and breathing

Age group: any

Instruction: Close your eyes and think of a colour that brings you joy, happiness, calmness and breath it in. Think of how it makes you feel and imagine your whole body filling with this colour.

As you breathe out, think of a colour that makes you unhappy and breathe out that colour. Breathe in again the colour of happiness and repeat a few times.

Discussion: There is no time frame for this, and no right or wrong colours to think about. Students may feel a little self-conscious, but since they will all have their eyes closed, reassurance to students that they are safe should be given. Getting the student to reflect on their 'joyous' colours can be used to encourage them use these colours, for example when choosing clothes, or stationery for school. Guidance can be offered, that they can use this technique whenever they feel anxious, for example waiting for an interview or an exam.

Subjective remarks: Students felt a little self-conscious at first, but since they all had their eyes closed and with some reassurance, they realised they were in a safe space. Most commented how easy it was to do. They were also made aware how this could be very useful when feeling tense, or anxious and could be done anywhere, even with their eyes open. Many said they would do this again and was a useful easy tool for their own general wellbeing.

2.7 Gratitude Jar / Wall (depending on resources)

Overview: short writing activity

Goal: to try and understand, that nothing big has to happen to be grateful, sometimes we can focus too much on one bad thing that happened in a day or that there was nothing good or special about a day

Age group: any

Instruction: Everyone will be given a piece of paper or a post-it and they will write what they are grateful for today.
- Something they saw along the way to the session,
- A new friend they made
- Something that made them smile

These will then be stuck to a wall (if possible to be viewed by everyone or placed in a jar).

Discussion: This can be done daily, weekly or whenever life seems to feel a little bleak or overwhelming. It can also be developed into a daily journal for those who enjoy writing.

Subjective remarks: Students enjoyed this and were smiling whilst they were writing, which was positive in itself. It took students a while to focus on something small to be grateful for and sought reassurance that their ideas were valid for the task. They soon started to realise that there were many things to be grateful for even on a bad day.

2.8 Positive Emotion Using our Senses

Overview: (10 minutes) focus on using all the sense to channel a positive emotion

Goal: to be more aware of the senses

Age group: any

Instruction: Sometimes when we are overwhelmed, we forget that the simplest things can help us to think positively. Take a moment to think of the following, these can also be written down:
- Sight   – *What makes you smile when you see it?*
- Hear   – *What is the best sound for you to hear?*
- Touch – *What feels good when you touch it?*
- Smell – *What is the best smell?*
- Taste – *What tastes make you smile?*

Discussion: The purpose of this activity to be think about using all the 5 senses. Students are encouraged to use each sense to channel a positive emotion. It should not just be limited to thinking of something positive, but it highlights that by focusing on touch or smell or any sense, we can find something positive around us or in a situation.

Subjective remarks: This generated a lot of discussion amongst the students as they shared their preferences. It does not have to always be classroom based. By

using the senses, we can always find something to be positive about and find joy around us. An example could be give such as when we feel the sand between our toes, or the smell of grass. It should help students to be more mindful.

2.9 Positive Emotion Cards

Overview: creating cards with positive messages

Goal: to spread positive messages on campus or school premises

Age group: any

Instruction: If possible, put students in teams (one student from each country) and each team will create 4 cards.

Create positive talk cards with your favourite phrase, some examples can include:
- *everything will be ok*
- *just breathe*
- *this will pass*

Discussion: Sometimes when a friend or someone we know is struggling, we too might need the person to be positive for other person, especially if they think they have no positive qualities or are overwhelmed. These can then be placed on a table and viewed during the break by others or when they need it. The idea is that these can be implemented and used on a daily basis in schools/colleges using monitors or QR codes around the campus. They can also be used by individual students for positive emotion reinforcement whenever they have moments of doubt.

Subjective remarks: Students enjoyed writing these as they were able to feel 'helpful' when encouraging someone else. This brought them a sense of purpose and in turn feeling positive.

2.10 Recall

Overview: to be able to recall and think back to a time they felt joy

Goal: (10 minutes) to be more aware that there a positive that happen

Age group: any

Instruction: Take a few minutes to think about the last time you felt joy in your life, or did something you enjoyed doing rather than doing what you felt you had to do or think about this session, what did you enjoy or would like to do again for yourself and your own positive emotion?

Discussion: It is important to stop sometimes and just reflect when we felt joy. When we recall such events, it may make us feel happier and sometimes help us to realise what we take for granted. We also may not have realised at the time, that that was a joyous moment. It is important to reflect, so that we may try to repeat that moment or event, and if it is not possible, then we can use that memory to bring back a moment of joy when we need it.

Subjective remarks: it was hard for students to think back, but the reflection helped them. Many mentioned something from the previous days and making new friends or something they saw. Students offered varied responses.

3. Engagement and Motivation

Background

Engagement, a pivotal concept in positive psychology, denotes being fully involved and enthusiastic about an activity, crucial for optimal functioning and well-being. It holds particular significance in education, where it facilitates potential development and academic success, while its absence can contribute to underachievement.

Flow, as proposed by Csikszentmihalyi (1990), offers a constructive framework for understanding engagement in gifted education. It represents an optimal state of experience achieved when individuals are deeply engaged in activities that align with their abilities and challenges, fostering fulfilment and potential enhancement.

The link between recognizing one's character strengths and experiencing flow is also robust: individuals who leverage their strengths are more likely to experience flow, thereby enhancing their well-being and performance (Govindji & Linley, 2007; Harzer & Ruch, 2012). This association is rooted in the alignment between challenging activities and personal skills and interests, leading to a sense of mastery, enjoyment, and engagement (Niemiec, 2018).

Engagement and intrinsic motivation are intricately intertwined, both playing crucial roles in academic achievement. Intrinsic motivation, driven by pleasure in the activity itself, synergizes with engagement, reinforcing each other. Students can benefit from intrinsic motivation and engagement, which can mitigate boredom and disengagement. Promoting autonomy, competence, and relatedness further bolsters both intrinsic motivation and engagement (Deci & Ryan, 2008).

In summary, the interconnection between engagement, flow, and intrinsic motivation is vital in education and the pursuit of high achievement. By fostering flow experiences and promoting autonomy, competence, and relatedness, educators can cultivate engagement and intrinsic motivation, leading to improved academic outcomes and enhanced well-being.

Activities

3.1 How can we have fun while we are studying (or working)? – The flow experience at schools: Introduction

Overview: presentation and elicitation of the meaning of "flow"

Goal: to help students understand the concept of "flow"

Age group: 14+

Instruction:

1. Elicit as much from the meaning of the word "*flow*", and the words and expressions usually associated with it, as possible (e.g. moving liquid, river, etc.), then ask if anybody has heard about it in connection with psychology

2. Explain that they are going to see a short video about it, and show them the following from minute 2:35 to 6:17
   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wADq0pb7Nvs

3. If you consider it necessary, you can replay it from 5:46, asking students to remember what definition they hear for "flow".

4. Elicit answers from them, then put on the board (a PPT is advisable to use):
   "A state of optimal human performance, a perfect balance between being deeply focused in your actions, totally absorbed, and at the same time letting go of everything. It's thinking without thinking." (Cedric Dumont, 2017)

5. Ask them about their present feelings in connection with the idea. (e.g. *Do you think it is a pleasant feeling? Have you ever experienced it? Would you like to?)*

6. Show on board and interpret the following quotes (if necessary, translate them):
   "a subjective experience, one people enjoy so much that they were willing to go to great lengths to experience it again – several respondents described a 'current' (or flow) that carried them along effortlessly throughout the activity"
   (Nakamura and Csíkszentmihályi, 2005)
   "intense experiential involvement in moment-to-moment activity; it can only be achieved on the basis of an individuals' personal effort and creativity" (Csíkszentmihályi, 1990).
   Source: https://positivepsychology.com/flow-activities

   "a constant balancing act between anxiety, where the difficulty is too high for the person's skill, and boredom, where the difficulty is too low" (Csíkszentmihályi, 1990).
   Source: https://positivepsychology.com/flow-at-work

Subjective remarks: You can highlight, explain and illustrate certain words and expressions from the quotes to make sure that the students understand the concept well and that a little anticipation is created before moving on to the next exercise.

3.2 How can we have fun while we are studying (or working)? – The flow experience at schools: Personal Experience

Overview: students work individually then in groups to reflect on their own flow experiences

Goal: to understand the experience of flow through shared personal examples

Age group: 14+

Instruction: First individually then in small groups:

Gather examples of your own lives when you experienced the following (characterizing the flow experience) (to the greatest extent possible)! It could be during a project or when you were doing something on your own (e.g. music, sport, dancing, computer games, learning, reading or any other hobbies).

Statements to be presented on board:

1. I had a meaningful time
2. I knew clearly what I wanted to do or what I should do at every moment
3. I really enjoyed what I was doing
4. My abilities matched the challenge of what I was doing
5. I felt that I could deal with whatever might happen next
6. It felt like time passed quickly
7. It was easy to concentrate on what I was doing
8. I was aware of how well the task was going
9. The task was really interesting/exciting
10. I had a sense of great control over everything I was doing
11. I lost track of time while doing the task
12. I lost myself in doing the task
13. I wanted to do it again
14. I knew how well I was dealing with the task (Yoshida, et al, 2013).

Discussion: Gather examples of all the groups and talk about *flow*

Final step: *Creating a poster/mind-map* – in small groups (of about 8) with colourful felt-tip pens on A/4 sized pieces of paper (in the groups everybody says at least one specific activity – e.g. not just "reading" but "Reading … (book title/ author)" or not just "dancing" but "Flamenco dancing" etc. Try to gather 8-9

activities + as many drawings as you have time for, glue them together/make a collage on one big piece of (e.g. A/3) paper, creating one poster of them.

Subjective remarks: Allow adequate amount of time for students to think and express their ideas, if they realize that they share their passion with someone else in the group, it is a great opportunity for bonding.

3.3 How can we have fun while we are studying (or working)? – Flow at schools: What would an ideal school experience be like?

Overview: students use their creativity and imagine an ideal school in the future where they can experience flow more

Goal: to make students think about the flow experience and to have a discussion about their own and others' role as well as other factors influencing it

Age group: 14+

Instruction: Tell your students: *Use your creativity and imagine an ideal school in the future where you can experience flow more! Think of both internal and external factors!*

1. ***What kind of school environment would help you experience more flow?*** – *Write down your ideas! (individually)*

   e.g. It would be great to have… (not 45 minute lessons/ different settings for different subjects)

2. *Now think about yourself and write down:*

   What I could change: *(e.g. theoretical: "be the change that you would like to see" and practical: e.g. "phones switched off, not even within sight")*

3. *Now please give advice to your teachers and write this:*

   Advice for our teachers: *… (e.g. Please, make sure we are physically well before trying to teach us anything!)*

Discussion: follow-up: *Imagine your daily school activities and the rules of the school and try to change them in a way that it would bring you the experience of flow!*

1. In **small groups** discuss all your ideas and try to come up with a list of activities and changes that most of you can support, if you find something that not everybody likes note that too with the reason behind it
2. **Everyone** together: create a "wish list of guidelines" for teachers and schools
3. **Individually:** Write down your take-away lines for yourself! What have you learnt today? (e.g. "Challenge is necessary to experience flow - so if a task is challenging, it can be more fun to do it than if it is boring")

Subjective remarks: You can further explore this topic and share these results

with your students: Mills and Fullagar (2008) examined student engagement in learning and found that flow correlates positively with motivation, with highly motivated people experiencing high levels of flow. An activity engaged in with high enjoyment, motivation, and concentration can facilitate the subjective experience of flow (Bonaiuto et al., 2016).

Source: https://positivepsychology.com/flow-activities/

3.4 Let's Engage with Breathing!

Overview: students reflect on what mindfulness is and do a breathing activity.

Goal: to make students aware of the fact that every human being is able to be fully present and connected to what is happening around through our bodies

Age group: 13+

Instruction: Students are asked what they think mindfulness is to what they will answer by using the application Mentimeter. Later, they will be explained that mindfulness is the basic human ability to be fully present and not reactive or overwhelmed by what is going around us. After that explanation, the students will have to do for a couple of minutes a meditation activity called ¨Two-Four Breathing¨. Finally, students will share if they feel more connected now and more relaxed.

Discussion: Students should understand that mindfulness is a quality that every human being already possesses, so we just have to learn how to access to it and one of the ways is through breathing activities. If students experience a positive feeling after doing it, these breathing activities could be included at the beginning of every lesson as an activity that helps them focus.

Subjective remarks: For some students it will be difficult to follow all the steps of the relaxation activity, such as closing their eyes. Therefore, they can do the activity without closing them. Others will feel surprised how calm and present they feel.

3.5 Let's Engage with Music and Emotions!

Overview: students will reflect on the engaging power of music and how music is connected to emotions by listening to some famous pieces

Goal: to experience how music makes us feel connected to the present moment

Age group: 13+

Instruction: Students will watch four (or more) different pictures representing emotions, which will be linked to famous pieces of music. The students will listen to every piece for a minute and will have to identify the emotion connected to that extract.

Discussion: *What feelings and emotions crossed your mind?* There are no good or bad answers. The purpose of the activity is to become aware that music makes us lose the track of time.

Subjective remarks: Music can produce different states in our students. The teacher must be empathetic and not judge them.

3.6 Let's Engage with our Bodies!

Overview: students will reflect on the power of music and movement to be fully focused on the task at hand

Goal: to experience how movement and music make people be completely absorbed in an activity

Age: 13+

Instruction: Students will listen to famous songs (e.g. *Believer* and *La Vida es un Carnaval*) in order to make a "body percussion activity". Body percussion is the practice of using your own body to create rhythm. It's a great way to build musicality and make music without instruments. You can use any part of your body to make music, including hands (clapping, snapping, patting), feet (stomping), or any part of your body.

Discussion: Students should be asked after finishing the activity how they felt and if they lost the track of time at any moment.

Subjective remarks: Some students may not feel comfortable dancing or moving in front of others classmates, they should be allowed not to dance.

3.7 Team Flow Activity

Overview: students are asked to collaborate in a hands-on group activity as a team-flow exercise

Goal: to build an object with the materials provided, within a fixed time-frame, this needs engagement and collaboration from all participants of the group

Age group: 10+

Instructions: Students need to build an object that has a function in 15-20 minutes. They are provided with different materials such as paper, plastic or

glass bottles, strings, tape, paper clips, crafts material etc. They have to follow only one particular rule and that is that they need to choose one item from every material provided to them. At the end of the activity, one student from each group will be the presenter who gives a summary of their work.

Discussion: After completing the activity, some questions are asked to the various participants:

1. *How did you feel during the activity session? (for example: you felt you were in control; satisfied to have generated new ideas for the activity; lost track of time etc. etc.)*
2. *Did you feel connected with the group? (example: felt safe to risk; share ideas) Did you feel at any time disconnected? (example: your ideas ignored)*
3. *Which of your (signature) strengths you feel have helped you to engage throughout the session and therefore helping your team? (printed strengths list available)*

All students in the group take part in the activity and discuss the above questions. When there is good teamwork and all participants feel involved and fully engaged throughout a particular activity, then the work becomes more effective which leads to an enhancement of group outcomes.

Subjective remarks: This activity need to be worked out in a group. Factors which contributed to better engagement were various. For example: work is appropriately divided within a team, responsibilities are shared, fairness and tolerance. Tasks were more likely to be finished within a set time frame when participants showed higher level of engagement throughout the activity.

3.8 'Flow state' Activity

Overview: the flow state is the experience of being so absorbed by an engaging, enjoyable task that your attention is completely held by it. You generally lose sense of time, self-consciousness, and anything that doesn't have to do with the task at hand. In flow, you feel as if you could keep doing whatever you're doing forever.

Goal: to gain insights into the different areas of an individual's life that they may not have truly reflected on in depth previously

Age group: 14+

Instructions: Throughout a particular week, students are asked to make a conscious effort to observe themselves doing the various tasks and activities. The tasks may vary from tasks need to be done as our everyday chores and other tasks which we may feel are more enjoyable. They are instructed to produce a

schedule of activities and on the side mark how they felt throughout the activity with emojis. On a voluntarily basis they eventually share their week's outcome during the next meeting.

Discussion: The topic of engagement is tackled and evaluation questions discussed:

· *During which activities do you lose track of time?*
· *What percentage of your time do you spend in the present moment?*
· *What activities do you get completely absorbed in?*

Subjective remarks: Engagement is sometimes also referred to as 'flow'. It's the process of being fully engaged and immersed in the activities, duties, and tasks that fill our lives.

When we are in a flow state, not only are we engaged, but we also find a reliable source of passion and commitment to these things. Students observed and felt that it is possible to draw energy from being engaged and enjoy the activities they are committed to. They also commented that many times this requires a conscious effort to eventually reach the 'flow state'.

3.9 Engagement and the Power of YET - Origami Penguin Activity

Overview: origami is the art of taking a piece of 2D paper and turning it into a 3D sculpture or a colourful object. This is an amazing form of art, that creates amazing ways to make one's own origami creations.

Goal: to realize that learning to do something is a process and you have to be open to trying; also, by putting in effort, one would feel more engaged in the activity

Age Group: 13+

Instructions: Start by asking kids to fold an origami penguin, with no instructions at all. Talk about their frustrations, then give them the chance to follow instructions and ask for help.

Discussion: Origami enhances the ability to be aware of what is happening in the moment and focus. Origami has been studied as a tool to improve concentration. After the session students will be asked for feedback. For example, we will reflect on the thoughts and feelings felt by participants when they initially were given no instructions vs how they felt when instructions were provided. So having clear instructions and clear planning before starting a project may also help to improve our level of engagement and flow throughout the activity.

Subjective remarks: This is such a cool way to introduce the idea of a growth

mindset coupled with engagement. A great way to integrate the power of yet into all that you do is to identify where you're using the word 'can't'. All you need to do is add the word 'yet' on the end and you're there: *I can't ride a bike... yet*, so cannot fully feel the flow or engagement. However, through perseverance this flow may eventually start growing naturally in us.

At the very beginning students were finding it hard to achieve the goal, but they understood the point that when looking deeper into things one can gain insight of the challenge and overcome it by time, at times with help from others.

4.   **Relationships and Social Connections**

Background

Positive relationships between students and teachers, as well as among peers, are integral to achieving high academic performance and fostering well-being. Martin and Collie (2019) found that a positive teacher-student relationship correlates with increased academic achievement and engagement. Similarly, Romano et al. (2021) demonstrated that academic resilience is linked to perceived emotional support from teachers, which in turn impacts school engagement. Roorda et al. (2017) conducted a meta-analysis revealing a significant association between teacher-student relationships and both engagement and achievement, particularly crucial for academically at-risk students, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds or with learning difficulties.

Positive relationships in education serve several purposes: they foster a sense of belonging and connectedness, thereby enhancing student engagement and persistence (Osterman, 2000), provide emotional and social support for coping with challenges (Wentzel, 1998), and facilitate communication and cooperation among students of diverse backgrounds (Slavin & Cooper, 1999). For gifted students, positive peer relationships offer intellectual and social stimulation, emotional support, and access to shared interests and resources, while positive teacher-student relationships provide academic and emotional support, along with opportunities for advanced coursework.

Activities

4.1 Mind-map and Discussion about Respect

Overview: in this 5-10-minute lead-in exercise students reflect on their own ideas about the meaning and aspects of respect, then together create a common mind-map of their ideas

Goal: to focus on the topic and its importance and to realize our differences and similarities

Age group: 10+

Instruction: First individually, then in pairs or small groups answer the following questions:

1. *What words come to your mind when you hear the word RESPECT?* – Please, write them down in a list or in the form of a mind-map!
2. *Do the others have the same words as you? Why did they write those words? What do they mean for them?*

Discussion: After working in pairs or small groups (of 3-4) join bigger groups (of 8 or more) and create a common mind-map with all of your ideas then present it to the rest of the class.

Helpful hints:
· The dictionary definition of respect: *1. to have due regard for the feelings, wishes, or rights of others 2. to admire (someone or something) deeply, as a result of their abilities, qualities, or achievements*
· Synonyms: *1. due regard, consideration, thoughtfulness, attentiveness, politeness, courtesy 2. esteem, regard, high regard, high opinion, acclaim, admiration, approval, appreciation, favour, popularity, recognition, honour, praise, homage*
· Characteristics of respectful relationships: *trust, care, safety, fun, good communication – talking and listening, honesty, loyalty, support; praise, compliments and/or apologies when appropriate*

Subjective remarks: To create physical mind-maps A/3 sized paper and many colourful felt-tip pens are useful, and they can be put up on the walls for later reference or alternatively Mentimeter can be used to create the final word-cloud, which later can be shared digitally.

4.2 Circle Chat about Respect

Overview: in this 10-15-minute exercise students discuss their ideas about the reasons and different expression of respect

Goal: to have an open discussion about the topic and to realize our differences and similarities in expressing respect to promote acceptance and inclusion

Age group: 10+

Instruction: Divide the class in two equally large groups then create two circles: the students in the inner circle are facing out, and the students in the outer circle are facing in, so everybody* has a pair to discuss the answer the following questions in about 2-3 minutes (or more if needed):

1. *What can you respect in a person?*
2. *How is respect shown in your family/environment/culture? What do you say and/or do?*
3. *When do you feel respected? What can I do to make you feel respected (and accepted/included)?*

When the agreed time is up the teacher creates a pleasant sound (e.g. a chime or bell) and the students in the outer circle take one step right to form new pairs and continue the discussion.

Discussion: You can also add some kind of respectful greeting at the start of each new discussion, so students can choose from a handshake or a high-five or a hug or just a smile or anything else that makes them comfortable and respected when they face a new person. If the students don't already know each other, they should respectfully introduce themselves too.

Subjective remarks: *If you happen to have an odd number of students then join in!

4.3 Think, pair and share! – The dos and don'ts of respect

Overview: in this 15-20-minute activity students think about then discuss their ideas about the rules of respectful behaviour

Goal: to reflect on expectations and create acceptable rules for respecting differences, to promote mutual respect and equality

Age group: 10+

Instruction: Tell the students the aim of the activity and that in the end you would like to create a list for "The dos and don'ts of respect" with them and then describe the steps as follows:

1. Individually: *Think of 3 rules and write them down: "This is how you can respect me and how I can respect others: …"*
2. With one person sitting next to you: *Discuss your lists and make a common list of 5 points!*

3. In groups of 4 (and then 8/ or as it suits your group and time management the best) *Create a list of your top 5 (or10) rules*
4. Present your ideas to the whole class, and then discuss them and create the final list of dos and don'ts applicable for the whole class

Subjective remarks: If you feel that this is an important topic for your group and/or the students enjoy the activity, you can let them do it for (significantly) longer. You can also use this method at the beginning of a working relationship to create the class rules democratically. Then the students and the teacher(s) can sign it and put it up on the wall as a reminder. In that case, it is advisable to make only a short, easily memorisable list of the most important rules.

4.4 Social Media Misuse Scenarios

Overview: students are asked to work on a scenario in which social life is affected by distorted use of social media platforms, like Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, something that is very present in their everyday life

Goal: to reflect on wrong behaviours which may encourage hate speech, discrimination and isolations among adolescents; it can be introduced in class, with a follow-up in the form of a short play performed in front of the class to open the discussion

Age group: 15-18

Instruction:

1. Divide the students in groups and give each group a different scenario
2. Ask them to read it, comment on it and answer some guiding questions
3. Then each group should prepare a short scene/dialogue to be performed in front of the other groups
4. This will lead to a general discussion, where all students might express their opinions on the facts described and offer possible solutions

Discussion: At the end of each play, elicit responses, collect experiences and sensations and make a list of good advice.

Subjective remarks: It gives the students an occasion to think over the possible dangers arisen by a wrong use of social media and make them understand the possible consequences on the people involved over a short and a long period of time.

If students don't feel confident in preparing and acting out the short dialogue, they might be asked to describe the situation in their own words and teachers will elicit reactions and comments. A list of do's and don'ts can be then drafted on the board.

4.5 Choreography „Connection"

Overview: the students are asked to create a choreography which expresses the theme of social and human connection

Goal: to make students aware of the importance of creating strong, meaningful human connections with their peers, not limiting their experience to social media online

Age group: 14-18

Instruction:

1. students are asked to listen to the song „*Connections*" by One Republic while they read the lyrics, then comment on it in class
2. then they are asked to create a choreography which expresses and reinforces the song's message. They have to divide the song in stanzas, define the movements used to express situations, relations and feelings.
3. in the end they are to invite all the rest of the class to join in and express their connection through music and movement

Discussion: Show the choreography to the public, involve them in the dance and ask what emotions were conveyed by the show and how they felt at the end of it.

Subjective remarks: Preparing a show takes time and effort, especially because it can be a one-of-a-kind experience. Students will be involved in all the different steps and will be guided to use the movements of their body to express emotions and actions.

The activity was performed by a group of teenagers aged 17/18 who used the song *Connection* to illustrate the ideas of isolation and alienation, then physical and psychological connection.

4.6 Choreography Against Bullying

Overview: the students are asked to create a choreography which tells a story about an episode of bullying

Goal: to make students aware of the dangers connected to unsocial behaviours

Age group: 14-18

Instruction: students are asked to create a choreography

They are to create the story, to outline the main characters and the role of the chorus/community, they need to divide the story in sequences and define the movements used to express situations relations and feelings; plus, they also need to find a piece of music which can express their message.

Discussion: Show the choreography to the public and ask what emotions were conveyed by the show and how they felt by the end of it.

Subjective remarks: Preparing a show takes time and effort, especially because it can be a one-of-a-kind experience. Students will be involved in all the different steps and will be guided to use the movements of their body to express emotions and actions.

The activity was performed by a group of teenagers aged 17/18, who used the song *Flashdance* to describe a typical situation: a girl is bullied, her hoodie is taken away and thrown in a dumpster; she is left alone, but someone comes near and she feels relieved; in the end, all the group dances together to express the theme of belonging.

4.7 Mobility Logbook

Overview: this booklet was created in order to help students concentrate on the activities presented during the mobility in Rome and to have time to write down memories and personal observations

Goal: to make students aware of the importance of living in the moment, savouring experiences, taking time to enjoy new environments and new people while creating strong, meaningful memories of the activities performed with their international peers

Age group: 14-18

Instruction: Students are given a word file they have to fill up at the end of every day during the mobility, to jot down ideas and also to understand the processes which connect one activity to the next one. The aim is that of making students aware and active participants to what is being done for them, to them and with them. Another aim is to make them slow down and find the time to record some experiences and emotions during the hectic days of an international mobility.

Discussion: Every now and then the participants are asked to stop and consider what they have been doing, also trying to understand the aim of the proposed activities in the light of the bigger picture.

Subjective remarks: The activity was performed by a group of teenagers aged 17/18 who used this booklet to jot down their impressions during an international mobility. In the end they felt the booklet was a treasured souvenir of their experience together.

Examples for the questions on the pages:

Activity n. 1: Let's get to know each other!
- What is the colour of your group? Who are your partners? Write their names and nationalities here:
- What have you learnt about their countries?
- What do they like doing to have fun?
- What activities have you got in common?

Activity n. 2: "REALationships"
- Comment on the scenarios you have read with your group, the problems which were presented and the solutions your group proposes
- Real and virtual friendships: how important are they in your life? How do they help you to be happy and relaxed?
- What are the dangers connected with the use/abuse of social media?

Activity n. 3: Engage in Artistic Beauty
- What famous places have you visited today? Were your expectations fulfilled or not? Which one did you like most?
- How can Art help increase well-being?

Activity n. 4: Engage in Sports
- What are the most common sports done by teenagers in your country?
- What have you practiced today? What was it like?
- How can sport help increase well-being and social life?

Activity n. 16: Friends and Fun!
- Collect farewell messages from your friends here:

4.8 Connect!

Overview: students are asked to research the reasons why social connections are essential to well-being; they are encouraged to think in the realms of psychology, biology and neurology

Goal: to make students aware of the importance of social connections, in a period in which adolescents tend to close themselves in their rooms and are afraid to leave the cocoon where they feel protected

Age group: 14-18

Instruction: Students are to find scientific articles and online sources, they have to research the link between well-being, health and social connections. Before starting their work, they are guided to investigate the Happiness Index (finding

out that strong family and social connections are considered essential for a happy life).

Discussion: The class can start discussing about what they think are the most important factors bringing a happy life. A brainstorming activity can be used at this point. While success and money often seem the most important elements connected with happiness, the Report demonstrates that people feel happy when they feel loved and well-connected.

https://worldhappiness.report/

Subjective remarks: This vital sensation of connection and inclusion is important in every moment of life, from new born babies to elderly people, it has been demonstrated to be essential even for animals.

4.9 Meeting Places

Overview: the students are asked to reflect and then describe the places they attend with their friends: where? with whom? to do what? They can create a photo album, a video or a presentation which underlines the theme of relationships among peers, of social and human connection

Goal: to make students aware of the importance of creating strong, meaningful human connections with their peer, not limiting their experience to social media online, and to celebrate the rites of social life among groups of peers based on inclusion

Age group: 14-18

Instruction: Students are asked to show and describe their meeting places.

Discussion: Show the pictures and places to other students, share, comment, analyse and discuss.

Subjective remarks: Students will be involved in all the different steps and will be guided to see their meeting places from a different perspective other than their usual one.

This activity was performed by 5 groups of students from different nationalities during an international meeting and therefore an added value was to compare the different ways and places where teenagers meet around Europe.

4.10 Dancing "sevillanas"

Overview: the activity proposed is dancing *sevillanas* because it is a dance about courting and attraction

Goal: to realize how dance is a type of relationship

Age group: 5+

Instruction: The *sevillana* is a colourful and exciting style of song and dance. It can be performed in pairs and in groups. It can be very sensual, although the pair cannot touch each other until the end. It was originally a courting dance, a way of showing love attraction.

These are some tips for people who have never danced *sevillanas*.

- Form pairs.
- Follow your partner and keep visual contact all the time.
- Maintain your body firm.
- Move your hands like if you were picking up an apple.
- Dance with your heart.

After the student's explanation, a video is played with *sevillanas* music and professional dancers. Then, everybody starts dancing.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZfO1HyZjZEs

Discussion: When we dance, we speak, talk to other people, exercise, have fun, we also may court somebody... Dance partners are in a relationship which requires concentration and to follow the pattern given.

Subjective remarks: It is a lot of fun because of the possible mistakes, such as stepping on your pair, misunderstanding a step..., make participants laugh and talk to each other to get the rhythm. If any student doesn't feel comfortable dancing, he/she will be allowed not to participate.

4.11 Musical Chairs

Overview: a large group game, in which participants have to follow the rules (move/dance all the time, touching chairs is not allowed) and be respectful to others (no pushing/kicking...)

Goal: to develop strategic thinking, listening to directions, non-verbal communication and social comfort

Age group: 3+

Instruction:
1. Arrange chairs in a circle with the seats facing outwards
2. Players are gathered in the circle around the chairs (one chair less than the total number of participants)
3. Play the music and have the players walk around the perimeter of the chair circle.
4. When the music stops, everyone must immediately sit in a chair.
5. The one person left standing it out.
6. Remove another chair and continue until only one person is left.

Discussion: Human beings live in groups, in different communities and we must follow the rules if we want to develop society peacefully. That's why anyone who doesn't follow the game instructions will be out of the game.

Subjective remarks: It's a game which teaches participants to play in a group and to accept that you cannot always win, also developing speed, balance, coordination, concentration and spatial skills.

4.12 Small talks, the art of meeting people

Lead-in: Before the main activity, two questions are given in order for students to think about relationships. The first one is related to healthy relationships and the second one is on toxic relationships.

Mentimeter questions to create a word cloud:
1. *What words cross your mind when you think of a healthy relationship?*
2. *What words are related to toxic relationships?*

Overview: This activity begins with matching pairs. Each student is given a card (with a question or a situation) and has to find his/her partner. Students go around the class speaking to one another about various small talk topics (such as the weather, hobbies, food, sports…). This helps students develop an understanding of small talk, learn about conversation starters, and practice keeping a conversation going. To sum up, they learn how to start relationships with unknown people.

Goal: to give tips for meeting people and interacting with them, so they can make friends

Age group: 12+

Instruction:
1. Ask a simple question!
2. Drop a compliment!

3. Ask for help/advice!
4. Maintain eye contact!
5. Keep your head high!
6. Share something about yourself!
7. Be aware of your body language!

Discussion: After doing the activity, some volunteers pairs may present their dialogues to the others.

Subjective remarks: Some students may be shy, so teachers have to encourage them to participate.

# 5.	Meaning and Goals

Background

Meaning is a fundamental aspect of well-being, encompassing a sense of purpose, belonging, and connection to something greater than oneself (Steger, 2012). Individuals who find meaning in their lives typically report higher levels of well-being and life satisfaction. However, the quest for meaning extends beyond the pursuit of happiness to address deeper existential questions, values, goals, and the search for significance in today's increasingly alienated world.

Viktor Frankl, a notable figure in existential psychology, posited that humans possess an inherent drive to discover meaning and purpose. He identified three avenues through which meaning can be derived: through creative endeavours or actions, through encounters or experiences, and through one's attitude toward inevitable suffering (Frankl, 1985). Frankl's emphasis on finding meaning amidst suffering is particularly poignant given his observations during the Holocaust, where those who maintained a sense of purpose were more resilient and able to endure extreme conditions (Frankl, 1959).

In the realm of education, meaning serves as a potent motivator for students. Adolescents who pursue personally meaningful projects, supported by manageable goals and social reinforcement, experience fewer depressive symptoms and greater subjective well-being (Little, 1989; Salmela-Aro & Nurmi, 1997). Yeager and Bundick (2009) discovered that young individuals with purpose-driven work goals demonstrated higher levels of meaning in life, associating their academic tasks with greater significance. This suggests that understanding the interplay between work goals, academic motivation, and overall well-being requires consideration of adolescents' aspirations for meaningful contributions to the world, alongside constructs such as identity and future orientation.

To address these challenges, it is imperative to encourage students to explore their passions, cultivate a sense of purpose, and engage in activities that provide meaning and fulfilment. Opportunities for service activities or projects with real-world implications can offer a sense of purpose and community, addressing existential inquiries and fostering a sense of belonging.

Activities

5.1 Christmas Candy ("szaloncukor") Tower Challenge

Overview: planning and building a Christmas candy tower

Goal: to learn about goal setting and achieving goals

Age group: 6+ (if the children are younger probably more helpers are needed)

Instruction:

1. The teacher explains the challenge and the scoring:

     Challenge: *Build a single line tower of Christmas candy with one hand in 1 minute that will stand for at least 5 more seconds when the time is up*

     Scoring: *20 points for each piece IF you can reach your goal, if not, it's 10 points for each piece (also for extra pieces that are beyond your goal)*

2. Students set a goal for themselves: *How many can you put on top of each other?* The aim for them is to set the highest <u>achievable</u> goal that they or a helper write(s) down (in their notebooks or a card) like this: **"Attempt 1: __"**

3. The teacher gives the students as many candies as they aimed for + 2 extras (and tells them that every student will get to eat (e.g. 2) candies in the end ☺)

4. At the start students put the candies on the table (they can't be on top of each other, but they can arrange them as they want), then all students put one of their hands behind their back and raise the other hand with the first candy in it (this way the teacher can take an unnoticed mental note who is left-handed!) and on the teacher's signal they start building until the teacher tells them to stop (with the help of a timer set for 1 minute).

5. They step back from the tables and count to 5 together to see which tower is still standing.

6. The teacher does the scoring and puts the results on the board **or** a helper writes the results of the students at the same table on a sheet.

7. The students are given a second chance to set an achievable goal, that they write down again as: **"Attempt 2: __"**

8. The teacher sets the timer and the students raise their hands again with the candies, but this time the teacher says that *sometimes there are unexpected challenges so they need to switch hands and build with their other hand only*!

     (+1: optional 3rd round when they can choose their building hand)

9. If students are not interested in a third round or after that, the activity is rounded off by **discussing** the results and methods and what they have learnt about goal setting (e.g. it is important to think about your past goals and to evaluate what went well and what didn't while you were trying to reach it). This can be done in small groups and then with everybody or as "popcorn"

answers from the whole group.

Questions to consider:

· *How achievable were your goals for the 1st, 2nd (or 3rd) time?*
· *What made you change your goals?*
· *What happened when you faced an unexpected challenge? How did you overcome it?*
· *Could you still reach the original goal? Why or why not?*
· *What can we learn from this about goal setting?*

Subjective remarks:

„Szaloncukor" is the name of a traditional Hungarian Christmas candy. However, you can use a different kind of (preferably individually wrapped) candy or chocolate/muesli bar, or even building blocks if it is feasible.

The idea is based on:

https://secure.cfwv.com/images/wv/PDFs/RTS/Facilitators_Guides/Grade_9/G9_Unit2_SettingGoals.pdf

It is a great opportunity to guide discussion towards SMART goals (used in the next exercise), so the teacher can say:

*"Now that you have an idea about successful goal setting, let's explore this further and let's learn about **SMART goals** ☺. However, it is not going to be me who is teaching you, but you are going to teach each other."*

5.2 SMART goals

Overview: jigsaw-type learning activity about SMART goals

Goal: to understand what SMART stands for when talking about goals

Age group: 14+

Instruction:

1. Students form 5 groups, and get one letter of the word SMART with its meaning and guiding questions in a printed or electronic form (to form the groups more randomly the teacher can write the necessary number of letters on pieces of paper and students can draw one each, then form the groups according to their letters: S/M/A/R/T).

2. In their small groups, students read the questions belonging to their letter (if necessary, translate them), they add their own examples for the possible answers and think of ways to explain their letter to others.

SMART Goals:

S: Specific (detailed, not general or vague)**:** *What am I going to do exactly? With who and/or what? Where? When?*

M: Measurable (includes some quantity or element that can be measured)**:** *How will I measure my success? How will I know when I have achieved my goal? (e.g. how many/ how much / how often...?)*

A: Attainable (ambitious but reasonable; often breaks large goals into smaller pieces)**:** *What will I do to achieve this goal? How will I accomplish this goal? Do I have the resources and/or support needed to achieve it? Are the expected results realistic?*

R: Relevant (to the person, who is willing to do the work for this goal)**:** *Is this goal worthwhile? Why is this important to me? How will achieving it help me (in my career/personal life)? Is it significant? Does this goal fit my values?*

T: Time-Bound (establishes a time frame for accomplishing the goal)**:** *When will I accomplish my goal? How long will I give myself? What is my completion date?*

3. Students form new groups, with at least 1 student from each "letter group" and they teach the group what they have learnt. Then help each other to come up with SMART goals and they discuss it with each other.

4. They choose one of the goals in the group or come up with a new (maybe common) one and prepare a sheet to show it to the others how it is SMART.

The sheet can look like this:

Goal: _____

S:

M:

A:

R:

T:

5. The groups present their work to the class

Discussion: As a closing of the activity the main points covered can be discussed again as a group and students are asked to come to the next class/activity with a SMART goal.

Subjective remarks: It is advisable to encourage students to share what they

have learnt about SMART goals with their parents and/or friends (to help them remember what the letters stand for), and at the same time they can tell their loved ones about their goals (while possibly asking for support if needed).

5.3 Make a plan!

Overview: based on the previous activity students create a plan to achieve their goals

Goal: to learn how to make a good plan

Age group: 14+

Instruction: As an introduction the teacher can say: *"Now that you have your SMART goals, you will make a plan to accomplish them."*

Then the teacher shows the steps in a PPT, and asks 7 students to read them out one by one and to try to give an example for them while the others write down their own ideas:

Make a plan!

1. Break down your goal into **milestones.**

   For example, if your main goal is to increase your English vocabulary, you can set bigger and smaller milestones (that you find achievable but challenging), like learning 30 new words a week for 6 weeks – so 5 new words a day for 6 days + 1 day for revision.

2. If you would like to, you can think of a simple **recognition or** even a **celebration** at the very end that is meaningful to you.

   For example, eating your favourite food with candlelight or making a certificate for yourself to put up on your wall.

3. Then set aside a **time and place** when and where you would like to work towards reaching your goal.

   For example, every day before dinner or every time when you start studying, at your desk.

4. Choose a time when you **reflect** on your progress (*e.g. after dinner*) and think of a simple but nice **recognition** for your regular efforts – anything that is meaningful to you (maybe using your love language(s): touch, words, services, gifts or quality time).

   For example, if you feel most loved when somebody touches you, then it can be a daily "high five" with a family member, and at the end of the week a "celebration dance" to your favourite song.

5. Remember, it takes weeks for a new routine to become a habit and it is easier if you have **encouragement**, so find someone who can keep you accountable and supports you in achieving your goals – tell them exactly what your goal is and how you would like them to support you.

   You can even set a reminder on your phone and send a message to someone when you reached your daily goal.

6. **Evaluate** your **progress** regularly and think of ways to improve or **modify** your actions if necessary.

   Let's say that you want to reach your final goal in 3 months, then a monthly progress check seems to be logical.

7. When you reach your goal, you can get yourself the **reward** or have the **celebration** you planned in the beginning, *but knowing that you were able to get there could also be rewarding enough.* ☺

Discussion: Students can share their views and ideas about the topic with the group, as homework they can be asked to write a detailed plan to reach their SMART goal.

Subjective remarks: The time needed for these activities largely depend on the age and maturity of the group as well as the level of their involvement, so feel free to allocate time according to your group's specific needs.

5.4 Letter to your Teacher

Overview: students are to write a letter to their teacher about their achievements and future learning goals

Goal: to get to know your students better and to help them focus on their future goals while making them feel supported

Age group: 10+

Instruction:

Write your teacher a letter of minimum 150 words in which you answer the following questions about your future learning goals (not just concerning English):

1. *What have you accomplished so far and how do you feel about it? What are your achievements that you are the proudest of?*
2. *What would you like to learn more about (in English lessons and other subjects or topics too)?*
3. *Whom / where do you want to learn from? (you can name more) Why?*

4. *What topics are you really interested in?*
5. *What kind of career plans do you have?*
6. *What kind of short or long-term learning goals do you have (with English and with anything else)?*
7. *How can I help you achieve your goals? Who else could help?*

Subjective remarks: You can write a reply to the letter or have individual discussions with the students about their plans. If you see fit, help them to reach out to people and/or to get the necessary information (and maybe resources) to be able to reach their goals as well as to feel supported.

5.5 Questionnaire: Uncover Your Purpose

Overview: students are asked to answer a questionnaire about their passions and their main values, to understand their purpose in life

Goal: to reflect on behaviours which may encourage the development of one's purpose. It can be introduced in class, with a follow-up in the form of a discussion.

Age group: 15-18

Instruction:
1. Divide the students in groups and give each student a copy of the questionnaire
2. Ask them to read it, to take notes and answer the questions
3. Each group should discuss their answers. This will lead to a general discussion, where all students might express their opinions.

Discussion: At the end of the group discussion, elicit responses, collect experiences and feelings and make a list of pieces of advice.

Subjective remarks: It gives the students an occasion to think over the possible aspects of their personality and to delineate their goal in life. If you have the opportunity, you may do an individual follow-up session with the students, and also encourage them to share their answers with supporting adults in their lives, e.g. their parents, other teachers or counsellors.

Handout:

UNCOVER YOUR PURPOSE IN LIFE!

Sometimes we ask ourselves: why am I here? What is my role in this world, what is my purpose?

There is not a definite answer to these questions and often the answers change during our lifetime, depending on our experiences and priorities. It would be nice to keep a notice of our answers and read them again in different periods of our life….

The purpose of the following questions is to make your life narrative clearer to yourself. Your purpose is there, you just need to uncover it! Answer these questions spontaneously, without thinking too much about them, but be sincere!

Part A: Take 10 minutes of your time, concentrate in silence and answer these questions:

1. *Think of a close friend or family member. What do you think they would say when describing you to some other people?*
2. *If you meet some people on a trip or another occasion, how would you like those people to remember you after spending some time with you as a friend?*
3. *What moral/ethic values describe who you are?*
4. *What passions define who you are? When do you feel the most that you are really yourself?*
5. *If you didn't care about what others think of you, what would you do?*
6. *If you weren't afraid that you might not succeed, what would you try?*
7. *What one thing do you think you are here for? What is your mission?*
8. *If you had unlimited resources, what would you change or impact in the world?*

Part B: Discuss your answers with the other members of your group, find similarities and differences.

5.6 The Sailboat Metaphor 1.

Overview: students are asked to listen, while the teacher illustrates the sailboat scenario and they have to imagine their own sailboat; then the teacher will explain the different aspects of the sailboat metaphor and make students ponder on the different aspects of their lives

Goal: to reflect on different aspects of our life and how we can guide, harmonize and interact with them; it can be introduced in class, with a follow-up in the form of a group discussion

Age group: 15-18

Instruction:

1. Create a relaxing atmosphere, with silence and soft lights
2. Describe the metaphor, slowly and calmly, letting time for the students to understand and to reflect on themselves
3. In the end, open a general discussion, where all students might express their opinions on their situation and feelings

Discussion: At the end of the activity elicit responses, collect experiences and sensations and make a list of good advice.

Subjective remarks: It gives the students an occasion to think over different aspects interacting in their daily life.

5.7 The Sailboat Metaphor 2.

Overview: the students will identify some of the elements which form part of the sailboat metaphor; then, they will be provided with a story where they will have to recognize the different elements of such metaphor

Goal: to make students aware of how their emotions tell them what is supposed to be right or wrong

Age group: 13+

Instruction: After having a notion of what the first three elements of the Sailboat Metaphor mean, they will be introduced with the rest: destination, leaks, sails and compass, emphasizing on this last element. Then, Marta's story will be presented where it will be necessary to identify the different elements of the metaphor and reflect on what could be happening to Marta. Mentimeter will be used for the students so that all the possible answers can be read on the screen and shared with their classmates.

Discussion: After having being introduced with the different elements of the metaphor, the students should be able to identify that Marta's compass was telling her that she had not taken the right path and provide a possible solution for her problems.

Subjective remarks: The students could be provided with a photocopy of the Sailboat Metaphor so that they could write the different elements which appear in the story and offer in groups a possible solution for Marta's problem.

Credit for this tool: Alberts, H.J.E.M. (2016). The Sailboat. Maastricht: Positive Psychology Program

Handout:

Martha's Story:

Marta is 20 and she is studying medicine at university, just as her father did. She spends countless hours devoted to get her goal, which is to become a doctor. However, her grades are not good and she does not feel happy. Consequently, Marta decides to change the university where she is doing her degree, but her grades stay the same and she becomes depressed.

What do you think is failing here? Can you identify any of the elements of the sail boat metaphor?
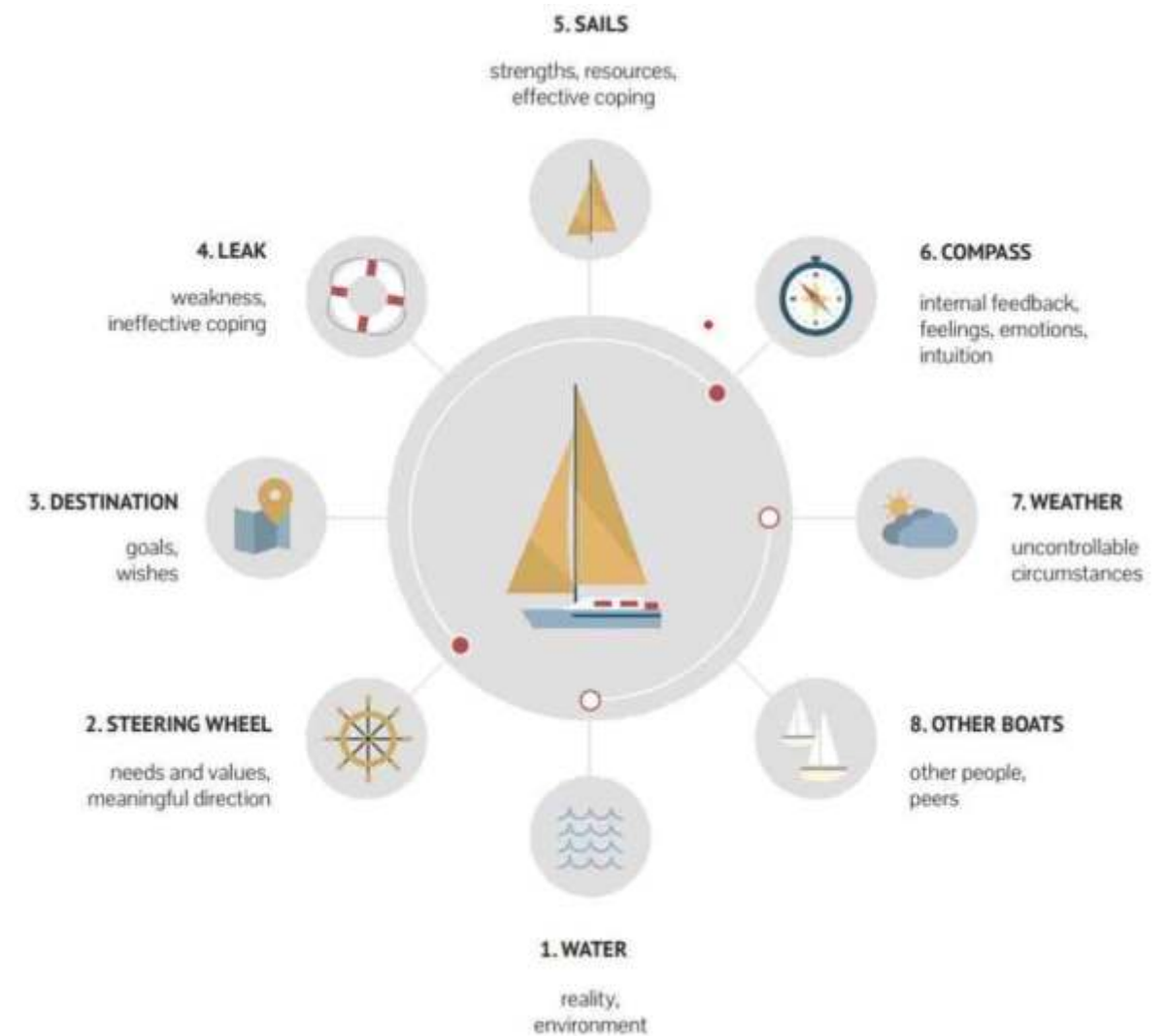
5.8 What is meaningfulness for you?

Overview: students are asked to reflect on those activities that give meaning to their life and that make them enter into a state of positive flow

Goal: to reflect on behaviours which may encourage the development of one's meaning in life. The topic can be introduced in class and then students prepare a

personal presentation, for example a photo of themselves while performing what makes them feel concentrated and in the flow. Students can also collect pictures, representing activities, moments and experience which make their life meaningful (like staying with family and friends, cooking, celebrating traditional festivities, playing sport or performing in some kind of art.

Age group: 15-18

Instruction: Explain the meaning of meaningfulness and make students give examples of moment and activities which make them feel alive. It is important to make students feel at ease, so they can speak freely with their peers.

A brainstorming activity can be organized, as also a word cloud on the electronic whiteboard. This will lead to a general discussion, where all students might express their opinions.

A presentation in the form of public speaking and photographs or as a short video.

Discussion: At the end of the group discussion, elicit responses, collect experiences and sensations and make a list of occasions and experiences which make kids feel good

Subjective remarks: It gives the students an occasion to think over the possible aspects of their personality and to reflect on their special moments.

5.9 The Five Ways to Wellbeing

Overview: students are offered a video to watch and asked to reflect on those activities that give meaning to their life and that make them enter into a state of wellbeing

https://youtu.be/LCA4EEyCBCE?si=nx6-sMV97P5FXnfl

Goal: to reflect on behaviours which may encourage the development of one's meaning in life

Age group: 15-18

Instruction: The topic can be introduced in class and then students prepare a personal presentation. Students can also collect pictures, representing activities which make them feel well and make their life more meaningful. Explain the meaning of meaningfulness and make students give examples of moments and activities which make them feel alive. It is important to make students feel at ease, so they can speak freely with their peers.

Then the video is shown, where they are guided to reflect on five kinds of activities that bring wellbeing:

1. Be active
2. Take notice
3. Keep learning
4. Give to others
5. Be thankful

Students are asked to prepare a presentation where the five topics are studied and explained to their peers with examples coming from their everyday life.

Discussion: At the end of the group discussion, elicit responses, collect experiences and sensations and make a list of occasions and experiences which make kids feel good.

Subjective remarks: It gives the students an occasion to think over the possible aspects of their personality and to delineate their special moments.

5.10 Fishing for Meaning

Overview: the students identify some of the elements which form part of the sailboat metaphor; then, we concentrate on one element "the steering wheel", in order to talk about personal values since they are directly linked to meaning

Goal: to identify the first two elements of the sailboat metaphor: water and the steering wheel, which represent our personal values

Age group: 13+

Instruction: The students will be shown an image that represents the "Sailboat Metaphor". First, they will have to identify the different elements which form part of such a metaphor. Then, the concept of "water" will be explained to move to the "steering wheel". As this concept symbolizes our personal values, the students will be asked to choose of their best friends and think about what makes them close. In order to answer, the students will use the application Mentimeter.

Discussion: The students' responses about the personal values which make them close to their best friends will be projected anonymously on the screen. This will make them reflect on the fact that our personal values determine our destination, the next element of the Sailboat Metaphor.

Subjective remarks: Instead of the Mentimeter, the students could move around the class and interview other classmates adding other questions so that they can have more information about their peers' personal values. For example: what is your dream job and why? What are three your most cherished possessions? etc.

5.11 The Starfish Story

Overview: students watch the video of *The Starfish Story* and then they write about small action they have done for someone on a post-it note and stick it on a poster which represents the sea and the shore

Goal: to make the students reflect on the fact that even small acts of kindness are meaningful and make a difference, so we have to decide what kind of difference we want to make

Age: 13+

Instruction: The students will watch *The Starfish Story* video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rCi5YetnOvw

After watching the video, the students will be asked to write a good deed, a meaningful action they have done lately for anyone. In order to do that task, they will have to get one star-shaped post-it note which will be stuck on the part that represents the sandy shore. Once they have written their good action, they will have to "save their star" by sticking it on the part of the poster that symbolizes the water.

Discussion: It would be advisable to make a poster that represents the shore and the sea and have star-shaped stars so that the students can see graphically that many small actions turn can make a big difference in this world.

Subjective remarks: The poster could be hung in a classroom or a place where people pass by so that little by little it is filled with good deeds that serve as an example to other classmates.

5.12 Giving Meaning to Activities

Overview: a sense of meaning and purpose in our lives can be observed from belonging to and serving something bigger than the self, so this activity provides ways for students to look back at their weeks and reflect of events, conversations and activities (at work, school, at home, community work etc.) that made them feel good and worthy

Goal: to appreciate one's life - this activity reflects on ways on how to approach life to improve happiness and decrease anxiety, depression, and distress

Age Group: 13+

Instructions: Write three activities from the last week when you felt worthy, and felt that the given activity is meaningful or useful.

Discussion: What was it? Why? How did you feel when doing this activity? The

following could be reflected:

· Focusing on your strengths
· Recording your experiences
· Being grateful
· Showing gratitude
· Developing skills to increase positivity

Subjective remarks:

In positive psychology, 'meaning' is about connecting to the things that motivate you. In the classroom, students can do meaningful work when they understand the value of their time spent in school and how their current lessons connect with material, they've already learnt.

The majority of students loved sharing their personal experiences with others and started realising also that they might have a lot in common with others in their group. Students also at times were surprised with themselves that when they made a conscious effort to look back at past activities they realised that they started appreciating more the moment.

5.13 Vision Board

Overview: vision boards are a great way to plan out goals, especially the big ones that are especially meaningful to us

Goal: to makes us think about what is most important to us and encourage us to stay motivated in striving towards our goals

Age Group: 14+

Instructions: Create a Vision Board!

Here is how to create an effective vision board:

• Gather some old magazines (you can also draw pictures, use newspapers, print out some pictures, etc.) and have your students cut out some pictures that represent their hopes and dreams for the future.
• Help your students arrange the pictures on a piece of cardboard and use glue to secure them in place. You can also provide glitter, stickers, ribbons, markers, and anything else they might like to decorate their vision board with.
• Ask your students to describe what each picture represents and how he or she plans to work towards that goal.

Discussion: Once the vision board is ready, students are asked to explain their choices of pictures and what each picture represent for them. Students will also

identify themselves with the pictures chosen and explore ways that could help them achieve their goals.

If the class is too large or some students are shy, students can opt to write it down instead of sharing it out to the group.

Subjective remarks: Vision boards are a great way to plan goals, especially the big ones that are especially meaningful. Helping our students create a vision board will challenge them, get them thinking about what is most important to them, and encourage them to stay motivated and work harder in striving towards the goals.

Students enjoyed doing group work; they enjoyed looking at the magazines and cutting pictures and sticking them on the big piece of cardboard. This was a practical session where students felt engaged and in flow with the others.

5.14 Imaginary Map

Overview: using imaginary maps to reflect on values and looking at different ways to give meaning to our everyday lives which at times we take for granted

Goal: to make sense of experiences

Age Group: 14+

Instructions: Students are asked to place themselves on an imaginary map laid out in the room representing the places they have been (school, family, sports, entertainment, community work) according to where they grew up. Then, they are asked to share one internal value they got from that place, and why that is important to them. Students are encouraged to share a short story if they want to.

Discussion: The following can be discussed: Internal values are connected with our spirituality, our self-esteem, our personal development, how we are growing as a person. These values are acquired throughout the various life experiences and the imaginary map helps individuals put life puzzle pieces together for a better understanding of oneself.

Subjective remarks: Throughout this activity the participants focused and reflected on the impact, significance, importance, uniqueness, or personal relevance of the experience: *"Lives may be experienced as meaningful when they are felt to have significance beyond the trivial or momentary, to have purpose"* (King, Hicks, Krull, & Del Gaiso, 2006, p. 180). This quote was read out and discussed accordingly.

Some students were more comfortable than others to share their experiences. Freedom of expression was given importance throughout the session, so at any point in time students were given the opportunity to share with others and they could choose the moment to do it.

6.   Accomplishment and Mindset

Background

Accomplishment is a central theme in positive psychology, particularly pertinent in educational environments. Within education, achievement can stem from various sources, such as academic success, extracurricular endeavours, and personal growth (Seligman, 2011). Studies indicate that emphasizing achievement and nurturing individual strengths correlates with heightened engagement and improved well-being. Encouraging students to set ambitious yet feasible goals and providing support as they strive to attain them is a viable strategy. Equally crucial is affording opportunities for students to receive acknowledgment and feedback, fostering self-efficacy and motivation.

Goal setting plays a vital role in driving achievement and well-being, serving as a roadmap for individuals to strive toward desired outcomes (Grant, 2012). Setting clear and achievable goals aligned with personal values is instrumental in motivation and self-regulation. Meaningful goal pursuit contributes to a sense of purpose and direction in life, promoting sustained motivation and commitment (Emmons, 2003). In the context of gifted education, setting goals that are challenging yet attainable, specific, and relevant to individual interests and strengths is essential (Phelps & Lewis, 2022). Gifted students may aspire to excel academically, pursue advanced coursework, or engage in independent research (Subotnik et al., 2011). Additionally, they may have goals pertaining to personal growth, social-emotional development, or community service. Empowering gifted students to set and accomplish meaningful goals fosters a sense of purpose and motivation, facilitating greater success and fulfilment.

The concept of growth mindset is an important element of positive psychology that emphasizes the idea that individuals can develop their abilities and intelligence through hard work, dedication, and perseverance (Dweck, 2006). According to this approach, people who believe in the power of a growth mindset tend to view challenges and setbacks as opportunities to learn and grow, rather than as evidence of their innate limitations. The growth mindset is contrasted with a fixed mindset, which suggests that intelligence and abilities are fixed and unchangeable traits that cannot be developed. Individuals who have a fixed mindset tend to avoid challenges and view setbacks as a reflection of their innate shortcomings. In contrast, those who embrace a growth mindset tend to welcome challenges and seek out new opportunities for learning and growth. Positive psychology research has shown that individuals who have a growth mindset, or a belief that their abilities can be developed through hard work and dedication, are more likely to achieve their goals and experience greater well-being (Ortiz Alvarado, 2019; Tao et al., 2022).

Activities

6.1 Encouragement – Brainstorming & Discussion

Overview: brainstorming students' ideas about encouragement

Goal: lead-in for the discussion of the topic of encouragement

Age group: 10+

Instruction: With the help of *Mentimeter.com* or other some other method (e.g. writing on the board) make a word cloud of ideas from students connected to the topic of encouragement.

Discussion: Talk about the possible similarities and differences of the ideas, if possible, try to group them, then promote discussion about the different settings and people possibly involved (encouraging and encouraged) as well as the effect of encouragement.

Subjective remarks: if students are out of ideas, you can add (some of) the following:

- Positive expectations
- Good influence
- Help to succeed
- Believe in you (no matter what)
- Gentle push
- Cheer you on
- Challenge
- Potential
- Support
- Courage
- Perseverance
- Confidence
- Inspiration
- Motivation
- Hope
- Solution
- Strength
- Accomplishment

Follow-up discussion: In pairs or small groups students can share stories about people in their lives who have encouraged them and talk about their effect on their lives (e.g. feeling thankful?) and then discuss opportunities for being a

good, encouraging friend, and their opinion about an encouraging community (e.g. a class, a group of friends) and the effect this kind of environment can have.

IDEA for grouping: Offering (e.g. 4) different coloured pieces of paper to choose from (blindly or not), then the people with same colour sit together.

Helpful questions to put on the board:
- *Who has encouraged you so far? How? What were they doing?*
- *Why was it important to you? What effect did it have on your life?*
- *How do you feel about it now? (Are you thankful for it?)*
- *Is there an area of your life now where you would like to receive some encouragement?*
- *What would make you feel encouraged?*
- *How can you be an encouraging friend?*
- *What can happen if you have several friends /people in your life like this?*
- *Do you agree with the proverb that "whoever refreshes others, will be refreshed"?*

Follow-ups:
Sharing things learnt with the **whole group** on a voluntary basis.
Individual reflection: for homework students can write imaginary or real stories about encouragement and its effects

6.2 Words of Encouragement – Discussion

Overview: students discuss the possible use of phrases of encouragement presented on the board

Goal: to make students think about the actual words that they could say or write to encourage somebody in a difficult situation

Age group: 10+

Instruction: Preferably sitting in a semi-circle with good view of the board, students are shown the situations and the sentences below, so that they can discuss their preferences and the possible usefulness of saying those expressions. The teacher reads out the sentence pointing to a situation which is an opportunity for encouragement, then students one by one (e.g. in the order they sit) read out the possible words of encouragement and say their opinion about it. If time permits, others can share their opinion too, or alternatively, they vote by raising their hands to show if they would use that sentence or not in the given situation.

Subjective remarks: If students sit in a semi-circle, it promotes open

discussion, and knowing when they are next to read out a sentence tends to lessen their anxiety. Of course the teacher should aim to maintain an encouraging atmosphere all through the activity.

Examples for presentation on the board:

Expressions you can use to <u>encourage</u> others:

„This is so difficult, I'm not sure I can do it!"
> You have done (something like) this before, you can do it again
> If others can do it, then you can do it too
> Failure and mistakes are natural along the road, we can learn from them
> Give it a try!
> Go for it!
> Why not?
> It's worth a shot.
> What are you waiting for?
> What do you have to lose?
> Just start doing it!
> It might be easier than it seems.
> Hang in there.
> Don't give up.
> Keep pushing.
> Keep fighting!
> Stay strong.
> Never give up.

„Which one should I choose?"
> I'll support you either way.
> I'm behind you 100%.
> It's totally up to you.
> It's your call.

Questions to ask to help the other see more clearly:
> What are you afraid of?
> Do you see the possible consequences clearly?
> What resources could you use to solve this problem?
> Who are the people that could help?

Encouraging and inspirational expressions in writing:

> Follow your dreams!
>
> Reach for the stars!
>
> Believe in yourself!
>
> The sky is the limit!

6.3 Café Courage for Good Friends

Overview: a "speed-date-style" role-play where students can practice being a supporting listener as well as communication as an encouraging, good friend

Goal: to learn more about emphatic listening and timely encouragement

Age group: 14+

Instruction:

1. As a lead-in the teacher asks the students:

   What does a good friend do when you have a problem?

   (Expected answers: e.g. listens to you, encourages you, helps you, gives you advice)

   Do we always want to hear advice or sometimes we just need someone who pays attention and encourages us without giving advice?

   (It might lead to an interesting conversation if we ask boys and girls separately, first just boys then just girls, and if there is a difference the group can talk about that too.)

2. The teacher says that it is time to practice how to be a good friend, but first everyone needs to think of a (not too serious) problem:

   Think of a real or imaginary situation where you would like to get some understanding and encouragement from a friend and write it down in a few lines!

3. Form two lines of chairs facing each other (one chair for each student). One line of students stays (not too closely) seated (as in a restaurant or café) and share their problems and the other line moves on one chair at a time in the style of "speed dates" and really listen to the problems

4. When everybody is seated and quiet, you can discuss how to be a good listener: *You really need to pay attention, looking in the other's eye, nodding, maybe giving supporting one-word reactions or showing empathy with your facial expressions; maybe sometimes ask questions to be able to imagine what the situation is like for the other, but never judge them, argue with them, talk about yourself or give advice.*

5. The teacher measures the time and rings a bell (or plays a chime or tune)

every 2-3 minutes (or more or less, depending on the time most students need) when the listeners say their emphatic and/or encouraging words and round off the conversation before moving on to the next chair (the last in line comes back to the first chair in line that became empty)

6. When everybody gets back to their original chair, they reverse roles and the ones who were moving stay sitting and sharing their problems while the others move.

Discussion: Depending on the time available, you can discuss the experience with the group or ask them to write about it for homework (*What did you like/dislike about the activity? What did you learn from it?*).

Subjective remarks:

- If you don't have an even number of students, you can join in (or ask a helper/other teacher to join).
- If you feel that the number of repeating the problem is too high to be effective and/or interesting, then you can create several smaller groups instead of dividing the group into only two. (For example in case of 20 students, you can make four groups of 5, when 10 students stay seated at a time, but in two groups, so they only repeat the problem 5 times (not 10).
- You might reduce the lights and/or allow eating and drinking while talking to make it more café-like.
- During the activity, pay attention to the average length of their interactions and try to find the ideal amount of time that is neither too long nor too short to explain the problem and then react.
- In the end you can say: *I encourage you to keep practicing to be able to become better at encouraging and being understanding!*
- You can share the following link, which is an animated short video illustrating Brené Brown's words about empathy:

  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Evwgu369Jw

- You can provide extra opportunity for expressing empathy and support (or gratitude) in writing. (Students can do it in class if there is some extra time left, or as homework: *Write encouraging (and/or thank you) messages to at least 3 people you talked to today!*

6.4 Assessing and Promoting Mindset

Overview: students are explained the difference between having a fixed or a growing mindset in order to favour positive achievement and personal growth

Goal: to reflect on the importance of self-induced reinforcement towards

positive growing mindset and to show how important words and thoughts are in modulating our reaction to the environment

Age group: 15-18

Instruction: Explain the difference between fixed and growth mindset. Ask students to work in groups and collect statements in two columns: in one they'll write fixed mindset statements, in the other they'll write growth mindset statements.

Discussion: At the end of the activity, the lists will be read aloud and students will make observations about their experiences and sensations.

Subjective remarks: It gives the students a sense of purpose, the idea that they are working on themselves.

6.5 Helping Hands

Overview: students are encouraged to use self-induced reinforcement and to help others in need of reinforcement with a simple craft activity

Goal: to reflect on the importance of self-induced reinforcement towards positive growing mindset and to show how important words and thoughts are in modulating our reaction to the environment

Age group: 15-18

Instruction: Explain the difference between fixed and growth mindset and collect some reinforcement statements to be used in different environments. Ask students to work in groups and decorate their partners' Helping Hands with sentences they'd like to hear from friends, teachers and parents in moments of difficulties. Each of them will then take home their Helping Hand to be set on the wall in their room.

Discussion: At the end of the activity, show the hands, make an exhibition, ask students to talk about their experiences and feelings.

Subjective remarks: It gives the students a sense of purpose, the idea that they are working on themselves. Alternatively, you can ask students to outline their hands on a piece of paper, then add the ideas.

POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT STATEMENTS

If I'm trying I'm doing enough

I can do it

I am my only limit

You can make it

Only if you don't try you can fail

With a bit of luck and patience I'll be able to do it

Give it a go and learn from your mistakes

You can always ask for help if you are not ready

I'm doing my best

If I keep trying I'll be good at it

There's still time to learn

If you do it, then you'll be proud of yourself

Stand up and go!

Stay calm and don't procrastinate

Pull yourself together and face the challenge

You've always been a good student, why are you afraid now?

If others can do it, you also can

I'll never be able to finish if I keep doing nothing

I must work hard if I want to achieve my dreams

In few days it will be over, let's give it a try

You must believe in yourself

You worked hard, you can't fail

A mistake doesn't define you

Try your best and see what happens

You are stronger/smarter than you think

You are capable of things you can even imagine

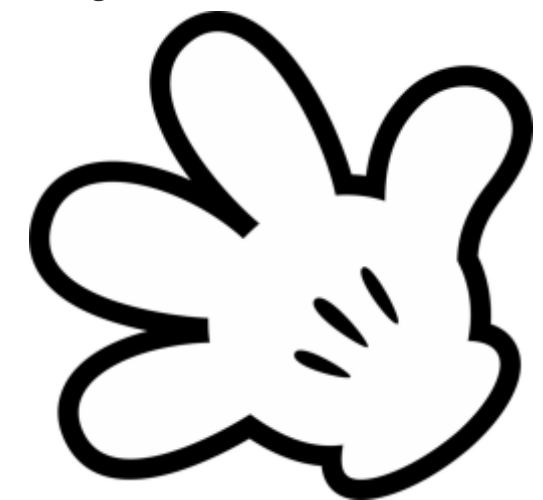*You are really close to it!*

It takes only a bit of effort

These aren't the real problems in life

Talent without effort is nothing

Struggling is a part of life

It's not the end of the world

Stay focused

Handout: Mickey Mouse's hand (4 fingers):

6.6   Brain Building Exercises

Overview: students are encouraged to understand the importance of nourishing our brain everyday with meaningful activities and exercises

Goal: to reflect on the importance of leading a healthy life in terms of sleep, exercise and diet and to encourage young people to engage in meaningful brain teasing activities

Age group: 15-18

Instruction: Explain the functioning of the brain and how neurons and synapsis are created.

Modern studies in neurogenesis and neuroplasticity have demonstrated than the number of neurons and of synapsis changes during our life: increasing during the formative years, decreasing during old age and bringing to cognitive degeneration.

As students often spend time and effort on body building, we want to encourage them to perform tasks and to have a lifestyle which encourages and enhances BRAIN BUILDING

To illustrate which are the activities that our brain needs to be healthy and active, you can say: *sleep 8 hours, have a good diet, refrain from smoke and drugs, do exercises regularly, walk, learn a foreign language, listen to and perform music, dance, do something creative, have meaningful social connections in person.*

Ask students to work in groups and perform simple brain teasing tasks like sudoku, crosswords, memory games, learning new words, performing a choreography.

Discussion: At the end of the activity, ask students to talk about their experiences and sensations.

Subjective remarks: It gives the students a sense of purpose, the idea that they are working to better themselves.

6.7 The Water Bottle Experiment with a Follow-up Activity

Overview: students are encouraged to visualize the effect of stress, fear and fatigue on their body and minds

Goal: to reflect on the importance of self-induced meditation and reinforcement towards a positive growing mindset

Age group: 15-18

Instruction: Give a group of students each a bottle of water weighting

approximately 500 grams. Ask students to say if they find the bottle heavy. They'll answer that it is not heavy.

Ask some students to keep the bottle up with their straight right arm in front of them for a period of time, which can be 10-15 minutes, while doing something else with the rest of the students. They must keep the position steadily for all the time needed. The students will say they are tired and that they can't hold the bottle any more.

Discussion: At the end of the activity, ask the students what similarities they can find between the effort of keeping the bottle up and their life

Tell the students the bottles were a metaphor for their difficulties, fears and everything that stresses them for long periods. Something that seems to be easy to handle at the beginning, may become too heavy a burden if it is not relieved in a short time. Students must learn to get rid of stressing situations and negative emotions before being overwhelmed by them.

Follow-up activity: Students are asked to write a short text about what they feel to be a heavy burden in their present life and giving reasons for that. For example:

I am very worried about my job. My colleagues don't help me at all, they seem to criticize me every day. I have too much to do and there is never enough time to finish everything calmly. I don't feel I'm able to tackle all these problems and I'm sure I'll quit my job and ruin my life.

When they have finished, ask them to turn all the present tenses in past tenses. Ask them how they would feel if all their present fears would turn into past experiences: e.g. *I was very worried about my job. My colleagues didn't help me at all, they seemed to criticize me…*

Subjective remarks: It gives the students a sense of purpose, the idea that they are working on themselves.

6.8 Bookmarks

Overview: in this an art and craft activity students are asked to create a motivational sentence or to find a motivational quotation from a famous author and write it on a specially crafted bookmark

Goal: to reflect on the importance of reinforcement towards positive growth mindset

Age group: 15-18

Instruction: Ask students to find a motivational sentences or to create some

themselves. Ask them to choose a picture they like and create self-made bookmarks to be given as gifts to friends.

They can either use some prepared pictures or choose the picture themselves and enrich it with the quotation they have chosen.

Discussion: At the end of the activity, ask the students why they chose a particular quotation and image and what they want to communicate with it.

Subjective remarks: It gives the students a sense of purpose, the idea that they are working on something that will make a person happy.

6.9 The Iceberg Illusion of Success

Overview: this activity helps use analyse the situation when people think that success does not take hard work and persistence but from experience we are aware that it takes much more than that

Goal: as all people see is the success of someone (the tip of the iceberg) but do not see all the stages of mistakes, persistence, failures, etc. (the lower half of the iceberg/under the water) that they go through to achieve the success which is the stages of a growth mindset, this activity helps us to delve deeper and to look at the past accomplishments with a sense of satisfaction

Age group: 13+

Instruction: Ask students to write their main accomplishments and achievements in the section at the top of the iceberg. This is the part that others will see once the task is finished. On the lines below the water's surface, students should then write the efforts, failures, sacrifices they experienced to complete/keep in mind to help them achieve the main goal.

Discussion: After completing the Iceberg task, volunteering students may show their completed iceberg and explain what they wrote and why. It is an effective way to get to appreciate ourselves more and our hard work and persistence. This activity may be used as a great reminder and source of motivation.

Subjective remarks: This activity can be worked out alone as an individual or it could also be a shared activity where students share their accomplishments and achievements. This activity created a lot of thinking and sharing of experiences between the participants. It was also a great way to get to know each other better.

6.10 Role-play of a conversation between friends highlighting fixed mindset versus growth mindset

Overview: a reflection assignment that ultimately helps students consolidate their understanding of fixed mindset and growth mindset, in this case, class discussion is used to showcase meaningful stories, explore connections between student experiences and mindset concepts and allow students to share how their thinking about learning has evolved

Goal: to explore social connections and reflections on one's own automatic negative thoughts

Age Group: 13+

Instructions: Students will create a scenario in which they pretend to be someone else. Someone might play the role of someone with a fixed mindset whilst another takes on the role of someone with a growth mindset. Together students will write a dialogue which will then be presented to their peers.

Discussion: Each of these situations allows them to explore different social skills activities. Personal reflection and storytelling are used to identify mindsets in practice. This introduces content about mindsets via a shared experience. Small-group discussions facilitate peer teaching about mindsets in action.

Subjective remarks: This easy-to-implement exercise can be used in any type of everyday scenarios, with any student. This exercise engages students cognitively and emotionally both as an individual and as a team.

6.11 Crumpled Reminder

Overview: crumpling a piece of paper with a mistake written on it, then picking it up to learn from it

Goal: for students to realize that making a mistake is also an opportunity for learning

Age group: 10+

Instruction:

1. *On a piece of paper write about a mistake you made this week or last week and how it made you feel!*
2. *Now crumple that piece of paper and throw it at the wall thinking of the feelings you experienced when you made that mistake!*
3. *Now pick it up, smooth it out, and colour each line of your writing, connecting them with one long line, in a colour that you like!*
4. *What do you think that line represents?*

5. *Presentation on brain activity:*

SYNAPTIC ACTIVITY: that line represents the synaptic activity that occurs in our brain when we are learning

NETWORKS: when synapses are working correctly, they allow your neurons to communicate with each other creating networks/ pathways. This is because of the plasticity of the brain which is constantly rewiring itself and modifying its connections.

WHAT ARE THE SYNAPSES? -Neurons are cells that make up our central nervous system and synapses are tiny connections between the neurons in our brains.

MAKING PATHS: Establishing neural connections between brain cells is the same as making paths: if you keep walking across a field many times on the same path, it will become wider, and more and more comfortable to walk on.

6. *So, now you can draw two brain cells* (show the picture of one) *at the ends of your long colourful line and then keep that paper where you can see it as a reminder of a moment of growth. Everybody make mistakes, and you can learn from them!*

Discussion: Students can share their feelings about the activity and reflect on what they have learnt from it. They can also share the mistakes, if they would like to, but it is voluntary.

Subjective remarks: Students can be puzzled when they have to pick up their papers again after feelings of "letting go of" the mistake written on it. You can explain that the consequences of our mistakes often stay with us, and even if we usually have negative feelings when we make mistakes, it doesn't mean that they are something that we should try to forget about.

If you do the activity with the whole class, before throwing the pieces of paper at a wall (or walls) at the same time, find a way to easily identify the crumpled papers from the outside (e.g. use colourful papers and/or initials, maybe envelopes), so that everyone can pick up their own to avoid the embarrassment of someone else reading about their mistakes. (You can also distance the students a little to achieve the same result.)

6.12 Super-achiever Toolkit

Overview: groups of students create a toolkit of techniques that can help to achieve a goal

Goal: to learn more about different techniques for higher achievement

Age group: 14+

Instruction:

1. Say: *Now we are going to create a super-achiever toolkit!*
2. Pick four volunteers who want to get that toolkit
3. The volunteers think of a difficulty or a specific goal they have
4. Form 4 groups of the other students
5. Each group chooses different techniques from the whole set provided for them on cards or pieces of papers that can help to achieve their volunteer's goal.
6. The volunteers are presented with the toolkit

Discussion: *Which tools do you like the best? Why?*

Subjective remarks: You can make the presentation of the toolkits a little formal while wishing good luck to the volunteers. Also, it is a nice touch to prepare a colourful/decorated bag or box for the pieces of papers with the tools on them.

The tools to be printed and cut:

Believe in yourself, in your own skills and abilities, and in your capacity for a positive change.	See failure as an opportunity to learn from your experiences and apply what you have learned next time around.	Cultivate your self-awareness: work on becoming more aware of your talents, strengths, and weaknesses.
Be curious and continue learning: try to adopt the attitude of a child, ask questions and truly listen to the answers.	Get friendly with challenges: know that if you mean to accomplish anything worthwhile, you will face many challenges on your journey: prepare yourself for facing these challenges, and for failing sometimes.	Do what you love and love what you do: it's much easier to succeed when you are passionate about what you're doing.
Be tenacious: it takes a lot of hard work to succeed, but it takes even more than working hard—you must be tenacious, weathering obstacles and getting back up after each time you fall.	Inspire and be inspired by others: it can be tempting to envy others when they succeed, especially if they go farther than you, but it will not help you to succeed: commit to being an inspiration to others and use the success of others to get inspiration as well.	Acknowledge and embrace your imperfections: don't hide from your weaknesses.

View challenges as opportunities for self-improvement.	Try different learning tactics and strategies: don't consider any strategies one-size-fits-all.	Replace the word "failing" with the word "learning" in your vocabulary.
Stop seeking approval for others, and prioritize learning over approval.	Value the learning process over the end result.	Emphasize learning well over learning quickly.
Redefine "genius" as hard work plus talent, rather than talent alone.	Give constructive criticism, and accept criticism of your own work if constructive.	Reflect on your learning regularly.
Reward hard work before talent or inherent ability.	Emphasize the relationship between learning and "brain training:" like any other muscle, the brain can be trained.	Abandon the idea of succeeding on talent alone: recognize that it will always take some work as well.
Use the phrase "not yet" more often, as in, "I haven't mastered it yet."	Learn from the mistakes that others make.	Make a new goal for every goal you accomplish: never stop striving towards your goals.
Take risks and be vulnerable with others.	Think realistically about how much time and effort your goal will take.	Take ownership of your own attitude, and take pride in your developing growth mindset.
Seek mentorship.	Avoid language that implies a fixed mindset about your abilities (e.g. "I've never been great at math.")	

Glossary

accomplishment

Feeling accomplished stems from striving for and achieving goals, mastering tasks, and maintaining self-motivation to complete what you've aimed for. This enhances wellbeing as individuals can reflect on their lives with a sense of fulfilment and pride. Accomplishment encompasses perseverance and a passion to attain goals. Thriving and wellbeing are fostered when accomplishment is linked to pursuing things driven by internal motivation or striving for improvement for its own sake.

achievement emotions

Achievement emotions are emotions that relate to activities or outcomes that are judged according to competence-related standards of quality. In the academic domain, achievement emotions can relate to academic activities like studying or taking exams and to the success and failure outcomes of these activities (Pekrun, Linnenbrink-Garcia, 2012, 262.)

broaden-and-build theory

Fredrickson (1998) argues that while negative emotions restrict our range of thoughts and actions, positive emotions expand these possibilities, allowing us to access a diverse range of cognitive and behavioural responses to emotional triggers. According to this perspective, positive emotions liberate us to engage in creativity, playfulness, curiosity, and experimentation, which in turn generate opportunities to acquire new physical, social, and intellectual assets.

bullying

Continuous acts of threatening and aggressive physical conduct or verbal harassment aimed at others, particularly those who are younger, smaller, weaker, or in a position of relative vulnerability and disadvantage. Cyberbullying refers to the use of electronic technologies such as cell phones, email, and text messaging to engage in threatening or harassing verbal behaviour.

character strength

A positive attribute, such as kindness, teamwork, or hope, esteemed for its moral significance and its role in enhancing the well-being of both oneself and others. Also referred to as human strength.

engagement

Student engagement refers to the level of attention, curiosity, interest, optimism,

and enthusiasm exhibited by students during their learning experiences, which directly correlates with their motivation to learn and progress academically. Fundamentally, the notion of "student engagement" asserts that learning is enhanced when students are actively curious, interested, or inspired, whereas it tends to suffer when they are bored, apathetic, disinterested, or otherwise disconnected. Strengthening or enhancing student engagement stands as a common instructional goal among educators.

However, in various contexts, student engagement may also encompass efforts by school leaders, educators, and other adults to involve students more actively in school governance and decision-making processes, in the development of programs and learning opportunities, or in the civic affairs of their community.

flow

Flow is a state of optimal experience resulting from deep engagement in a pleasurable activity, like participating in a sport, executing a musical piece, or crafting a creative work. It emerges when one's abilities are fully utilized and match the challenges of the task, intrinsic motivation is at its zenith, self-awareness and awareness of time fade away, and there is a feeling of control, effortlessness and undivided focus on the present moment. [proposed in 1990 by Hungarian-born U.S. psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1934–2021)]

goal setting

Goal setting is a process that defines clear, time-bound objectives for behaviour, ensuring they are measurable, achievable, and realistic. Its effectiveness hinges on the individuals involved understanding the desired outcomes and embracing the goals as their own, believing in their feasibility.

gratitude

Gratitude is the feeling of appreciation, thankfulness and joy upon receiving a gift, which can be a physical item (like a present or a favour) bestowed by someone or a stroke of good luck (such as a gorgeous day).

happiness

An emotion of joy, gladness, satisfaction, and well-being.

Locke's theory of goal-setting

The theory proposes that (a) specific goals are more effective in guiding activity compared to vague or general ones, (b) challenging goals lead to better performance than moderate or easy ones, and (c) short-term goals can be instrumental in achieving long-term objectives. Several mechanisms account for

the performance-enhancing effects of goal setting: (a) it focuses and directs activities, (b) it regulates the allocation of energy, (c) it bolsters persistence by sustaining effort until goals or subgoals are achieved, and (d) it can stimulate the development of new strategies to enhance performance. Effective goal setting relies on timely feedback indicating performance or progress relative to the goals. Acceptance of goals is essential for their effectiveness, and achieving them is facilitated by an action plan or strategy.

locus of control

Locus of control is a psychological concept that reflects individuals' beliefs regarding the extent of control they possess over the events and circumstances influencing their lives. In the realm of education, locus of control typically pertains to how students perceive the underlying causes of their academic successes or failures.

Students exhibiting an "internal locus of control" generally attribute their achievements or setbacks to the effort and dedication they invest in their academic pursuits. Conversely, students demonstrating an "external locus of control" tend to attribute their successes or failures to external factors beyond their influence, such as luck, destiny, environmental circumstances, injustice, bias, or perceived unfairness or incompetence on the part of teachers. For instance, individuals with an internal locus of control might attribute poor academic performance to insufficient study efforts, while those with an external locus of control might attribute the same outcome to an unjust teacher or an unfair test.

meaning

The quest for meaning and the desire for a sense of value and worth are inherent aspects of human nature. This pursuit entails feeling connected to something greater than oneself or fulfilling a larger purpose. Having a sense of purpose aids individuals in prioritizing what truly matters, particularly in times of considerable difficulty or adversity. The perception of meaning is shaped by personal values, and individuals who express a strong sense of purpose tend to experience greater life satisfaction, fewer health issues, and longer lifespans.

mindset

Mindset' refers to a state of mind that shapes individuals' thoughts and behaviors regarding their pursuit of goals, potentially influencing their ability to function optimally. The concept of mindset, pioneered by psychologist Carol Dweck and popularized in her book "Mindset: The New Psychology of Success," has gained traction in educational settings. According to Dweck, a mindset refers to an individual's self-perception or "self-theory." For instance, believing oneself

to be either "intelligent" or "unintelligent" illustrates a basic mindset. Furthermore, individuals may hold mindsets concerning various aspects of their personal or professional lives, such as "I'm an effective teacher" or "I'm an inadequate parent." Dweck suggests that individuals may be conscious or unconscious of their mindsets, yet these mindsets can significantly impact learning outcomes, skill development, interpersonal relationships, career achievements, and various other facets of life.

According to this perspective, individuals who have a growth mindset tend to perceive challenges and setbacks as chances for personal development and advancement, rather than as indications of inherent limitations. The growth mindset stands in contrast to a fixed mindset, which posits that intelligence and abilities are immutable traits that cannot be cultivated. Those with a fixed mindset typically shy away from challenges and interpret setbacks as reflections of their innate deficiencies. Conversely, proponents of a growth mindset actively embrace challenges and actively seek out opportunities for learning and self-improvement. Research in positive psychology has demonstrated that individuals who adopt a growth mindset, believing that their capabilities can be honed through diligence and perseverance, are more likely to attain their objectives and experience enhanced well-being.

motivation

The driving force behind behaviour, providing purpose or direction, operates within humans at both conscious and unconscious levels. Motives are commonly categorized into (a) physiological, primary, or organic motives, such as hunger, thirst, and the need for sleep; and (b) personal, social, or secondary motives, such as affiliation, competition, and individual interests and aspirations. It's crucial to differentiate between internal motivating factors and external stimuli, such as rewards or punishments, which can either encourage or discourage particular behaviours. Intrinsic motivation refers to the internal drive to engage in a specific activity, stemming from the enjoyment of the activity itself (e.g., genuine interest in a subject studied), rather than any external benefits that may be gained (e.g., money, course credits). Extrinsic motivation, on the other hand, involves external incentives to participate in a specific activity, particularly driven by the anticipation of reward or punishment (e.g., completing an undesirable task in exchange for payment).

positive emotion

An emotional response aimed at conveying positive feelings, such as happiness upon achieving a goal, relief after avoiding a threat, or contentment when one is pleased with the current situation.

positive feedback

Feedback loop is a system setup in a way that some of its output is routed back to amplify the impact of input signals. In human communication, it typically pertains to the acceptance, approval, affirmation or praise received by an individual in reaction to their actions or performance.

positive psychology

Positive psychology is a branch of psychological theory and research centred on exploring psychological states (such as contentment and joy), individual traits or character strengths (such as intimacy, integrity, altruism, and wisdom), and social structures that elevate subjective well-being and contribute to a fulfilling life experience.

positive youth development

Positive Youth Development (PYD) encompasses both a philosophy and a structured approach aimed at fostering the healthy, productive, and active growth of youth as they transition into adulthood. Central to the PYD framework is the notion that youth who possess a greater number of developmental assets are more likely to achieve academic success, experience improved economic opportunities, engage more actively in civic life, and maintain better long-term health. The PYD approach involves the active participation of youth, their families, communities, and/or governmental bodies, empowering youth to realize their fullest potential.

prevention

Behavioural, biological, or social interventions intended to reduce the likelihood of disorders, diseases, or social problems, affecting both individuals and entire populations. These interventions aim to proactively address risk factors and promote protective factors, ultimately enhancing overall well-being and minimizing the occurrence of adverse outcomes.

school culture

The term "school culture" typically encompasses the beliefs, perceptions, relationships, attitudes, and explicit or implicit guidelines that define and influence all aspects of a school's operations. It encompasses tangible elements such as the physical and emotional safety of students, the organization of classrooms and public areas, and the extent to which diversity is embraced and celebrated in terms of race, ethnicity, language, or culture.

Similar to broader societal culture, school culture emerges from both conscious and subconscious viewpoints, values, interactions, and behaviours, heavily

influenced by the unique context of each institution. Students, parents, educators, administrators, and other staff members collectively shape the culture of their school, along with external factors like the surrounding community, operational policies, and the founding principles upon which the school is established.

SMART goals

SMART goals are defined as follows:

S (Specific): They pinpoint a precise area of improvement or focus, directing efforts toward enhancing that particular aspect.

M (Measurable): The outcomes can be quantitatively assessed or qualitatively described, facilitating the monitoring of progress following plan implementation.

A (Attainable/Achievable): The goals are tailored to suit individuals and their capabilities, recognizing that a one-size-fits-all approach is not suitable. They are adaptable to varying circumstances.

R (Realistic): They are pragmatic and devised in a manner that is feasible to implement in real-world scenarios. SMART goals not only outline the plan but also aid in its execution.

T (Time-bound): Incorporating a time element adds precision to the goal, offering a timeframe for task completion and enhancing focus on achieving objectives within a specified period.

well-being

A state characterized by happiness, contentment, low levels distress, good physical and mental health, and a positive outlook on life, contributing to an overall high quality of life.

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