

HELPING DEVELOP A POSITIVE OUTLOOK

Aberdeenshire Council Educational Psychology Service May 2020



Being able to look for positives in life is one of the most important strengths for building resilience. Why? Taking a positive outlook can change tricky situations into ones we can manage by helping you see possibilities and opening your mind allowing you to build new skills. Although it is impossible to fully control life events, you can control your reactions to what happens. This attitude enables you to develop the strength to deal with life's challenges. When children develop a positive attitude early in life, positive thinking becomes a habit that can ease the pressures associated with growing up. Helping children develop this is best done within a caring relationship and is an

important part of self-regulation.

 [Refer to our leaflet on Self regulation](#)

Unfortunately, science says it is natural for people to dwell more on negative thoughts than on positive ones, and this can be even truer for children, whose inner voices can be more negative. Negativity is usually driven by feeling afraid, doubting yourself or feeling ashamed. These feelings produce stress chemicals in the brain. A negative attitude can shape how children see themselves and the world around them. However, trying to be happy all of the time is not possible or healthy. Children do not need to be pressured to avoid or dismiss negative emotions, rather to

accept these and process them in a healthy way.

 [Refer to leaflets on Emotion Coaching and Understanding and supporting Anger](#)

The brain can be trained to be more emotionally resilient and to respond to certain emotions in a healthier manner. You have a key role to play in helping your child change the balance toward the positive.

Positive psychology focuses on the positive events and influences in life, including happiness, joy, inspiration, and love.

Resilience:

The capacity to cope well in times of adversity or hardship.

The ability to bounce back from difficult times while retaining a positive sense of self.

Inside this leaflet

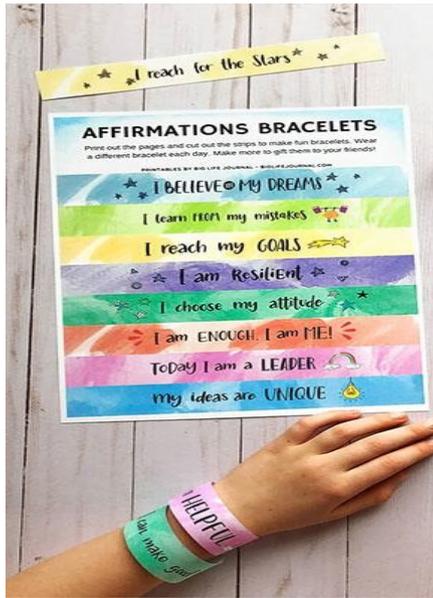
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What does the research say actually makes us happy?

What matters less?	What matters more?
Lots of money and things	Genes set your happiness range
Perfect health	Strength of relationships
More and more education/higher IQ	Work
Race/looks/gender	Extreme money problems
The weather	Strength of community/ friendship links
....these things just need to be good enough.... which is GREAT NEWS!!	Mental health to a degree

Positive Psychology

- Positive psychology is the study of positive emotions and positive character traits.
- It investigates what makes people flourish, that is, become happier, more contented to others and engaged in purposeful, meaningful activity.
- It was launched in 1998 by Martin Seligman.



What you can do

Count your blessings

Every day for 3 weeks write down 3 things which added to your wellbeing or happiness. 3 things which made you feel blessed, joyful, grateful, interested, hopeful, amused, inspired and loved. This has been proven by Seligman and other researchers to increase happiness.

Record Awe Moments

Encourage your child to record sights or moments from the day they found beautiful/extraordinary (kind act, a rainbow, smell of favourite food).

Practice positive affirmations

Help your child think about the things they say to themselves, make sure they are kind to themselves, (e.g. I am kind, I am enough, I am loving).



[Link to more information from Relax kids on positive affirmations](#)



What you can do

Looking for beauty in nature

Connecting with nature is healthy. Walks or visits to parks are great for well-being. Getting outdoors helps children feel calm and focused.

Help others

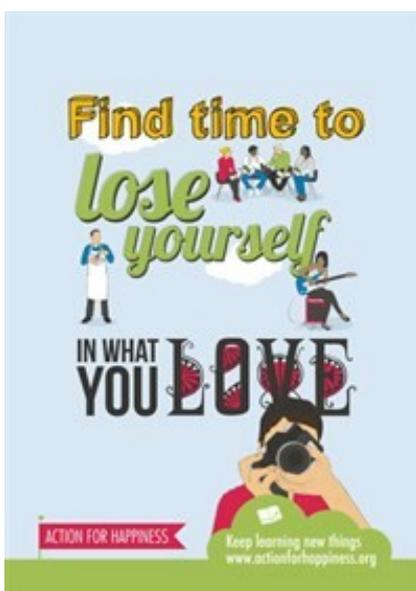
Make volunteering a family activity.

Have a laugh

Humour brightens our views and helps us connect with others. Children love being silly, join in with a funny voice or face. Enjoy jokes, funny stories, funny movies or music with them. Explain to children that just smiling and laughing can help shift your brain chemistry.

Be on the lookout for the bright side

Find the silver lining or the cup half full.



What you can do

Share positivity and affection

Hug your child, provide them with your **undivided attention** enjoy positive experiences together, use kind words, high fives, pats on the back.

Set and achieve goals

Positive things happen because of planning, problem solving and effort. Encourage your child to set goals, visualise these and plan for barriers.

Use **WOOP** - wish, outcome, obstacles (what could get in the way) and plan.

Be a strengths detective

What are your child's skills, likes and interests, what are they good at? Give them opportunities to use these and develop them to experience success. We all feel better when we get to use our strengths more often.



What you can do

Make a Wall of Love

As a family think of something you love about another family member, write or draw it on a post-it note and stick it on a wall.

Encourage a 'Can Do' attitude

Support them to try new, different activities, believe in themselves, learn from mistakes and step outside their comfort zones. Ask 'what is the worst that can happen here?' To help them overcome fears.

Talk about the best part of your day

At dinner or bedtime share stories about good parts of your day. This will create close relationships and a positive atmosphere in your home.



What you can do

Acts of kindness or kindness tokens

Do random acts of kindness for others, give your children tokens when you notice them being kind.

 [Link to short video on Acts of Kindness](#)

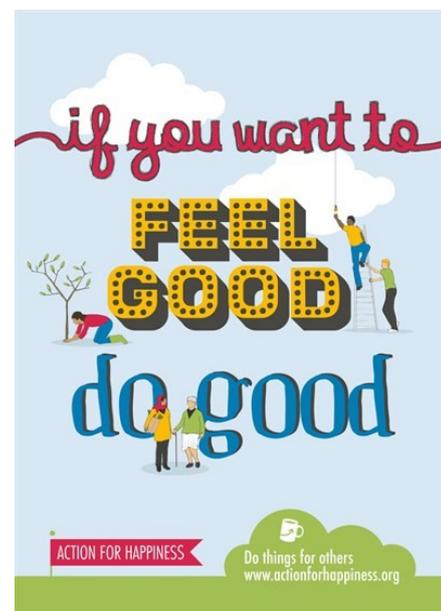
Help children become their best selves

When they imagine themselves at their best, their confidence increases. Show interest in them and the kind of young people they want to become. When they feel good about themselves, help them to hold onto these thoughts and feelings. (what feels good for them?) Tell them what you notice about them.

Help children to remain in the present

We can only really do one thing at a time, often we spend time going over the past or anticipating the future. Try mindfulness or breathing exercises.

Click [here](#) link to for some mindfulness for children.



What you can say

It is not what you say but HOW.....Research shows by slowing down your speech you will produce calm feelings and deepen your connection with your child. Good eye contact and a warm tone of voice send positive signals to the brain.

"It was a rainy day and our picnic was cancelled. So, we had an indoor picnic instead. The rain didn't stop our fun."

Say 'YES' whenever possible. If you cannot say 'yes' start a conversation on the topic e.g. if you were a mother, what would convince you to allow your daughter to stay up late?



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We value your feedback, please complete our short survey by scanning the QR code.



Pause for thought.....

A helpful thing to do to is to focus on what you can control, give this your energy and attention so that you can make a difference, and leave what you cannot. Knowing the difference between these things is key as focusing on what we can't control makes us less effective and potentially leads to the outcomes we fear.



Further information and resources

[Action for Happiness for everything happiness related](#)

[Big life journal, register for freebies, download booklets](#)

[Martin Seligman's website on Positive Psychology or to find out more about yourself, your happiness and strengths using free questionnaires](#)

[Fischy Music website offering songs and emotional support](#)

[Relax Kids](#)

[Positive thinking self-help website](#)

[Dr Hazel Harrison describes how to build resilience and positive outlook](#)



[BounceBack video 'What is Resilience](#)

[Action for Happiness video links](#)

[Vanessa King Tedx talk on 10 keys to happiness](#)



[The Optimistic Child \(2018\) by Martin Seligman](#)

[Ten Keys to Happier Living \(2016\) by Vanessa King](#)

[How Children Thrive \(2018\) by Mark Bertin](#)

Top tips on

how to improve your happiness

Based on Seligman's research evidence



- ♥ Exercise three times a week
- ♥ Count your blessings at the end of each day; ask yourself "What's been good?"
- ♥ Talk for one hour to partner, parent or close friend three times a week
- ♥ Grow a plant and keep it alive or care for a pet
- ♥ Cut TV viewing in half
- ♥ Phone a friend you have lost touch with
- ♥ Give yourself a treat regularly
- ♥ Spread kindness by doing a good turn often or thank someone
- ♥ Have regular outings to the great outdoors
- ♥ Do something with others e.g. join a choir/club/team
- ♥ Have a good laugh each day
- ♥ Smile, say Hello to a stranger daily
- ♥ Visit the countryside
- ♥ Identify what your character strengths are and find ways to use these more often