



Pearson

Boosting positive emotions

Tips & Activities for Wellbeing and Resilience

Most of us are living in conditions we would never have imagined a few months ago. In so many ways our lives have dramatically changed, with lockdowns and stay-at-home orders to slow the spread of the coronavirus. What can we do to help ourselves and our children to stay positive and resilient in such challenging times? The following tips and activities are designed to provide parents and teachers with some wellbeing tools for primary school-aged children during this global pandemic.

Boosting positive emotions

While it is normal for children to experience challenging emotions like anxiety, fear or frustration at this time, try to find ways to boost their positive emotions. Positive emotions help us to undo the negative effects of stress. Plan for activities that promote feeling connected and a sense of belonging, having fun, feeling grateful, joyful, energised, curious and/or excited. Children will feel better and then cope better.



Activities

Everyone has pleasant and unpleasant feelings

Younger children could make a paper plate puppet – on one side of the paper plate is a happy emoji face, on the other side a sad emoji face. Older children could make a range of different emoji masks. All can play, how would you feel if...

- You got soaking wet while playing or walking outside
- You won a prize for your drawing or writing
- You were playing your favourite game
- You got lost in the shopping centre
- Your best friend phoned you to play a game over the phone
- You fell over and hurt yourself
- Someone said you were stupid
- You broke your computer or tablet
- You found something you love that you thought you had lost
- Your friend said something mean to you
- Your grandma gave you a special present.

Talk about how everyone has pleasant feelings most of the time and that it's normal anytime, but especially during COVID-19 lockdown, to also experience some unpleasant feelings like feeling frustrated or sad. We naturally feel this because we can't go to school, visit our friends or other people in our lives that we would like to see, and can't do group sports or many other activities that take us outside the house. So we need to be the boss of our unpleasant feelings and learn to change our bad mood into a good mood.

Good mood hunt

The Good Mood Hunt by Hiawyn Oram and illustrated by Joanne Partis is a great picture book for shared reading (also available on YouTube). It's about Hannah who wakes up in an infectious happy mood and then remembers she has nothing for Show and Tell and her good mood disappears. As she looks for something to show her classmates, she discovers all kinds of things she had lost that make her happy. Although this book is for young children, the message is relevant for all ages – we can change a bad mood into a good mood by actively engaging in activities which boost positive emotions, so we cope better at this time of lockdown.

Go on your own Good mood hunt

Look around your home for 3 things that help you feel happy – it might be your favourite book, photo, drawing, soft toy or game. For older children what activities do you like doing best at home that help change a bad mood into a good one, such as reading, painting/drawing/craft, playing music, kicking a football, hitting a tennis ball against a wall, developing dance routines etc?

Make a happy cube

On each of the six sides draw and write about one thing that makes you happy. When you are feeling down, roll your cube to remind you of how to change your bad mood into a good mood.

Make a hand hopper

Use an outline of your child's hands and write down or ask each other eight questions about positive emotions representing each finger, such as what makes you calm, curious, proud, happy, excited, interested, surprised or grateful. Then write eight answers.

Boosting positive emotions challenge

How many of the following emotions can you feel over the next week? When we are feeling good, stop to notice how you are feeling – this makes your good feelings last longer and also helps you to better understand how to boost those positive feelings.

Keep a record over the week when you feel these positive feelings:

- What surprise news or good news excited you?
- What new thing did you learn that was difficult to do but you felt pleased when you finally 'got it'?
- What's one thing that made you laugh?
- Who makes you feel grateful and what did they do?
- What's one thing you did this week that really interested you?
- What's one thing you did this week that you are proud of?

Sing, move and groove time

Family or group singing and movement lifts everyone's mood. Take 5-10 minutes as a family or class for sing, move-and-groove time playing songs that are happy, inspiring, celebratory, joyous or just silly. I'm sure you will have your own family favourites but some suggestions are "Happy" (Pharrell Williams), "Don't Worry, Be Happy" (Bobby McFerrin); "Can't Stop the Feeling" (Justin Timberlake), "If You're Happy and You Know It", "Nutbush City Limits" (Ike and Tina Turner), "We Will Rock You" (Queen), "Good Vibrations" (The Beach Boys), "Funky Town (Lipps Inc), "The Macarena" (Los del Rio) or "The Hokey Pokey". There are some great songs, such as one family's hilarious lockdown-themed adaptation of a Les Miserables song.

Laughter is the best medicine

Currently there are lots of memes, cartoons, jokes, funny songs and video clips about COVID-19. One of my favourites is "If the schools are closed for too long, the parents are gonna find a vaccine before the scientists!" Discuss with older children why times of adversity like this always produce a range of jokes and cartoons. Seeing the small funny side of a bad situation helps us to cope better and also connects us with others.

Play the What if? game

Each member of the family takes turns to make up something that is downright silly and ridiculous like:

- What if your hair is made of spaghetti?
- What if the carpet was made of honey?
- What if a part of you was robotic?
- What if your bed turned into a rocket ship?
- What if your dog turned into a lion cub?
- What if you lived in a gingerbread house?
- What if you could walk on the ceiling?
- What if your sister or brother were made out of chips?
- What if a gummi bear was as big as you?

Older children could collect the best of the family's ideas to make them into an illustrated family book.

Feelings are contagious

Be aware of how much influence you have on the emotions and moods of those around you. Even though it can be a challenge, try to be calm. Also remember that everyone is trying to cope with their own anxiety and frustration at the moment, so be kind and understanding towards others (as well as yourself). Find time to exercise – walk, run, do yoga, Pilates or stretches, etc. One of my favourite apps for mindfulness is calm.com with a great daily 12-minute practice that has a new positive message each day.



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