



## Strategies to Support a Positive School Climate

# Hedonia and Life Satisfaction

Hedonia is the 'feel good' part of well-being associated with enjoyable experiences, feeling relaxed, or participating in exciting activities. Related to happiness, life satisfaction involves "a person's total assessment of the quality of his or her life" (McCabe et al., 2011). Life satisfaction is a key marker of well-being and is essential for positive youth development (Proctor et al., 2009).



### Why is it important?

- Students with higher levels of life satisfaction report greater academic performance, interpersonal relations, and intrapersonal functioning than those with low life satisfaction (Gilman & Huebner, 2006)
- Life satisfaction has a protective effect on student mental health which mitigates the negative effects of stressful events and experiences (Suldo & Huebner, 2004).
- Hedonic activities serve not only to increase feelings of pleasure and joy but also help restore focus and mitigate stress (Huta, 2015).

## In Practice

School leaders can attempt to foster happiness and life satisfaction by implementing intentional strategies designed to promote positive emotions, behaviours, and cognitions.



### What can schools do?

Positive psychology emphasises the positive aspects of life to reinforce the feelings that emerge when engaged in things that make people happiest.

- **Mindfulness training** is used to direct attention, counter intrusive thoughts and resist impulsive behaviours.
- **Character strengths-based approaches** emphasise awareness of personal strengths, (e.g., signature traits or characteristics) and how to use them in daily life to overcome adversity.
- **Gratitude exercises** celebrate a mindset of appreciation and thankfulness over dwelling on negative emotions and experiences.
- **Positive relationship interventions** encourage prosocial behaviours, such as kindness and altruism, to promote cooperation and enhance personal relationships.

Though there are a number of different positive psychology programs, the PERMA model and Positive Education Practices (PEP) framework are favoured within the school setting. Both offer a structured implementation process well-suited to schools and provide guidance on five foundational factors that, when embedded within a school culture, improve well-being (Waters, 2011).



## In the Classroom

Educators can enhance student happiness and life satisfaction by planning engaging lessons centred around collaborative experiences and implementing positive psychology principles in the classroom.

- Stress the importance of relationships, a key predictor of happiness, and provide opportunities for social connection in the classroom (e.g., small group work).
- Facilitate an understanding of one's emotions and their adaptive purpose by highlighting emotional parts of the curriculum and asking students to reflect on what feelings they evoke.
- Foster a sense of accomplishment and maintain student engagement by providing an appropriate level of challenge and scaffold as necessary.
- Teach students to practise reflection through self-talk and positive affirmations focusing on accomplishments and strengths of character.
- Encourage acts of kindness (e.g., thank you notes, offers to help a classmate, volunteering to clean up the classroom etc.).
- Promote gratitude by asking students to keep a reflective journal noting what they feel grateful for and/or what is going well in their lives (e.g., at home, school etc.).
- Incorporate mindfulness training in the classroom (e.g., breathing exercises) to help students remove distractions and be in the moment to appreciate and enjoy their experiences at school.
- Give students opportunities to participate in activities or assignments they find enjoyable and encourage them to savour how they feel in these moments (Huta, 2015).

## References

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