

Lesson Name:

Understanding the Happiness Research

Student Objectives:

- Learn the happiness research and why it matters.
- Reflect on the different aspects of happiness and the effect on their long-term happiness levels.
- Find hope in the 40 percent of happiness that they can achieve through thoughts, actions, and behaviors.

Educator Preparation:

- Chart paper or dry erase board and markers
- Journal Prompt

Introduction:

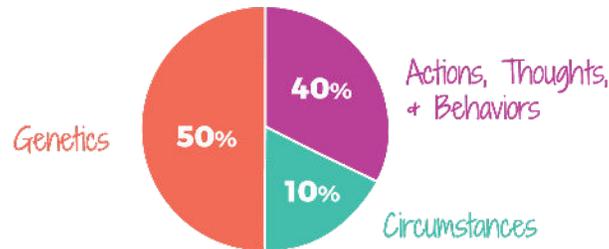
Today's lesson is going to be an introduction to happiness. What is happiness? How can we learn to be happier? How do we begin to feel more joy in our life? How do we begin to wake up excited to live each day?

Instruction:

We've all been told that if you work really hard, go to college, get a good job, and make lots of money, then someday you will be happy. Getting an education or learning a skill set is important, but we have been led to believe that if we drive a nice car, live in a really big home, have four wheelers, boats, and all kinds of toys, that then we will finally be happy.

The problem is this formula doesn't work. The old formula for happiness that we've all been led to believe is: "Pick a goal, accomplish something spectacular, get your degree, win a special award, makes lots of money and then you will finally be happy". But this formula is wrong! We know from the research that when you train your brain to be happy right now, you

then become more successful, but you have to put your happiness first. Happier people are actually more successful. So where does this happiness come from and how do we get more of it? Let me show you using a pie chart.



Here's the research. Fifty percent of your happiness is genetic, which means it comes from your mom or your dad, or a mixture of both. Some people are born in this world with a happy disposition. They're able to endure challenges and overcome obstacles and still really have a sunny, positive disposition to them. And then, there are other people who have to work really hard at happiness. It doesn't come naturally to them.

Now, here's the surprising part. Are you ready? Ten percent, and only ten percent, of your long-term happiness comes from your external circumstances. What do I mean by external circumstances? This means whether you're in a relationship or not, if you have a partner or not, what kind of home you live in, what kind of money your parents make, what kind of clothes you wear, etc. We are led to believe that people who have more money are happier. But the research is really strong that income above or certain point above poverty, shows no direct correlation to the amount of happiness they experience.

So if 50 percent of our long term happiness is genetic, and it comes from our mom, our dad, or a mixture of both, and ten percent is from our external circumstances like money and things and material wealth, then that leaves 40 percent of the pie chart left. Every single one of us has the ability to increase our happiness by up to 40 percent... Isn't that hopeful?

Interaction:

I want you to think about that for a moment. What are your thoughts about this pie chart? What are you thinking when you find out things such as what kind of job you have, what kind of degree you get, what kind of money you make, what kind of home you live in, and how much money your parents make have less than ten percent to do with your long term happiness? How does that feel?

So, what makes up this 40 percent? Your behaviors, actions, and thoughts make up the 40 percent. We know that there are five different areas that are proven to be the top five things that you can do to increase your happiness levels. They are gratitude, random acts of kindness, exercise, social connections, and meditation.

Closure:

So in today's lesson, we talked about the happiness research and why it matters. If you get your happiness levels up, you actually then begin to create success in your life because you have more energy and vitality. We also know that a positive brain is able to come up with better solutions than a negative brain. And so, when you start to create your happiness for yourself, it starts to change every other outcome in your life.

Activity:

I would like for you to fill out a few journal prompts about what you have learned today. Please see the attached Google Doc/PDF.