

Listening to and sharing own sources of happiness and the happiness of others (seniors)



Lesson plan

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Title of Activity: Listening to and sharing own sources of happiness and the happiness of others (seniors)	Subject area: philosophy, psychology, social issues and communication
Grade Level(s): end first grade and second grade	Duration: 1 hour

Learning objectives:

- Students engage in open and constructive dialogue about worldviews, inspiration, and meaning in life.
- Students reflect on their own identity.
- Students enter into dialogue about the relational, dynamic, and multiple nature of identity.
- Students discover how different forms of diversity are enriching and challenging for living together.
- Students interact with others in a respectful and constructive way, respecting each other's boundaries.
- Students generate creative ideas to solve a problem and discuss their feasibility based on given criteria.

Teaching Method:

Active learning: Students actively participate by doing, thinking, and discussing in a group conversation with seniors.

Teaching Techniques: Discussion and dialogue

Materials / Resources / Technology use:

Cookies and coffee, small whiteboards, post-its to stick names on the chest, markers in different colors, ballpoint pens, a whiteboard or large A3 paper for the wall, tape, a stuffed animal or doll to use as a talking stick, a personal photo or image/picture on paper that students and seniors bring that represents happiness for them (to be asked to prepare beforehand). An assessment sheet with questions at the end of the session.

Activity Description

Introduction:

Step 1:

As a teacher, find an organization where seniors (65+) are open to participating in a philosophical conversation with students.

This philosophical conversation can take place at the school or at the organization itself. It is nice to visit the organization (e.g., a retirement community) so that students can get to know the living environment.

You provide coffee and cookies and a large space with tables arranged in an oval. You ensure that the seniors feel welcome, both by you as the teacher and by the students. You put up large sheets of paper in the room or use a whiteboard for notes. Students and seniors sit mixed together. Everyone sticks a post-it with their name on their chest. Each participant introduces themselves to the whole group and, in an introductory round, shares their favorite character from a movie or series and explains why.



Step 2:

As a teacher, you explain that the goal today is to reflect on the theme of “happiness” and to learn from each other.

Each participant shares the photo/picture/image they brought and explains how it relates to happiness. The teacher writes down the descriptions of the examples on the board. The students’ examples are written in a different color than the seniors’ examples.

Step 3:

The teacher asks the participants (a mix of seniors and students) to form groups of four. Each group selects three photos that best represent the term “happiness.” The group also chooses three photos that relate more to the concept of “joyfulness.” They then discuss why these photos were chosen as truly representing “happiness.” What is typical or characteristic about them?

Step 4:

Each group then shares with the whole group why these photos truly represent “happiness.” Meanwhile, the teacher notes on the whiteboard or on a large sheet of paper the qualities or characteristics of the concept of happiness. The teacher also asks if there are any differences of opinion.

Step 4:

The teacher asks the whole group to arrange the photos in two rows, with the seniors’ examples at the top and the students’ examples at the bottom.

The teacher asks the groups to discuss the similarities as well as the differences between the seniors’ row and the students’ row of photos. They can also refer to the large board

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from the beginning, where the seniors' and students' examples are written in different colors. Each group then briefly shares with the whole group what similarities or possible differences in perspectives on happiness they noticed.

Note: The goal is for participants to observe that there are many similarities but also differences between people. These differences can be based on life experience or age. The teacher can ask whether, as people get older, the meaning of happiness changes. Seniors may notice changes due to aging, while younger participants may notice differences because of being in a different stage of life.

Step 5:

The teacher gives each group cards with the following statements about happiness. The goal is for the students and seniors to try to translate the meaning of each statement into their own words and share an example. They may also critique the statement and discuss their criticism within the group. Students can start first, with seniors responding or adding their perspective.

Note: The goal is for young and experienced participants to learn from each other's ideas and also bring in examples from the other's life world (e.g., illness or loneliness among seniors, or the impact of social media on young people, etc.).

Statement 1: You are happy when you listen to your mind/reason and not your heart (Epictetus)

Statement 2: Happiness lies in simple things and having no worries (Epicurus)

Statement 3: Happiness comes from doing what is good or right (Aristotle)

Statement 4: A person is never happy because they always compare themselves to others (Schopenhauer)

Statement 5: Being happy means accepting what you cannot change (Stoicism)

Closure:

The teacher asks each participant to write on an evaluation sheet what they learned today about happiness. Students note what wisdom or life experience they gained from the seniors, and seniors note what they take away from the experiences of the young people. The whole group then comes together to share and discuss their experiences in a round.



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Assessment

In the closure phase of the session, students complete the following sentences on an evaluation sheet:

- “Through this session, I learned something new from the seniors: happiness
.....”
- “Through this session, I learned something new from my classmates: happiness
.....”

After the lesson, participants write on an evaluation sheet:

- “Through this session, I learned something new from the young people: happiness
.....”
- “Through this session, I learned something new from the other seniors: happiness
.....”

Feedback form for teachers and students:

[Active Citizenship Compass Evaluating Learning activity - Formulier invullen](#)