

My Happy Place

This is the initial lesson in the Caring Unit. To start the conversation off right and reinforce the concept of respect from the previous unit, students will create “My Happy Place” collage boards for use when they feel upset or are struggling throughout the school day.

NOTE: This lesson would work very well in conjunction with your art time during specials. Consider asking your art teacher if he/she would like to collaborate! It’s a great way to show that you care about their academic focus as well.

Caring Sub-Concept(s)

Compassion, Kindness

Lesson Timeframe

45 minutes

Required Materials

- Various sizes of cardboard
- Glue sticks
- Scissors for each child
- Magazines or printed images from the internet
- Basic Art Supplies
- Glitter (optional)
- Modge Podge (optional)
- Scrap paper of varying textures (optional)
- Recycled Items (optional)

Standards Map

This lesson aligns with CASEL Competencies, National Health Education Standards, and Common Core State Standards. Please refer to the [Standards Map](#) for more information.

Lesson Objective

Students will:

- Create a personalized collage depicting images that inspire a feeling of happiness.
- Practice using coping skills when circumstances cause negative feelings.

Teacher Connection/Self-Care

In the first unit we talked about the importance of self-respect as a building block for respect within our world. This unit our focus is on Caring, which incorporates compassion, helpfulness, gratitude, and empathy. Caring is defined as feeling and showing concern for yourself and others. With this definition in mind, try to evaluate how you care for yourself.

Self-Care is a vital tool to ensure we have time to reboot. It is not selfish to provide time each day to just focus on YOU. What do you do just for you each day? If the answer is difficult to identify, brainstorm some ideas on how you can care for yourself daily. If you’ve already started this process, attempt to expand or deepen your self-care to include long term goals (such as working out or taking a fun class). If you don’t care for you, how can you expect to provide solid care for others?

Tips for Diverse Learners

- Assist a student with limited fine motor skills by cutting out pictures for them.
- Provide a variety of different sizes of cardboard for students to select from.
- Provide a finished product to assist with visualization.



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See last page for details.



Share

3 minutes

Have the students gather in your circle time or community area. Ask them to share one way they showed respect to a friend this week.

(Provide examples if necessary.)



Inspire

What is Caring?

5-7 minutes

Explain that caring is feeling and showing concern for others. This unit focuses on caring and expressing that in our classroom. We have already learned how respecting ourselves, our friends, and our space has helped us to feel safe and show kindness daily. Caring builds on this. When we are caring, our actions show kindness and others enjoy our company!

What is Self-Care?

5-7 minutes

Explain that self-care is when we take time to care for ourselves. This may sound silly, but if we don't take time to take care of ourselves, we aren't very good at caring for others. One way to practice self-care is to check your feelings often and have some tools to help you change your feelings when you are upset. We call these tools coping skills. When we use a coping skill it allows us to take some time away from the problem, clear our minds, and get back to feeling happy again!

- You may want to designate an area in your room that is quiet for students to use when practicing coping skills (your classroom library is one great option).



Empower

30 minutes

Today each person will create their own special "My Happy Place" collage using magazine pictures or printed images from the internet, art supplies, and cardboard. This is your very own board; no one can tell you what to put on it, how to make it, or even use it with you.

It is for you alone.

Step 1:

Each student will select a piece of cardboard for their collage. Make sure to offer different sizes as some students may feel overwhelmed by this task, while others will want more space. Write the student's name on the board and have him/her put glue and glitter over the letters to make them shiny. Note: If glitter is not possible/desired, have each student write his/her name on an index card and glue it in the center of the board.

Step 2:

While the glitter is drying, allow students to sort through magazines to find pictures that make them feel happy inside. To provide inspiration and clarity, show them your finished collage and explain why you chose your pictures. For example, “This dog makes me feel happy because it makes me think of my dog, Freckles, at home.” Students can cut out pictures, draw on pieces of paper, or even create happiness from textures and recycled items. There is no right or wrong answer as to what they put in their collages, as long as they can explain how the end result makes them feel happy. Have them glue all of their choices onto their board. Note: To help these boards last longer, consider painting them with Mod Podge or laminating them.

Step 3:

After all of the collages are finished, explain that students will use their “My Happy Place” board throughout the year to help them when they are feeling down or upset. Students can take out their board and discuss some of the pictures on it with the teacher or assistant when they are overwhelmed, frustrated, or even angry. This is a terrific way to show caring for ourselves. When we let negative feelings stay inside for too long, we are not showing kindness. Our attitude starts to change and it becomes more difficult to respect and show kindness to others because of all these yucky feelings. Using your “My Happy Place” board can help you to feel positive again quickly!

- Using your own board, demonstrate how to use the collage to change your feelings. One idea is to guide a person through an attitude change by pointing at several pictures and asking him/her how the pictures bring happiness.
- You will need to create a signal or plan for your students when they want/need this coping skill.
- You will also need to select a special location for students to store their boards.



Reflect

5-10 minutes

Have each student share 1-2 items from their collages with the class. Students do not have to show their entire boards if they do not want to. Emphasize that these boards are personal and some people may not feel completely comfortable sharing everything they put on it. Ask the following questions as students select certain pictures:

- How does that picture make you feel?
- Why did you put that picture on your board?
- Does that picture remind you of a person, place, thing, or fun time in your life?



Extension Ideas

- At Home Extension: Take a picture of each “Happy Place” collage and send it home with parents. Explain the activity and invite them to either make their own at home or use the picture during struggles with their children to decrease negative emotions.



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AS A RECOMMENDED
PROGRAM FOR SOCIAL
AND EMOTIONAL
LEARNING.

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) has been reviewing evidence-based SEL programs since 2003. Kindness in the Classroom® meets CASEL's SElect Program and is included in the CASEL Guide to Effective Social and Emotional Learning Programs.

Kindness in the Classroom® met or exceeded all of CASEL's criteria for high-quality SEL programming. Kindness in the Classroom® received CASEL's highest designation for high-quality SEL programming.

<https://casel.org/guide/kindness-in-the-classroom/>