Why is happiness and positivity so important to our health?

**STARTER:**

Emma didn’t want to get out of bed this morning, she felt down and tired. She had so many jobs to do – walk half an hour to the shops, take some books back to her friend’s house and then help out down the retirement home. Strangely, after her very busy day, Emma felt a real level of happiness and positivity.

• What do we mean by the term ‘positivity’? What has Emma done today that might have made her feel more positive?
• Why have these busy activities changed Emma’s mood? Explain your ideas in full.
• Analyse the difference between feeling ‘a little low’ and being depressed. Can we always help ourselves so simply?
Learning Outcomes:
Describe different ways we can help ourselves and others to improve our moods in a healthy way when we feel a little low.
Explain how certain activities can help to improve our moods and make us feel more positive as well as why these tips work.
Analyse the short and long term benefits of the different healthy ways we can improve our own and other people’s moods.

KEY WORDS:
Positivity – The practice of or tendency to be positive or optimistic in attitude.
Task One:
Watch and complete your choice of challenges on your sheet.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8KkKuTCFvzl

Challenging
1. What was the main thing that 80% of millennials said would make them happy?
2. How did the people doing the survey carry out their research? Name THREE things that the researchers did in order to get information.
3. What was the main thing that made people happy, according to the research?

More Challenging
1. Do you think that the research is reliable? Explain why or why not.
2. What, in your opinion, explains the findings of the researchers?
3. What are some of the ways of overcoming the barriers to maintaining good relationships? Name at least three, and list them in order of effectiveness, explaining your choice.

Mega Challenging
1. Why do you think that the study only followed the lives of men and why might this be problematic in terms of a) the research and b) the results?
2. What might explain the relationship between physical and emotional wellbeing, and is this the case for all people? Explain your answer fully, using examples
3. "There isn't time - so brief is life - for bickerings, apologies, heartburnings, callings to account. There is only time for loving - and but an instant, so to speak, for that." To what extent do you think that this quotation from Mark Twain exemplifies the researchers' findings? Explain your answer fully.
Task Two:
We will now find out more about why positivity and happiness is important and how we can help both ourselves and others to achieve more of a state of happiness when we’re feeling a little low.

POPCORN READING!
We will take it in turns to read. When you have finished reading a paragraph, say the name of the next person in the class you would like to read. Be ready, it could be you next!
You will then complete the next task at your challenge level.
Happiness and Positivity

What is happiness?

Happiness is the state of being happy – in other words, being content or pleased with your life, your situation, or the person that you are. It means having good feelings about the present, (and maybe the past or the future), and feeling that you are able to achieve what you want, or able to enjoy yourself.

Although happiness can be defined in general terms, it can also vary greatly from person to person, in terms of what brings them happiness. For example, for some people, happiness would be having a nice house, lots of money, or a really expensive car. These are all examples of material happiness – in other words, happiness that comes from possessing physical things. For other people, happiness would be having a loving partner, being really popular, or having great friends. These are all examples of emotional happiness, which comes from the relationships that a person is able to form. Yet again, for other people, happiness might mean doing really well at school, getting high grades, becoming a master at their particular hobby or interest, and getting a top job in their chosen field. This might be classed as professional happiness, because it's focused on achieving potential. For other people, happiness might mean seeing everybody in society doing well and being looked after. We might call this social happiness, as it's focused on the wellbeing of other people. Of course, there are many more types of happiness, and many people have a mix of all of these.
How do I become happy?

There are several things to think about carefully in order to answer this question. The first thing you need to think about is what makes you happy. As described above, there are many different types of happiness, and these are different for every person. You need to think about what is important to you, in order to be able to pursue the kind of goals that are going to make you happy. For example, if you value great relationships as a way of being happy, but you spend all your time working in order to get a competitive job that is going to take up all of your time, you may not end up particularly happy. Similarly, if money and material comforts are the most important to you, but you spend most of your time messing around with your friends and not really applying yourself to anything, you're not likely to end up achieving your happiness.
Another key thing to consider when looking to become truly happy is what you already have. This doesn't mean that you have to be grateful for everything in your life, but it does mean that you can acknowledge the things that are already good about your current situation. For example, you may have some good aspects of physical health, or you may have a special talent, or you may have benefited from a good role model, and so on. The more often you make the effort to notice the good things in your life, the easier it will become to spot them, which in turn will help you to feel more positive. Being aware of the good things about your current situation doesn't mean that you don't want to change anything. You can still be aware of what is less good and what you want to develop, whilst at the same time acknowledging what's working. In fact, taking a balanced view will help you to set appropriate goals.

This leads on to another important factor to consider, which is realism. You may think that the only thing that would make you happy is something that is completely impossible – for example, everybody living forever, or all diseases being completely eradicated from the Earth. If your happiness is aimed this high, then you will always be disappointed. Instead, it's important to be happy with smaller achievements and events, especially ones which lead towards your overall goal.
But how can I be happy when there is so much suffering in the world?

It's easy to take a pessimistic view of the world sometimes: the climate is in serious trouble thanks to human activity; there are wars in many parts of the world; social inequality is rising in many countries, and a host of other reasons to be miserable.

However, you may find it helpful to consider the following:

- you being miserable about these things won't stop them from happening or from getting worse, nor will it alone make them any better
- if you're not positive in your outlook then it's harder to find the energy to actively change things
- suffering is not the only thing happening in the world; there are many wonderful things happening all over the world too
- progress is being made in many areas as well as across history
- just because inequality and suffering exist, doesn't mean that you don't deserve to be happy
- you can feel sadness, pain and all the other negative emotions – but you can also have hope
What can I do to cultivate the habit of positivity?

Positivity can be exercised like a muscle, with some of these daily workouts:

- Keep a note of five different things you're grateful for every day for a month. Look back over what you've written in order to remind yourself of the good things you've got in your life. If five is too many – try one to begin with!

- Acknowledge good things in yourself and others. If someone's done something that you admire, respect, or are grateful for – tell them! Give yourself the same treatment too. This could be as simple as telling a friend, or just making a mental note to yourself that you've done well.

- Deal with problems as they arise (don't let things build up). Approach issues in a proactive way, being open and unafraid of conflict.

- Let go of blame, grudges, and anything that might keep you from being open and focused on enjoying the present.

- Get regular exercise. The endorphins released from exercise help you to feel good and to get a good night’s sleep.
Task Three: Exploring what makes us feel happy.

Challenge: Around your mind map write at least five things that make you feel happy or positive – it could be an activity, the name of a family member you talk to – anything that helps you smile.

More challenging: For each point explain why you think it is that this makes you feel more positive.

Mega challenge: Analyse how you could use the knowledge of what makes you happy to make others feel better if they’re feeling low.
Literacy Focus
Extended Plenary:

- a) “If it makes you happy, it can't be that bad.”
- OR:
- b) “Everybody has a different idea of happiness.”

- To what extent do you agree with this statement?

Learning Outcomes:
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