

## The Science of Happiness for Teachers and Students

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- Teachers need strategies to take control of their lives again because this profession is extremely difficult to survive in. Burnout, stress, and unhappiness can drown out the amazing things that happen in the classroom.
- There is more to life than surviving. We need to take control of our own well being.
  - Research shows that if you put your brain at positive rather than at negative, neutral or stressed that it is 31% more effective.
    - Therefore the harder we work doesn't mean that we are more productive.
    - If you put your well being in check and find happiness first then success happens on the other side of that formula.
- Critical that companies and schools take a look at their staff and realize that happiness can bring more productivity.
  - Working hard has become a badge of honor but we need to remember it is not always about how much can be produced in a day.
    - Play and laughter need need to be incorporated into the classroom and the workplace.
    - It takes courage to take care of our well being and personal life.
  - Minimum effective dosage: The amount that will be required to produce the desired outcome.
    - We need to be ok with simply being effective if our personal lives are being overrun. Take a permission slip to take care of your well being.
    - At some point it is diminishing returns to put in the extra time and effort and it is hurting our own life and relationships.
    - Consider the difference to our students between being highly effective vs. just effective and whether the benefits to our students match the effort that is being exerted.

On the science of happiness....

- Happiness research shows we all have a baseline that we are operating from. We can cause it to go up (buying a pair of shoes, tech gadget, new car) but over time it comes right back down to that operating baseline.
- Of your baseline, 50% is genetic and there is nothing you can do to change this.
- 10% of your happiness baseline is based on external circumstance. If it's more than that you are allowing external circumstance to impact you when it's really not necessary.
- This tells us that we have 40% control of our own happiness.

How do we help ourselves to love the life that we have?

- Value yourself. "If you cannot see your own value then the world will not be able to give you value back." ~ Kim Strobel
  - We are trained to take care of everyone else before we take care of ourselves.
  - We need to do more than keep our cups full. We need to be mindful to only give away only the excess so we aren't depleting from your own reserves because when we are depleted we can't do anything for our students (similar to the example of being on an airplane when it is stated to take your own oxygen mask first).
  - Social media magnifies the pressure of being everything to everyone.
  - Scale back and play more to reset the brain to positive. Play opens the mind and imagination.

How can we apply this in our classrooms? How do we show our students that we are happy and that they are cared about?

- Take time to play (kids and adults need it). Take brain breaks.
  - Book Recommendation: Silly Sports and Goofy Games by Spencer Kagan
  - Book Recommendation: Play: How it Shapes the Brain by Stuart Brown
- Power of gratitude. Scan your environment to find things to be grateful for to help reset the brain to positive.
  - The human brain has 50,000-70,000 thoughts a day and on average 80% are negative. 95% of the negative thoughts are on repeat throughout the day. We need to find ways to break this cycle.
  - Try starting a gratitude journal. Talk to your students about what they are grateful for (the average class can do this in 90 seconds).
  - Have a phrase or mantra that affirms your values that you can go back to throughout the day.

Give me six hours to chop down a tree and I will spend the first four sharpening the axe.

~Abraham Lincoln

- Inefficient tools waste energy. It's better to spend the majority of your time finding and cultivating the best tools for any task.
- We can't expect our bodies and minds to just keep on going and going even though we don't look after them. It's important that we take the time to do the things that set ourselves up to do the best work.

Carol Dweck, Stanford psychologist states that “the beliefs that you hold about yourself profoundly affect the way that you lead your life”.

- Words have power and energy.
  - Thoughts become words. Words become beliefs, Beliefs become actions.  
Actions become habits. Habits become what the world is mirroring back to us.
- We need to be mindful of the words that we are using with our students because our words also become their reality.
  - Have a classroom manifesto.
  - As teachers make sure that we are using really positive words and we need to be careful about labeling (even inadvertently) our students.