HAPPINESS

Leader's Guide for Ages 6-8

Dear Team Leader,

Thank you for your dedication to helping children learn and grow, and for supporting *On Our Sleeves* in its mission to provide free educational resources to every community in America. We are proud to have your organization as a member of the *On Our Sleeves* Alliance to help break the silence surrounding children's mental health.

This free *On Our Sleeves* educational program provides activities for children ages 6-8 that focus on happiness. Developed by the curriculum specialists at Young Minds Inspired in partnership with mental health professionals from *On Our Sleeves*, this program is designed to help children understand that happiness revolves around meaningful connections to others and to life experiences. This program also includes a take-home letter for families to reinforce these messages and promote greater awareness of social and emotional health.

We hope you will share this program with youth group leaders in your organization. And please take a moment to share your thoughts on this program at **ymiclassroom.com/feedback-oosalliance**. We look forward to your comments.

Sincerely,

The *On Our Sleeves* team

TARGET AUDIENCE

Children ages 6–8 and their families

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

- Promote the mental health and well-being of children by helping them better understand the pursuit of happiness.
- Help children identify and communicate the meaningful connections and experiences that make them feel happy.
- Encourage understanding that happiness is a choice, and how we determine happiness is up to us.
- Provide resources and tips for talking with children about mental health and wellness.

About the *On Our Sleeves* Alliance

The *On Our Sleeves* Alliance represents the diverse and powerful voices committed to breaking the silence surrounding children's mental health and taking action. The Alliance works together to share best practices and advance *On Our Sleeves*' mission to provide every community in America with access to free, evidence-informed resources necessary for breaking stigmas around children's mental health and educating families and advocates. Together, we empower the mental health and wellness of every child in America and support families. Learn more at **OnOurSleeves.org**.

How to Use This Program

Make copies of the activity sheet for your group and prepare any materials needed. The activity should take approximately two class sessions of 30 to 45 minutes. Have children share the completed activity sheet with their families, along with a copy of the take-home letter. You might also email the letter to parents/caregivers.

Materials Needed

Part 1: Four large poster boards or sheets of butcher paper, each with its own label as follows: Happy at Home, Happy at School, Happy at Play, Happy Alone.

Part 2: Copies of the activity sheet, pencils, markers, scissors, and glue, as well an assortment of simple collage materials, including cutouts of images or photos the children bring from home.

That Makes Me Smile! Activity Sheet

- **Part 1:** Write the word HAPPY on the board or on chart paper in acrostic format. Ask the children to share what they think happiness looks like, feels like, and sounds like. Then guide children to complete a poem or word puzzle for this word by naming things that make them feel happy for each letter of the word (e.g., home, applesauce, etc.). Complete the acrostic using their suggestions.

  Next, ask the children to identify things that make them happy in the following categories: Happy at Home, Happy at School, Happy at Play and Happy Alone. Organize the children into four groups and give each group one of the categories and butcher paper to create a mural by decorating the paper with drawings and words of things that make them happy. Have groups share their work when done, and then display the completed posters.

  Explain that, as their ideas and mural work shows, happiness isn't about any one thing, but about feeling connected to and good about the special people, places, and experiences in their lives, as well as the children's own unique strengths and interests. Add that thinking about the things that make us happy can help make us happy. The more we think about those things, especially when we feel down, the more we can boost our mood.

- **Part 2:** Distribute the activity sheet and review the directions with the children. Remind them that feeling connected and good about the special people in our life and things we like to do, can make us happy. Once done with their drawings, suggest that the children take their drawings home, share them with their families, and then put them somewhere special in their rooms where they can see them. Then, instead of holding on to a sad feeling about a bad day, they can look at their drawings and make a choice to think about or do some of the things that make them happy!

Extension Activity: Have the children create a "Happiness Is . . ." wall display featuring words and images of things that make them happy. Children may add to the ideas wall on an on-going basis.

Resources

- ***On Our Sleeves:*** **OnOurSleeves.org**
- ***On Our Sleeves—7 Ways to Cultivate Happiness:*** **OnOurSleeves.org/mental-wellness-tools-guides/helping-kids-stay-positive/cultivate-happiness**
- ***YMI microsite:*** **ymiclassroom.com/oosalliance**

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YMI YOUNG MINDS INSPIRED

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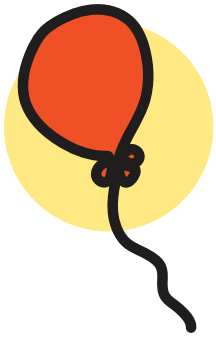
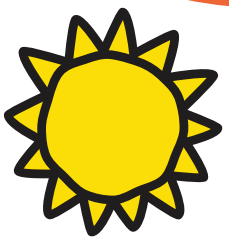
Name _____

THAT MAKES ME SMILE!

Think about your favorite things that make you happy. Think about people who make you happy. Think about things you like to do. Think about things that make you feel good inside and out.

Draw a picture of yourself inside the circle. Then draw pictures or write words for things that make YOU happy in the small circles.





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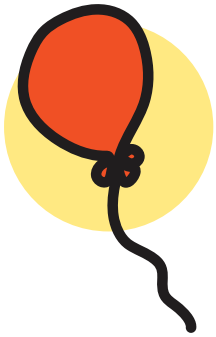
ON OUR SLEEVES®
The Movement for Children's Mental Health

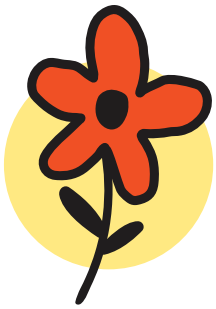
Nombre _____

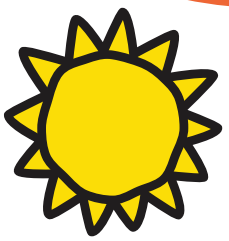
¡ESO ME HACE SONREÍR!

Piensa en tus cosas favoritas que te hacen feliz. Piensa en las personas que te hacen feliz. Piensa en las cosas que te gustan hacer. Piensa en las cosas que te hacen sentir bien por dentro y por fuera.

Dibuja una imagen de ti mismo dentro del círculo. Luego haz dibujos o escribe palabras de cosas que te hagan feliz en los círculos pequeños.







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ON OUR SLEEVES®
The Movement for Children's Mental Health

Dear Parents & Caregivers,

Mental health professionals from *On Our Sleeves*, the movement for children's mental health, have teamed up with the curriculum specialists at Young Minds Inspired to create activities for schools and youth organizations to support children's mental health and social and emotional development. This includes encouraging children and families to make positive choices to promote overall health. Your child's organization is a member of the *On Our Sleeves* Alliance to help break the silence around children's mental health.

Your child has been learning about happiness, something all parents want for their children. Happiness is more than just one thing or an isolated moment. Focusing on happiness is a skill that takes practice.

What Is Happiness?

Meaningful connections to others and to events, activities, accomplishments, and places in our lives bring us happiness. Long-term happiness, the kind you want for your child, is built through the habit of consciously choosing to think of and even engage with those connections often, but especially when we're going through a difficult time.

Focusing on happiness can foster a cycle that promotes health and well-being. Research shows that there are physical benefits to happiness, too. Happiness:

- Builds a stronger immune system.
- Allows one to experience fewer aches and pains.
- Improves educational outcomes.
- Improves sleep.
- Improves life expectancy.

Tips for Helping Your Child Build the Happiness Habit

1. Talk about feelings and moods together. Being aware of and processing emotions, especially emotions like anger or sadness that can bring on bad moods, is key to promoting happiness and overall emotional health.
2. Encourage happiness strategies such as: thinking about the people and things that make you happy, practicing positive self-talk or gratitude, appreciating the small and simple moments, and promoting optimism. Recalling simple things that bring us happiness can help us feel better in difficult moments.
3. Practice physical self-management routines that support happiness. These routines include eating healthy, exercising regularly and practicing mindfulness, or taking moments to stop, pause, breathe deeply and notice the little things around you that you might otherwise take for granted.
4. Work toward a growth mindset. Often children get stuck feeling sad, angry, or frustrated when something doesn't go as planned or they feel they have failed. Help them flip their thinking and respond with, "You just haven't built up that skill YET," or, "With more practice and time, you will get better at it."
5. Encourage building meaningful relationships with others, including extended family members, neighbors, and school friends.

Let the Happiness Begin!

Try some of these ideas to help bring more happiness into your child's life.

- Create a family collage using photos, cards, words, and images of things and people that make your family happy. Display the collage on the refrigerator or in some other central location of your home.
- Create a family playlist of happy songs. Listen to the playlist in the car on the way to school or during other events.
- Make a Happiness Jar. Place an empty jar or container on the kitchen counter, along with paper and a pencil. Have each family member write down one thing that made them happy for each day of the week. At the end of the week, remove the papers from the jar and read them out loud while your happiness playlist as your soundtrack!

For more ideas and information on how to help your child learn more about practicing happiness and its positive impact on mental health, visit **OnOurSleeves.org**.

Sincerely,
The *On Our Sleeves* team

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YMI YOUNG MINDS INSPIRED
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Estimados padres y cuidadores:

Los profesionales de salud mental de *On Our Sleeves*, el movimiento para la salud mental de los niños, se han unido a los especialistas en planes de estudio de Young Minds Inspired con el propósito de crear actividades para escuelas y organizaciones juveniles a fin de apoyar la salud mental y el desarrollo social y emocional de los niños. Esto incluye alentar a los niños y a las familias a hacer elecciones positivas para promover la salud en general. La organización de su hijo(a) es miembro de la alianza *On Our Sleeves* Alliance cuyo fin es ayudar a romper el silencio en torno a la salud mental de los niños.

Su hijo ha estado aprendiendo sobre la felicidad, algo que todos los padres quieren para sus hijos. La felicidad es más que una cosa o un momento aislado. Centrarse en la felicidad es una habilidad que requiere práctica.

¿Qué es la felicidad?

Las conexiones significativas con otros y con eventos, actividades, logros y lugares en nuestra vida nos dan felicidad. La felicidad a largo plazo, el tipo de felicidad que desea para su hijo, se construye con el hábito de elegir conscientemente pensar e incluso interactuar con esas conexiones a menudo, pero especialmente cuando estamos atravesando un momento difícil.

Centrarse en la felicidad puede fomentar un ciclo que promueve la salud y el bienestar. Las investigaciones demuestran que la felicidad también tiene beneficios físicos. La felicidad:

- Fortalece el sistema inmunitario.
- Permite experimentar menos dolores.
- Mejora los resultados educativos.
- Mejora la calidad del sueño.
- Mejora la esperanza de vida.

Consejos para ayudar a su hijo a crear el hábito de la felicidad

1. Hablen juntos sobre sentimientos y estados de ánimo. Ser consciente y procesar las emociones, especialmente las emociones como la ira o la tristeza que pueden provocar mal humor, es clave para promover la felicidad y la salud emocional en general.
2. Fomente estrategias de felicidad como: pensar en las personas y las cosas que te hacen feliz, practicar el diálogo positivo o la gratitud, apreciar los momentos pequeños y sencillos y promover el optimismo. Pensar en cosas sencillas que nos dan felicidad puede ayudarnos a sentirnos mejor en momentos difíciles.
3. Practiquen rutinas físicas de autocontrol que favorezcan la felicidad. Estas rutinas incluyen comer de manera saludable, hacer ejercicio regularmente y practicar el mindfulness, o tomarse momentos para detenerse, hacer un alto, respirar hondo y observar las pequeñas cosas a nuestro alrededor que de otra manera podríamos dar por sentadas.
4. Trabaje para conseguir una mentalidad de crecimiento. A menudo, los niños se quedan atrapados sintiéndose tristes, enojados o frustrados cuando algo no sale según lo planeado o cuando sienten que han fallado. Ayúdelos a cambiar su forma de pensar y responda con: “Simplemente todavía no has desarrollado esa habilidad” o “Con más práctica y tiempo, lo harás mejor”.
5. Promueva la construcción de relaciones significativas con otras personas, incluidos familiares lejanos, vecinos y amigos de la escuela.

¡Que comience la felicidad!

Pruebe algunas de estas ideas para ayudar a llevar más felicidad a la vida de su hijo.

- Cree un collage familiar con fotos, tarjetas, palabras e imágenes de cosas y personas que hagan feliz a su familia. Coloque el collage en el refrigerador o en algún otro lugar central de su casa.
- Crea una playlist familiar con canciones felices. Escuche la playlist en el auto de camino a la escuela o en otras ocasiones.
- Haga un Tarro de la felicidad. Coloque un frasco o recipiente vacío en la encimera de la cocina, junto con papel y un lápiz. Haga que cada día de la semana todos los miembros de la familia escriban algo que los haga felices. Al final de la semana, saque los papeles del frasco y léalos en voz alta con la playlist de la felicidad de fondo.

Para obtener más ideas e información sobre cómo ayudar a su hijo a aprender más sobre practicar la felicidad y su impacto positivo en la salud mental, visite **OnOurSleeves.org**.

Atentamente,
El equipo de *On Our Sleeves*

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