livehappy®

ACTIVITY GUIDE

CREATED IN COLLABORATION WITH HERO GENERATION

Lessons for a Life of Happiness

The distance between dreams and reality is called action.

LIVE HAPPY's mission is to make your world a happier place. We are dedicated to promoting and sharing authentic happiness, inspiring people to live purpose-filled, healthy, meaningful lives. We're a magazine, podcast, website, resource and movement about a timeless quest: Living a happy life.

HERO *Generation*

HERO Generation is on a mission to improve students, staff and parent well-being and demonstrate that higher social-emotional skills contribute to improved personal and academic well-being. We believe that this improved overall experience will spill over into students' homes and beyond. Plasticity Labs founded the concept in 2012, with a belief that certain social-emotional traits have a higher propensity to increase happiness and performance. They are: Hope, Efficacy, Resilience, Optimism, Gratitude, Empathy and Mindfulness (HERO Traits™).

GRATITUDE

WE SIFTED THROUGH *LIVE HAPPY* MAGAZINE, identifying the most practical ways to go from reading about happiness to living happy. From expressing gratitude and discovering your character strengths to finding more energy, tackling a problem and spreading happiness, this guide will offer reflections and activities you can do alone, with a teacher or mentor, or share with family and friends.

GRATITUDE is about noticing, acknowledging and appreciating the good things in your life.

QUALITY OVER QUANTITY. We recommend that you partner up with a trusted adult and spend 10–20 minutes a day doing the activities in this guide.

Putting the You in Thank You.

In "The Power of Thank You," page 2 of the *Live Happy Companion Articles* PDF, Paula Felps asks the question, Could practicing gratitude help us live longer? Research shows that experiencing gratitude has immediate benefits. Learning to harness this power and becoming more intentional about it can improve our relationships and bolster our own health and happiness. Research also found that various methods of expressing gratitude (journaling, writing a letter, counting blessings and gratitude visits) all had a powerful effect, with the journal being the most effective. **Start a gratitude journal! Write down 3 to 5 things you are grateful for every day and explain why each one makes you grateful. Do this for a week.** Then a month. How does it affect your outlook on life, your feelings and your relationships?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

PHOTOGRAPH: ©BENJO ARWAS; PENCIL: ©PIXEL EMBARGO/SHUTTERSTOCK

SHARE A PICTURE OF HAPPINESS.

In "Drawing Happiness," page 5 of the *Live Happy Companion Articles* PDF, Janne Willems shows us that simple ideas can make a big difference and good things can happen from bad experiences. After her mother passed away, Janne invited other people to participate in a happy habit she developed in college. Her prompt was simple: "Just draw a picture of what has made you happy in the last few days." Janne has traveled to more than 30 countries collecting people's stories and sharing them on her website seizeyourmoments.com. **Take a few minutes to draw a picture of something that has made you happy in the last few days.** Then invite some of your friends and family members to do the same and see what observations you can make. Do the drawings have anything in common? What were people's reactions when you asked them to participate?

Channel Your Inner Star.

In an interview with actress Gianna Simone on page 6 of the *Live Happy Companion Articles* PDF, she explains that the way she lives happy is through gratitude. "I wake up every day, and I am thankful—sometimes over a toothbrush. I am thankful to the extreme. If we're not [thankful], we're missing out on so much, including being happy and content." How about you? Channel your inner star and **make a list of all the things—big and small—you are thankful for.** Start with your toothbrush and see how many more items you can add to this list of gratitude. (Suggestion: Set a timer for five minutes.) Compare and discuss your lists.

SHARE POSITIVE FEEDBACK.

In Tom Rath's "Be 80 Percent Positive," page 7 of the *Live Happy Companion Articles* PDF, he tells us that "positive words, whether spoken or written, are the glue that holds relationships together." Strengthen one of the relationships in your life by writing a short note to someone you are grateful for. You might choose a friend who stuck up for you, a teacher who went out of the way to help, the neighbor who feeds your dogs when you're gone or a family member you know you can depend on. Taking time to mindfully express optimistic and grateful thoughts benefits both the giver and receiver of the thank-you note. **Use the template on the back of this activity guide to write and decorate your note.** Then decide how and when you

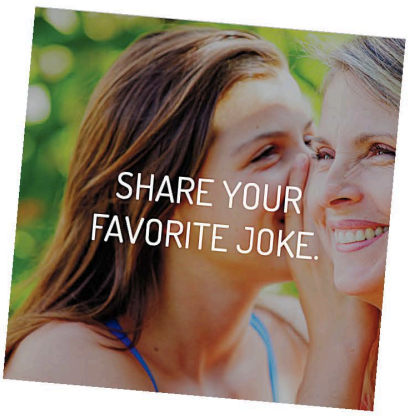
happy

excited

grateful

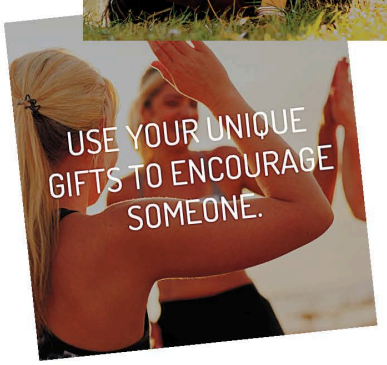
EMPATHY

EMPATHY is correctly identifying and responding to other people's emotions, thoughts, wants and needs. It means we put ourselves in another person's shoes.



Do Happy Acts.

Do Happy Acts. Live Happy has a campaign for performing small actions that make someone's day a little brighter. In doing #HappyActs for others, you not only feel better about yourself, but you are better in tune with the emotions of others. What acts of kindness could you perform for those around you? Discuss and list your ideas below. Pick one thing to do for a friend, a family member, a teacher and a neighbor.



How did you make that person feel?

How did you feel?

Learn more about **Live Happy's March #HappyActs campaign at happyacts.org.**

PRACTICE THE GOLDEN-GOLDEN RULE.

Don't just treat others the way YOU want to be treated, instead treat them the way THEY want to be treated. Ask them what would be the best way to help them out? Do they want advice? Would they like you to just listen? Would they want you to make them laugh? Listen. Learn. Apply. Repeat.

GIVE TIME.

In "Teaching Kids to Give Back," page 8 of the *Live Happy Companion Articles* PDF, Joanne Kuster writes that teaching about helping others can change lives forever. Charitable acts do not have to cost money to make a difference. Frequently, time is more important. Think of all the people or places in your area that could use some help, such as walking dogs at the animal shelter or visiting an assisted living facility. **Write down three ways you can donate your time to helping others:**

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Now, make it happen.

WEAR SOMEONE ELSE'S SHOES.

Think of someone you recently had a conflict with. Was someone mean? Was a teacher hard on you? Did you argue with a family member? Now, draw a picture of yourself with that person's shoes on. **Imagine walking around in that person's shoes and what life must be like.** Where do they go? How do they walk? Once we start to understand each other, we are much more likely to relate to each other. Practice creating empathetic moments by stepping into the life of someone else.

ILLUSTRATION FROM LEFT: ©OLGA GOLD/SHUTTERSTOCK; ©RVECTOR/SHUTTERSTOCK

MINDFULNESS

MINDFULNESS is being aware of what's happening in your body and around you (your thoughts, emotions or experiences in each moment).

WALK IN NATURE.

Read "Naturally Happy," by Paula Felps, page 12 of the *Live Happy Companion Articles* PDF. Studies show that walking in nature positively contributes to self-esteem as well as lowering stress. (Even viewing pictures of natural scenery can have calming effects.) **Take a 15- to 30-minute walk five days in a week to see how it boosts your mood.** Take the time to absorb the moment and how your body is feeling, what sights you are seeing, the smells and sounds you are experiencing. Be sure to breathe in the fresh air and savor the moment. Before going to bed, track your mood by coloring the box below with one of the five designated colors. Compare that to a week when you don't walk five times.

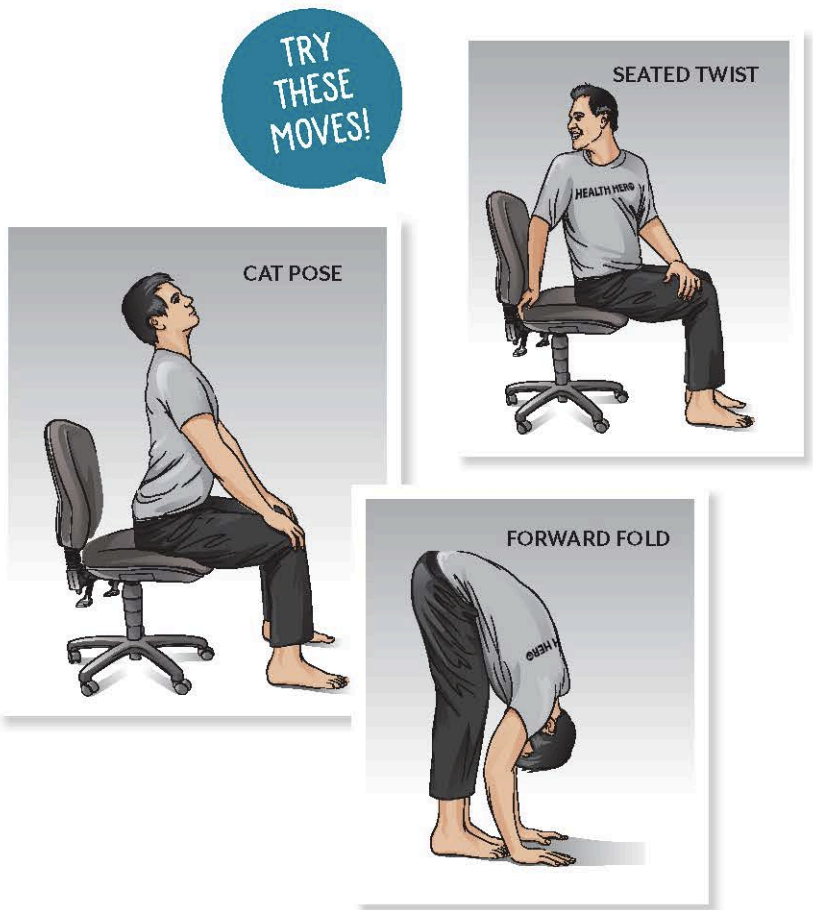
Walked

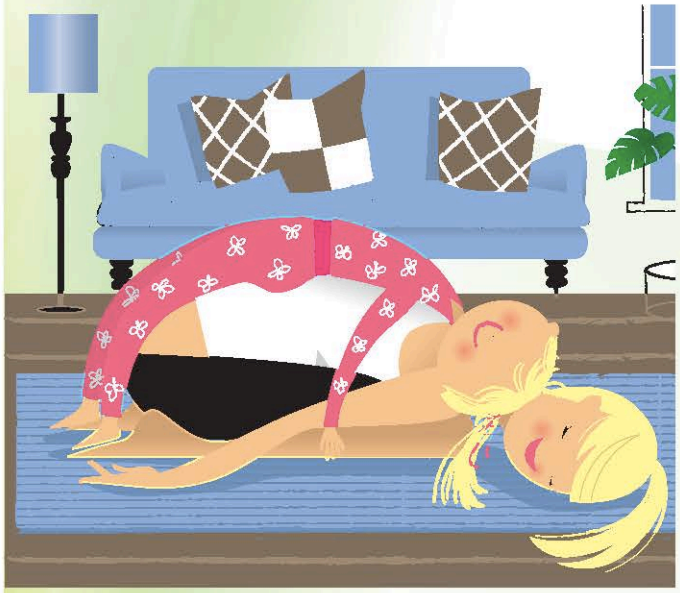
Didn't Walk

YELLOW = Happy
ORANGE = Somewhat Happy
RED = Neutral
GREEN = Somewhat Sad
BLUE = Sad

Strike a Pose.

Dr. Partha Nandi suggests that regular yoga practice can help you strengthen your body and your mind. Some of the health benefits include lower blood pressure, better cardiovascular health and lower stress. It's good for your muscles, too. Read his article "The Power of Yoga," page 14 of the *Live Happy Companion Articles* PDF, for yoga poses you can do anywhere. Learn the three poses over the coming week, and teach them to your family so you can practice together. Talk about how it makes you feel before, during and after the exercise.





BREATHE.

Read "Mindful Moment" by Sandra Bienkowski, page 11 of the *Live Happy Companion Articles* PDF. Susan Verde, a certified children's yoga instructor, believes the mindfulness of parent-child yoga can strengthen family connections. Mindfulness helps with self-regulation, helping you calm down when you are sad, frustrated or dealing with a difficult emotion. Find a comfortable space to sit with your back straight. Next, with a big belly breath, inhale for 7 seconds, hold for 4 seconds and exhale for 8 seconds. Try this when you next start to feel angry, stressed or frustrated —notice what difference it makes.

Extra: Listen to the *Live Happy Now* podcast interview with Ali Smith, from the Holistic Life Foundation, about how mindfulness can help build compassion, empathy and love as well as self-awareness.

BE IN TUNE WITH YOUR ENERGY LEVEL.

In his article "A New Energy You," page 9 of the *Live Happy Companion Articles* PDF, Joseph Cardillo, Ph.D., recommends increasing our energy by having easy access to two things: (1) a photo of something in nature that relaxes us and (2) a fast-paced song that makes our energy soar. **Find a picture in a magazine or online that relaxes you and attach it in the space below. Next to it, write the title of a song that boosts your energy.** Discuss your choices. Being mindful of how these things make you feel can create useful habits and behaviors to guide you when you are faced with challenges.

ILLUSTRATION ©NILA AYE

HOPE

HOPE is knowing there is a way to reach your goals, believing that you will get there and looking at the different paths that will get you there.

WRITE YOURSELF A HOPE LETTER.

In "Quit Wishing," page 20 of the *Live Happy Companion Articles* PDF, Margaret H. Greenberg and Senia Maymin, Ph.D., suggest writing a letter of hope to yourself. On a piece of paper, write down some good things that you want to happen or goals you want to achieve. Don't limit yourself. Address the letter to yourself and date it six months in the future. Give the letter to a grown-up or family member and have them mail it to you in six months. When your letter arrives, see how many of your goals were met. You may be surprised.

Be Grateful for Your Strengths.

As suggested in "Find Your Strengths for a Flourishing Life," page 28 of the *Live Happy Companion Articles* PDF, take the VIA Survey at viacharacter.org. This free scientific survey reveals your top character strengths that you can use to be happier, strengthen relationships, manage problems, boost confidence, reduce stress and accomplish goals. **List your top five VIA character strengths below.** Then discuss how any of these have helped you over the past few weeks.

Example:

1. **Zest**
2. **Gratitude**
3. **Creativity**
4. **Hope**—Hope is one of my five character traits, because in the past few weeks, I have experienced a big disappointment. Having hope in my top five strengths has made it easier for me to focus on the future, believing I can turn the bad situation into something good.
5. **Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence**

Be on the Lookout for a Gap in Your Life.

Paula Felps, author of "Keep the Change," page 29 of the *Live Happy Companion Articles* PDF, suggests that when we understand why we are setting a goal, we will be more successful in attaining it. The first key, she says, is to make sure our **goals** and **values** align. If they don't, we have identified a **gap** where setting a goal for improvement would make sense. For instance, you feel as though your schedule does not allow time for creative activities. Set a goal to spend 30 minutes a week writing in a journal, making cards or playing an instrument. You will be more likely to follow through because the goal is aligned with something you care about. This is an easy and effective way of developing **hope**—set your goal, develop your pathway to achieve it and believe you will do it!

Using your top character strengths from the VIA Survey, **identify one trait that you think needs more attention and then set a goal.** For example, gratitude is your top character strength, but lately you notice yourself focusing on all the things you don't have. To fill the gap, set a month-long goal to note one thing each day that you are grateful for.

Trait: **Goal:**

SET GOALS.

In "The Change Will Do You Good," page 16 of the *Live Happy Companion Articles* PDF, Tal Ben-Shahar discusses his research about when it comes to lifestyle changes, people rarely succeed on the first try. His advice is to make your goals both attainable and enjoyable. He suggests:

1. Create a specific time to honor your commitment.
2. Be very specific about the behavior you want to accomplish.
3. Believe in the value of implementing the change.

Write out a goal using the criteria above. (E.g., after school on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, I'm going to practice my violin/guitar/dance.) Draw an image of yourself when your goal is complete. Place this picture somewhere where you will see it often.

Mind Map a Problem.

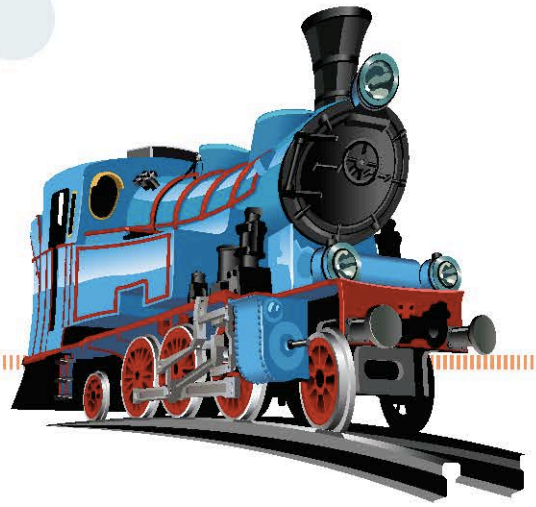
As we discovered in "Building Your Best Life," page 21 of the *Live Happy Companion Articles* PDF, problems seem bigger when we cannot see a way out or when options seem limited. Based on their larger concept of Design Thinking, Dave Evans and Bill Burnett suggest mind mapping problems or challenges you are facing. The process exposes you to alternatives, thereby leading you to more solutions and ultimately better decisions. It is an opportunity for you to find new pathways to develop **hope**, and build **resilience** and **efficacy** by allowing a growth mindset. The problem you mind map can be as simple as keeping your room clean or as big as improving a failing grade. Using the instructions from **page 24** and the accompanying space, mind map the problem of your choice:

1. Write your central challenge in the middle of the page and circle it.
2. Jot down five or six things—the first things you think of—that are related to your central challenge.
3. Generate new words and thoughts from the first words that came to mind. Keep going until you have at least three or four layers of word associations.
4. After your time is up, look at your mind map and highlight some words or concepts that jump out at you.

ILLUSTRATION OPPOSITE, ©RAWPIXEL; THIS PAGE ©STEPHANIE DALTON COWAN

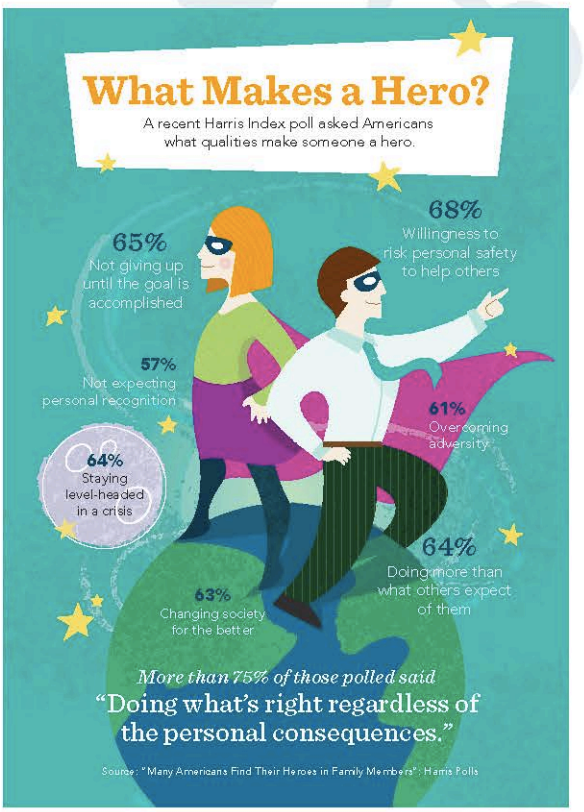
EFFICACY

EFFICACY is about believing in yourself and knowing you have the skills to achieve what you set your mind to.



I BELIEVE. Having self-efficacy helps you to see demanding situations as challenges, rather than threats. If you see something as merely a challenge to overcome, then you are likely to work harder to achieve that challenge. Think of the little blue engine from the book *The Little Engine That Could*. Her mantra was "I think I can, I think I can." And though the mountain was high, she worked hard to get over the top. But sometimes it feels like you just can't do it and that you are less because of it. **Sit alone and finish this sentence: "Today, what I admire most about myself is..."** If you find it difficult to answer, ask someone you trust. You may be surprised by what they say. Believe!

"Today, what I admire most about myself is..."



What Is a Hero? In a recent poll people were asked what makes a hero, and respondents said that not giving up until the goal is accomplished makes someone a hero. **In what instance have you *not given up until a goal was accomplished?*** Who in your life has been a hero to you?

When am I at my best?

SHARE YOUR ANSWER.

Martin Galpin and Michele Deeks, creators of At My Best strengths-focused tools, mentioned on page 31 of the *Live Happy Companion Articles* PDF, reveal that a question people have a hard time answering is, **When am I at my best?** Put your pen to paper and for the next five minutes, you and your partner jot down as many strengths as you can about each other, and then share your answers. Knowing our strengths and the strengths of others contributes to the development of **efficacy** and **resilience**, making us happier, healthier and more successful.

SMALL STEPS.

Staci Ardison, the woman featured in "Let Your Workout Lift Your Life," page 32 of the *Live Happy Companion Articles* PDF, found health and happiness through powerlifting. In fact, she discovered that powerlifting's progressive nature (each week, more weight is added) made her more confident. Do you have a big goal you would like to achieve? **Write down a big goal you would like to reach. Now break it down into at least four smaller goals.** For example, your big goal is to run 45 minutes three times a week. You can break that down into "I will walk 30 minutes a day," "I will run 10 minutes six times a week," "I will run 20 minutes five times a week" and "I will run 30 minutes four times a week." The key is that each smaller goal gets you a bit further out of your comfort zone until you finally reach your bigger goal.

Big Goal _____

Smaller Goal #1 _____

Smaller Goal #2 _____

Smaller Goal #3 _____

Smaller Goal #4 _____

ILLUSTRATION: OPPOSITE LEFT, ©MECHANIK/SHUTTERSTOCK; INFOGRAPHIC, FORM+FUNCTION

OPTIMISM

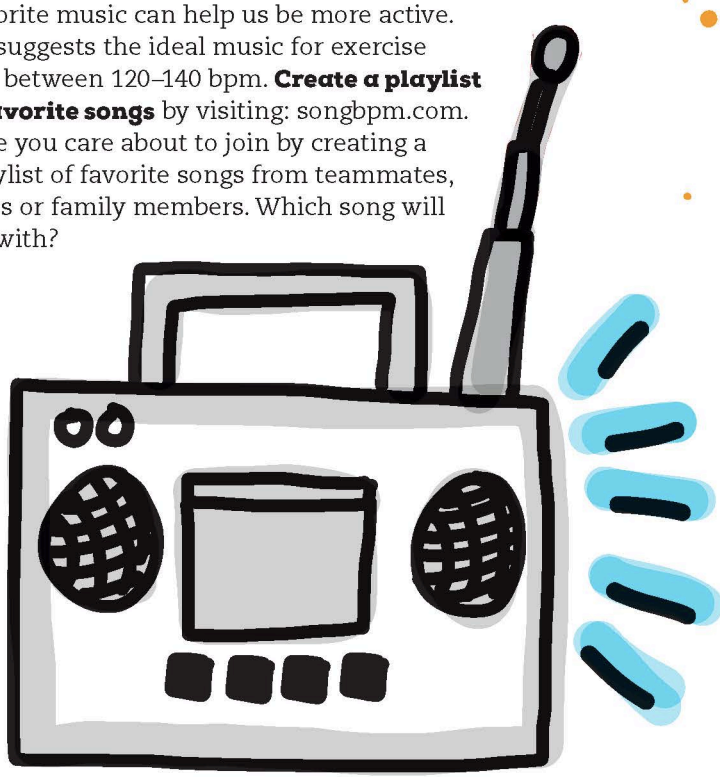
OPTIMISM is about seeing the best in yourself, others and your surroundings.

CREATE A "GOOD THINGS" BOX.

Increase the optimism in your household. Grab a shoebox or jar, and decorate it with your family. Use images that make you smile or laugh. Each week, write out or draw on a slip of paper good things that happened to each of you. At the end of the month, **spend some time together reading through all the good things.** It's amazing how the little things can make a big difference.

Discover the BPM of Your Favorite Song.

As noted on page 47 of the *Live Happy Companion Articles* PDF, knowing the beats per minute (bpm) of our favorite music can help us be more active. Research suggests the ideal music for exercise should be between 120–140 bpm. **Create a playlist of your favorite songs** by visiting: songbpm.com. Get people you care about to join by creating a group playlist of favorite songs from teammates, classmates or family members. Which song will you start with?



GREAT JOB!

Change the Message.

Having a tough time communicating with someone? **Next time you have a conversation, start it off with a compliment.** (I like your shoes. You have nice hair. You seem good at math.) See how the conversation changes.

LAUGHTER IS LIFE.

In "The Best Medicine," page 38 of the *Live Happy Companion Articles* PDF, Stephanie Davies talks about how neuroplasticity (a process by which our brains change and adapt) enables us to train our brains to use humor to find perspective, become more positive and be open to more laughter in our lives. **Increase the laughter in your life by creating a laughter board with pictures that make you laugh.** Have a create night with everyone in your family. Cut out images from magazines or draw your own. Tape, glue and arrange on a board. Hang in the family room or in your own room. Laugh with each other. It's contagious!

Think POSITIVE

REFLECT ON THE GOOD TIMES.

Optimism contributes to more success in school and helps you keep trying, even when things are tough. Research shows that optimistic people have less anxiety and depression and are more effective in dealing with pain and stress. Overall, studies show that optimists are healthier, live longer, have stronger immune systems and deeper relationships. A terrific way to boost your confidence is to notice good things as they are happening. Pick one of these activities to do for a week. **At the dinner table, discuss two positive things that happened to you that day. Or write down two good things each night.** After a week, how do you feel? Write a paragraph about your experience and send to editor@livehappy.com to possibly be included in our *Live Happy* magazine.

Monday: _____ _____

Tuesday: _____ _____

Wednesday: _____ _____

Thursday: _____ _____

Friday: _____ _____

Saturday: _____ _____

Sunday: _____ _____

PHOTOGRAPHS: OPPOSITE, ©EVKAZ/SHUTTERSTOCK; THIS PAGE, ©MICHAEL ROWE/GETTY IMAGES

RESILIENCE

RESILIENCE is the ability to bounce back or bounce forward after a failure or a challenge.

SHARE YOUR MISTAKES.

Having resilience helps you cope with challenges and adversity. People with higher levels of resilience are happier, more successful in school and work, and they live longer. They also demonstrate lower levels of stress, anxiety and depression. Admitting, talking about and reviewing your mistakes can help you build grit and become more resilient. With a partner, talk about a time you didn't get it right the first time, but you tried again. **Draw a picture that shows what the outcome will be in the future.**

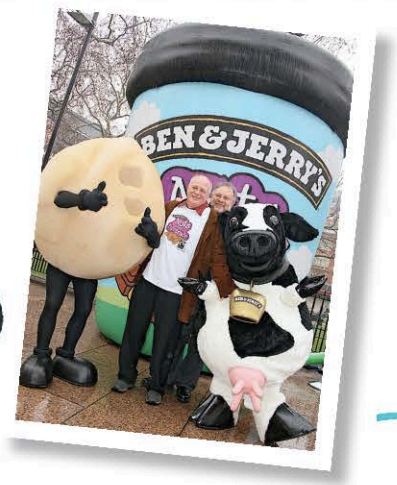
CHANGE HOW YOU SAY IT.

Read "Think Like an Underdog" by Amanda Gleason, page 40 of the *Live Happy Companion* Articles PDF. For Coach Gary Gilmore and his team, "believing made all the difference" in winning the College World Series. Write down three negative terms you use when you have a failure or are feeling overchallenged. Now rewrite them using a positive spin.

Ex: "I can't do it."	"I can't do this yet!"
Ex: "I keep making mistakes."	"Mistakes help me learn."

SHOOT FOR THE MOON.

Also, in "Think Like an Underdog," we learn about Ben Cohen and Jerry Greenfield, two guys who liked hanging out and eating. They started a business selling ice cream and were constantly using creative business solutions to grow. What if you could tap into the mindset of an underdog? What would you want to achieve? Discuss a problem you've overcome and the creative solution you used to bounce back! Then go eat some ice cream.



Gettin' Gritty With It

Angela Duckworth, Ph.D., a leading researcher on grit and resilience, says the most successful students show greater effort, determination and the ability to bounce back. Being smart is good, but having grit is better. How gritty are you? To find out, take Angela's Grit Scale quiz at angeladuckworth.com/grit-scale. There are no right or wrong answers, you just have to be honest.

Why is grit important? Well, according to research, grit will help you remain focused and interested in your tasks or goals. Plus, people with more grit have better self-control. What does your score mean? The grit scale is designed to provide data for researchers, but also self-reflection for you. If you score high on the scale, grit is already part of your character. If you score low, it's time to introduce more grit into your life. Either way, you win.

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Gratitude is the feeling of happiness that comes from expressing appreciation.

HAPPY FACT

Gratitude can improve relationships with others, reduce stress, make you happier. Also, research shows that grateful people tend to be more open to new ideas, better at perspective taking, more forgiving in conflicts, motivated to help others, more productive and less anxious and depressed.

INSTRUCTIONS: Copy onto colored paper or glue onto a patterned page. Make as many copies as you would like.