

ELT & the science of happiness tasks

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Summer 2014 update

Happiness dictation. Copy the sentences.
Each student gets one. They dictate to each other.

- ① Remember good things in your life.

- ② Do kind things.

- ③ Say “thank you” to people who help you.

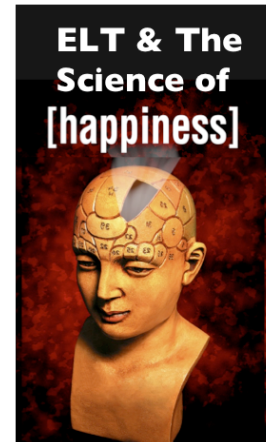
- ④ Take time for your friends and family.

- ⑤ Forgive people who make you feel bad.

- ⑥ Take care of your health and your body.

- ⑦ Notice good things as they happen.

- ⑧ Learn to work with your problems and your stress.



More information about these at: <http://tinyurl.com/84happiness>

• **Happiness Haiku:** This is to review and go deeper with the ideas above. Divide students into pairs. Give each pair one of the sentences above (①-⑧), a sheet of A3 or B4 paper and a magic marker. They think of a haiku (5-7-5 syllables) for their happiness idea. Then they share ideas as a group. Sample haiku to get started: *Our feelings reflect (5)/ the things we do every day (7)/ Choose to be happy*

① Remember good things in your life.

Language Focus: *Past simple* and other past tense forms.

• **My top 5.** Students list 5 good things from the past year (month, etc.). They explain. Partners listen and “shadow” (repeat key ideas) and ask follow-up questions.

• **Happiness Journal.** Each week, students write down 4-5 good things that have happened in their lives. This helps them notice and focus on the positive.

② Do kind things.

Language Focus: *habitual present, imperatives*.

• **Compliments.** Groups of 4-5. Each person compliments each other person. The partner just says, “Thank you.” At the end, they mentally review. (“(Name) said I...”).

• **Random acts of kindness.** Brainstorm “kind things” that people can easily do. Write them on the board. Have students decide which they will do. It is a promise to themselves. Ideas: • Say “thank you” to someone at school (the cleaning people, the office staff, etc.), • Give up your bus/train seat to an old person or someone with a baby • Smile at someone who is not smiling. • Pick up a bicycle that fell over. • Compliment someone (say something nice) • Pick up some garbage outside. Throw it away (It is kind to the earth). • Turn off a light that isn’t needed. (Also kind to the earth). • Send an email to friends. Tell them how much appreciate them

③ Say “thank you” to people who help you.

Language Focus: expressing gratitude, giving reasons, narrative

• **Thank you to the world.** In pairs/groups, students see how many languages they can say, “thank you” in. Then they think of countries and reasons. Examples:

I want to say “shukran” to Egypt because they invented mathematics.

I want to say “grazie” to Italy because they gave the world great art. And pizza.

• **Awards.** (Near the end of the year/term) Groups of 4-5. Each student makes an award for all the other members of their group.

• **Someone special.** Students think about someone who has helped them in their lives. They explain to partners why they want to thank them. (Hint: Have them change partners and repeat their story 3-4 times. Both fluency and accuracy improve).

• Also see **Thank you letter**, below.

④ Take time for your friends and family.

Language Focus: Talking about family. expressing gratitude, narrative

• **Thank you letter.** Students write a thank you letter to someone in their family (or a friend, or someone who has helped them). They write once in their first language and once in English. Encourage them to give/send the L1 version to the person.

• **My family.** Groups of 4-5. Students use toothpicks or other small objects to describe their family. They say at least 3-4 sentences about each person, including one saying why the person is special. Then partners try to remember what was said.

⑤ **Forgive people who make you feel bad.**

Language Focus: Understanding metaphor

• **Metaphor.** Students hold something heavy (e.g., a dictionary) with their arm extended. Read them a longish passage like this. The weight becomes a metaphor for not forgiving. Sample text (• = pause)
Someone did something bad to you. • Forgiveness does NOT mean it was OK. Forgiveness does NOT mean that person can do it again. • Forgiveness is important for things that must NOT be done again. • When you do not forgive, who is hurt? • The person who did the bad thing usually doesn't know. Or doesn't remember. Or doesn't care. • The anger is in your heart. • You carry the weight. • It does not help to know why the person did the bad thing. Usually that person doesn't know. • You carry the weight. • You have the power to let it go.

• **A story.** Students listen to a story about forgiveness. Optional: they draw pictures. There's a famous one about 2 Buddhist monks and a woman. Search the internet for: *monks carry her*

⑥ **Take care of your health and your body.**

Language Focus: introductions/greetings, establishing a good class atmosphere/culture

• **Smile introductions.** Talk about the health benefits of smiling (See: <http://longevity.about.com/od/lifelongbeauty/tp/smiling.htm>). They students stand, circulate and greet each other with a big smile: *Hi, I'm (name). How are you? I'm great/wonderful/super, etc.*

• **Laughter circles.** Students stand in circles and change "Ho. Ho. Ha-ha-ha" until they spontaneously start laughing. (*Fake it 'til you make it.*)

• **Smile writing.** Students put a pencil in their mouth horizontally, they write the sentence, "*(Own name) is great, wonderful, brilliant, a super student, fantastic.*" Holding the mouth in this position releases endorphins (positive chemicals) in the brain.

⑦ **Notice good things as they happen.**

Language Focus: *Present simple, imperatives*

• **Good things, right now.** In pairs, students list as many positive things in their lives as possible in one minute. Then change partners and do this again.

• **Experiencing a blueberry.** Give each student a blueberry or other piece of fruit. In a slow, even voice, narrate them eating it mindfully. Example: *You are going to eat this (blueberry) and as you do, really notice it. You'll get to know this piece of fruit better than any fruit you've eaten before. • Hold it in your hand. Look at it. • Notice the color. Notice the wrinkles. I wonder if they are like finger prints. I wonder if each one is different than other ones. • And smell it. You can notice that slight, sweet flavor. • And put it in your mouth but don't eat it just yet. • Notice how your tongue knows just where to put it. • And notice how your mouth is wet with saliva. Your body automatically knows you are going to eat something good. • And now, very slowly start to chew it. • As you chew, you taste and smell the flavor. • Take your time. It is good and you want it to last as long as possible. • Think about how wonderful it tasted, because you took the time to notice.*

⑧ **Learn to work with your problems and your stress.**

Language Focus: *Past tenses.*

• **Moving on.** Students think of a problem they had in the past. I must be one they overcame. They tell their partner(s) what it was and what they did to get past it. Again, this is good to do with 2-3 different partners to increase fluency and accuracy.

• **Successful learner self-talk/neck massage**

Students stand in a circle of 8-12. They walk slowly, massaging the neck of the person in front of them, repeating the one of the positive sentences to the person in front of them. Note: they say it in the first person (*I am*) as they are both their own and other person's *innervoice*. Positive sentences: • *Learning English makes me feel good. • Learning English is my passion. • I believe I'm a good student. • I'm hungry for English.*

○ **Savoring.** "Savoring" means "to pay attention to, appreciate and make positive experiences stronger." It is a combination of ① & ⑦ above, plus anticipating good future events.

Language Focus: *past, present and future tenses.*

• **3 good things.** Each day for one week, students write down 3 good things that happened that day and why. In research, this leads to increase positive emotion for six months. You may want them to discuss a few next class.

• **Types of positive emotion:** Teach these 10 types of positive feelings: *joy, gratitude (saying thanks), serenity (a peaceful mind), interest, hope, pride, amusement, inspiration, awe (so wonderful there are not words), love.* Students choose one and think about a time they felt that way. They close their eyes and mentally re-experience the event. Thinking through the WH-questions related to the event is a good way to do this. As they do, they think about how to describe it in English. Then they open their eyes and describe it to a partner. Variation: Have them change partners and continue this. You can add the 4-3-2 format (4-minutes, 3:00, 2:00 time sequence to add a challenge).

• **Take a hike.** Alone or as a group, students walk outside for 15-20 minutes, mostly silently. They see how many elements of nature they can notice, even in cities. Each time they do, they notice their senses. Later discuss.

• **5 pictures (mindfulness).** Students photograph 5 important, good things in their lives. In class, they explain what they are and why they are important. Partners ask WH-questions. Change partners and continue.

• **Hardwire Happiness.** Students think of a positive experience. Tell a partner. Partner asks WH Q's. This helps the speaker go deeper into the feeling. Reverse roles. Change partners. Repeat several times with different times.