



EduTrend Contents

P4C · HAPPINESS AND THE GOOD LIFE · PRIMARY

The Happy Machine

Would you choose to feel happy all the time?

Ages 8–11

Level: Developing

45 minutes

Whole class circle · up
to 30

Activity 02

Inside: activity at a glance · step-by-step session plan · facilitator notes · 3 pupil worksheets · assessment checklist

ACTIVITY 02 · AT A GLANCE

The Happy Machine

Pupils hear about an invented Happy Machine: put on the helmet and you feel happy all day, but you stay in your room and nothing real happens. Some characters in the story use it, others refuse. Pupils vote on whether they would use it, then create questions and enquire into whether feeling happy is all that matters.

Learning outcomes

By the end of the session pupils can:

- reason about the value of happiness;
- give examples of what else matters;
- consider different views;
- build on others' ideas.

KEY WORDS

happy · real · machine · matter ·
choose · life

CURRICULUM LINKS

PSHE: wellbeing. Computing:
technology and choices. English:
story discussion.

1

STIMULUS

Share something to
think about

2

THINK

Quiet thinking time

3

QUESTION

Create and choose
a question

4

ENQUIRE

Reason together

5

BUILD

Agree, disagree,
add

6

REFLECT

Last words

Materials (per class)

- Happy Machine story
- Yes, no and maybe cards
- Question and thinking-move cards
- Worksheets 1, 2 and 3

Before the session

- Read the stimulus and note possible concepts.
- Prepare question and thinking-move cards.
- Set out a circle so everyone can see each other.
- Print the worksheets.

SAFETY

Everyone may pass. Discuss ideas, not people,
and use the story or invented examples rather
than personal situations.

ACTIVITY 02 · SESSION PLAN

Step by step

Stay neutral: ask for reasons, examples and counter-examples rather than giving your own view.

Time	What happens	Say or ask
0–8 min Stimulus	Read the Happy Machine story.	<i>"What did you notice?"</i>
8–18 min Questions	Pupils create questions in pairs and vote on one.	<i>"Which question is most interesting to talk about?"</i>
18–40 min Enquiry	Enquire into the chosen question, building on each other's ideas.	<i>"Would you use the Happy Machine?"</i>
40–45 min Last words	Each person says one last thought or passes.	<i>"Has your thinking changed?"</i>

CHALLENGE CARD (print or copy onto the board)

Explain your vote with two reasons.

ACTIVITY 02 · FACILITATOR NOTES

The philosophy in brief

This is a child-friendly version of a thought experiment by the philosopher Robert Nozick, known as the experience machine.

Many people say they would not use such a machine, which suggests that we value real achievements and relationships, not only good feelings.

Common ideas to listen for

- “If you feel happy, nothing else matters.” Many disagree.
- “The machine is just like a video game.” Games end; the machine does not.
- “Everyone would say the same.” Views differ.

Adapting the activity

Support

Use a simple yes or no vote.

Stretch

Ask: what would you miss if you used the machine?

WORKSHEET 1

Our questions

Name: _____

Class: _____ Date: _____

Write questions the stimulus makes you wonder about.

Our questions

Question	Who asked	Votes

WORKSHEET 2

What would you miss?

Think.

What would you miss?

Something real	Why it matters

WORKSHEET 3

Last words

Before and after.

Is feeling happy all that matters? Before the enquiry I thought... Now I think... because...

FOR THE TEACHER

Assessment checklist

Use during the session. One sheet covers up to eight pupils; copy as needed.

Pupil	Asks a philosophical question	Gives reasons and examples	Listens and builds on others

Suggested codes: W = working towards · E = expected · G = greater depth

ABOUT THIS ACTIVITY

The Happy Machine is a sample activity from the EduTrend Contents P4C Happiness and the Good Life programme (primary, level: developing). Every activity in the programme follows the same format: a practical challenge, a clear session plan, facilitator notes and ready-to-print worksheets, so that teachers, club leaders and parents can run it without extra preparation.

Full 15-, 20- and 32-week programmes are available from EduStore at edutrend.org.

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