

Presentation: Don't Forget to Say: "Thank You"

Happiness

- I don't think it will be a surprise to most of you that:
 - "Happiness is considered one of the most important goals of human beings."

Happiness Activities

- "Psychology researchers argue that people can become happier by engaging in happiness activities that, when performed on a regular basis, have empirically been shown to increase an individual's level of happiness over a longer period of time."
 - Happiness activities may come in two forms:
 - Self-focused activities, which aim to enhance happiness through satisfying one's needs and wants
 - Other-focused activities, which refer to activities aiming to enhance happiness through social interactions with other people
 - Examples:
 - Expressing gratitude
 - Cultivating optimism
 - Living in the moment
 - Performing acts of kindness
 - Working on one's goals
 - Many of which we have learned about or done through other student-led activities

Other-Focused Activities

- Today we're going to focus on other-focused activities because...
- "Happiness activities that are other-focused, like expressing gratitude toward someone, for example, have an element of reciprocity, giving people a boost that lasts much longer than the actual experience itself."
- Because of this, "it is predicted that other-focused happiness activities are likely to be more effective over the longer term than self-focused happiness activities."

Thank Someone!

- With that in mind, we're going to all write a thank you note to someone. My hope is that this thank you will not be for a material item you have received, but rather to let someone know why you appreciate them.
 - I feel this is important because written expressions of gratitude are linked to increased happiness.

Prompts to Consider:

- Who/what are you grateful for?
- Recently, has someone completed an act that you are grateful for?
- A compliment to someone!
- Is someone you know struggling and you'd like to show your support and appreciation for them?

*Pause for time to think (~15-30 seconds)

Writing a Thank You

When writing a thank you note, here are a few things to keep in mind:

1. Use a salutation
2. First sentence: thank them explicitly for the specific instance/act for which you are writing the Thank You
 - a. I am so thankful/grateful for...
 - b. I want to say how much I appreciated...
 - c. I am writing this note to acknowledge...
 - d. I want you to know how much I value...
3. Second sentence: personalize the note with an original thought about the things you are thanking for, the effort or thought behind it, or what it means to you and the relationship
4. Third sentence (optional): focus back in time or think to the future
5. Fourth sentence: repeat the thanks or offer a concluding thought
6. Use a closing

Does anyone have any questions?

Alright, now, it's time to actually write your thank you! The paper and markers are on the front desk. Feel free to make it as fun and colorful as you wish.

I'm going to start some calming music and you will have some time to write.

Before you begin, would it be more helpful for me to leave this slide up or the previous slide for prompts to consider?

*Pause for time to write thank you notes (~5 minutes)

Discussion and Debrief

- I have a few questions for discussion and debrief.

Debrief

- If you're comfortable sharing, feel free to share, but if not, that's totally okay, too.
 - By a show of hands, have you ever received a personalized thank you before, particularly for something someone appreciates about you (not a material item)?

- Again, by a show of hands, before today, have you ever written a personalized thank you before, particularly for something (not material) you were appreciative for?
- Thinking about those experiences, how did either receiving or writing a personalized thank you make you feel?

*Pause for time to discuss (~2 minutes)

Study Details

Now, to take a look at the study.

Study Details

- Prediction
 - The prediction that other-focused happiness activities are likely to be more effective over the longer term than self-focused happiness activities was investigated in a six-week empirical study.
- Participants
 - The study's participants were 100 volunteer students enrolled in a major university in the Netherlands.
- Procedure
 - The study was conducted over a time period of six weeks.
 - In the first week, the participants filled out a prestudy questionnaire.
 - In each of the remaining five weeks, all participants (except those in the control group) performed six randomized tasks, noted as happiness activities, spending as much time on performing the activities as they wished.
 - Participants in the control group were asked to reflect on a daily event and write about it in a journal

Findings

- The results showed that other-focused happiness activities generated greater levels of happiness than self-focused activities.
- Self-focused happiness activities were found to have contributed to participants' happiness, just to a lesser extent.
- In broad terms, the research supports the distinction of happiness as self- or other-oriented, which can be achieved by building affect, or meaning.
 - All in all, it's important to say thank you and engage in activities that make us happy.

So, with that,

THANK YOU!