

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE

TEACHING THE FOUNDATION OF OPTIMISM, POSTIVE SELF TALK,
MINDFULNESS AND WELL BEING TO GRADE SCHOOL CHILDREN

A graduate project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements

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Marriage and Family Therapy

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ABSTRACT

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Many children struggle with issues of low self esteem, stress and lack of well being which can lead to conditions such as depression (Lewisohn et al, 1993). These issues not only effect children personally but they also significantly contribute to poor academic performance in school (Pfeiffer & Reddy, 1998). Conversely, the more that children can experience a sense of well being the more improved will be their ability to excel at school, which will ultimately result in better citizens entering into adulthood (Seligman, Ernst, Gillham, Reivich, & Linkins, 2009).

This project will offer elementary school children tools for fostering more optimism and well being in their lives, for challenging and changing their thoughts to create a more positive explanatory style, and for achieving a sense of self-compassion and self-acceptance, which will ultimately increase their sense of well-being. The literature review includes research on positive psychology, cognitive behavioral therapy, and the practice of mindfulness, as well as research on the effectiveness of social learning and entertainment-education. This project proposes an interactive children's assembly presentation that can be performed at elementary schools, with the aim of educating

children about the benefits of positive emotions such as optimism, the benefits of positive self-talk and of the practice of mindfulness meditation.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Since the late nineteenth century when Sigmund Freud introduced his theory of psychoanalysis, the field of Psychology has been primarily concentrated on diagnosing and attempting to treat psychological disorders. In other words the focus has been on problems and how to fix them (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). As a result the field of Psychology has become very well versed in the different emotional disorders and their prospective treatments.

But even with all of this wealth of knowledge gained over decades of theorizing and research, it appears that we have not eradicated psychological disorders or lack of well being by focusing merely on emotional disorders. For example, one recent study concluded that up to 85% of people who sought treatment and made a recovery from an episode of major depressive disorder had a recurrence of the disorder within five years (Mueller, Leon, Keller, Solomon, Endicott, et al., 1999). Data such as this begs the question: Are we missing a piece of the puzzle in our treatments of psychological disorders by being primarily focused on detecting and managing problems? After all, isn't the goal in treatment not just to end a disorder, but to ultimately help people to achieve a higher state of well being? Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi would certainly argue the case that there is a need to study how developing positive emotions and traits may be the key to increasing well being and possibly even to avoiding many disorders in the first place, "that arise when life is barren and meaningless" (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000, p. 5).

Psychological disorders such as depression have been associated with issues of low self esteem, stress and a lack of well being. Studies have shown that low self esteem, quantified by negative beliefs about oneself, was related to a risk of depression if partnered with a negative life event or stressor (Brown, Bifulco & Andrews, 1990) and low self esteem has also been determined to, "be involved in the etiology and persistence of different disorders" (McManus, Waite & Shafran, 2009, p. 266).

Issues of low self esteem, stress, lack of well being and ultimately conditions such as depression are not just adult issues, but are also quite prevalent among young people. Currently we see an alarming frequency of depression in young people, with one study reporting that 7.2% having suffered an episode of Major Depressive Disorder (MDD) by the age 14 years old and another study showing the rate of MDD in adolescents at 18.48% (Lewisohn et al, 1993).

All of the above mentioned issues not only effect children personally but they also significantly contribute to poor academic performance in school (Pfeiffer & Reddy, 1998). Conversely, if more children could experience a sense of well being it would improve their ability to excel at school, which would mean a better education and ultimately better citizens entering into adulthood (Seligman, Ernst, Gillham, Reivich, & Linkins, 2009). For that reason, mental health professionals are continually searching for new and improved ways to help children suffering from issues such as low self esteem, a lack of well being and depression. More and more evidence points to the fact that positive emotions such as optimism and self-esteem can not only increase general well being in children but can also improve their performance at school (Seligman, et al, 2009).

Cognitive behavioral therapy maintains that feelings of hopelessness, a common characteristic of depression, can be lessened and feelings of hope and joy can be cultivated by breaking the habit of negative thought patterns and retraining the brain to consider new, more positive thoughts (McNally Forsyth, Poppe, Nash, Alarcon, & Kung, 2010).

Next, the Broaden and Build theory of positive psychology posits that the act of focusing on positive emotions can help a person to expand their mind and open up new ways of thinking, which then helps them to acquire better means of coping in the future (Fredrickson, 2003). This theory also says the opposite is true, that negative emotions create more narrow-minded thinking which in turn limits a person's ability to acquire new resources for the future (Fredrickson, 2003).

Positive psychologists also theorize that there are ways to prevent depression and promote happiness and well-being, which can be broken down into three categories, the 'Pleasant Life', the 'Engaged Life' and the 'Meaningful Life' (Seligman et al, 2009). These three categories represent measurable and teachable skills which can be fostered in people, and it is predicted that teaching these qualities, especially to children, will go a long way in the prevention of issues such as mental illness (Seligman, Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

Statement of Problem

Lack of well being, stress and low self esteem, have been linked to worse conditions such as depression, and oftentimes these issues begin to develop in childhood (Lewisohn et al, 1993). The frequency of depression in young people is of concern to mental health professionals. Studies have shown that that as many as 7.2% of kids by the

age of 14 have suffered an episode of Major Depressive Disorder (MDD) and yet another study reported the rate of MDD in adolescents at 18.48% (Lewisohn et al, 1993).

If a child experiences any of the above-mentioned issues, that child may find it difficult to experience positive emotions such as hope and joy and will tend to experience more feelings of hopelessness (Mak, Ng, & Wong, 2011). These issues, if experienced as a child, can have a negative effect on academic performance in school (Pfeiffer & Reddy, 1998).

Purpose of Project

The purpose of this project is to write a script for an interactive children's show that can be performed at elementary schools. The show's objective will be to teach elementary school aged kids how to create and foster more optimism and well being in their lives, how to challenge and change their thoughts to create a more positive explanatory style, and how to achieve a sense of self-compassion and self-acceptance. All of this will be towards the goal of in an increase in these children's sense of well-being.

Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), positive psychology (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) and the practice of mindfulness have as one of their goals, to develop ways to help individuals to find, challenge and change patterns that contribute to a lack of well being in their lives and to assist them in creating a more positive belief system. The idea is that if people could experience more of a sense of well being it would improve their lives (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Specifically, if children could be taught the tools for achieving a general sense of well being, using CBT, positive psychology and mindfulness, it would not only improve

their lives but could also have a positive effect on their ability to excel at school, which would ultimately give them the tools to be better citizens entering into adulthood (Seligman, Ernst Gillham, Reivich, & Linkins, 2009).

Terminology

The following are items that need clarifying for purpose of this project, as they will be used throughout this paper:

Positive Psychology: The theory that prevention of mental illness and promotion of psychological health can be found through the study of positive human qualities (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

Positive Self Talk: Used in cognitive behavioral therapy to describe when a person talks to themselves using affirmative statements (Burnett, 1994).

Happiness: A sense of well-being that is describe in Positive Psychology as a three prong description: 'Pleasant Life', 'Engaged Life' 'Meaningful Life' (Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005).

Optimism: A mind-set that focuses on the anticipation of a pleasant or advantageous future outcome (Peterson, 2000).

The Pleasant Life: First of the three realms of positive psychology. It is the state of having positive emotions such as joy, love and contentment (Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005).

The Engaged Life: The second of the three realms of positive psychology which describes the state flow, or being completely immersed in an activity and forgetting all sense of time or self-consciousness (Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005).

The Meaningful Life: The third of the three realms of positive psychology, involves the sense meaning or purpose in a person's life, where they use their talents and skills to be a part of something bigger than they are (Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005).

Well being: The state of experiencing happiness, hope and general wellness (Fry, Guivernau, Kim, Newton, Gano-Overway, et al., 2012).

In conclusion, it is in society's best interests if we make it a priority to teach young people the qualities and skills they need to be happier, more self confident and optimistic. Ultimately our children (and therefore society) will be better served if, along with academic achievements and knowledge, our educational system also sends students into the world, "armed with optimism, self-regard, and regard for others" (Pajares, 2012, p. 34). The next section will review much of the research that has been done on this subject, in both the theory of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and of Positive Psychology.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Young people experience issues such as low self esteem, stress, lack of well being, and these issues are believed to have an impact on more serious emotional conditions (McManus, Waite & Shafran, 2009). The 2003 National Survey of Children's Health reports that in children under 17 years old behavioral and conduct problems were diagnosed 5-7% of the time, while anxiety or depressive disorder were diagnosed 2-4% and alcohol or drug abuse was reported at 19-22% (Blanchard, Gurka, & Blackman, 2006). Other studies point to an alarming frequency of depression in young people. One study reports 7.2% of its young subjects to have suffered an episode of Major Depressive Disorder (MDD) by the age of 14 and another study shows the rate of MDD in adolescents at 18.48% (Lewisohn et al, 1993).

If people are able to experience more of a sense of well being it could improve their emotional lives (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), positive psychology (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) and the practice of mindfulness all have in common the goal of helping people to discover and change patterns that contribute to a lack of well being and to assist them in creating a more positive frame of mind.

Both cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) and the newer theory of positive psychology (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) have focused on the idea of changing old thoughts and patterns that create negativity, feelings of hopelessness and issues like depression in people's lives and focusing more on strengths and positive emotions that

then create more positive schemas and belief systems, and ultimately more well-being and happiness. The practice of mindfulness can help to that end by, "disengaging individuals from automatic thoughts, habits and unhealthy behavior patterns" (Brown & Ryan, 2003, p. 823).

Positive Psychology

The field of positive psychology is a fairly new one, founded in the late 1990s by theorists such as Seligman (2000). The theory focuses on how to promote emotional well-being, rather than focusing solely on the pursuit of treating mental illnesses. The thinking is that psychology has been focused too exclusively on the negative aspects of human behavior and hasn't spent enough time studying what people do that creates more happiness and fulfillment in their lives, so that those habits can be taught to others. Positive psychology promotes a movement that "will allow psychologists to understand and build those factors that allow individuals, communities and societies to flourish" (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000, p.13).

Positive psychology offers the notion that one of the most effective tools of therapy is the fostering and building of strengths in people in order to prevent and treat psychological disorders (Seligman, 2002). To that end the study of positive psychology has been divided into three categories: The Pleasant Life which is the state of having positive emotions such as joy, love and contentment (Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005), The Engaged Life which encompasses ideas like flow, or being completely immersed in an activity and forgetting all sense of time or self-consciousness (Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005) and The Meaningful Life which involves the sense of meaning or purpose in a person's life (Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005).

Positive psychology also theorizes that there are subjective ways of looking at one's life experience and that the key to preventing issues such as mental illness lies in the promotion of positive subjective experience. Some of these positive subjective experiences that can be promoted are well-being, constructive cognitions about the future like hope and optimism, positive personal traits like courage, love and wisdom, and lastly, civic virtues like responsibility, tolerance and civility (Seligman, 2002).

In one study, 845 adults participated in an Internet survey that assessed life satisfaction as measured by three methods of achieving happiness: through pleasure, through engagement and through meaning. The respondents were asked a series of 36 questions that measured the above (Orientations to Happiness) and were then given a life satisfaction survey called the Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS). The results showed a strong correlation of the Orientations to Happiness to life satisfaction, with people who scored higher on the Orientations to Happiness also scoring higher on the life satisfaction scales, and conversely, people low on the Orientations to Happiness scales also reporting low scores on life satisfaction (Peterson, Park & Seligman, 2005).

People suffering from depression have a tendency to view themselves, the world and their own future negatively. Conversely, non-depressed individuals tend to view themselves, their world and their future in a positive light, and this viewpoint actually keeps them from being depressed. It is believed that positive cognitions and qualities may be a way to foster resilience which prevents depression by giving a person a sense of well being and a positive outlook towards their world and future prospects (Mak, Ng, & Wong, 2011).

This certainly pertains to young people as well. In one study, a group of fifth and sixth graders participated in a prevention program where they were taught cognitive and social-problem-solving techniques with the goal being to inoculate them from depression by offering them a more positive explanatory style. These children were given skills to help them recognize any negative thoughts, to then challenge the thoughts and to finally consider and choose more positive viewpoints. They were then compared to a control group of same-aged kids who were given no particular program. Two years after the program, the children in the prevention program showed half as many signs of moderate to severe depression than those in the control group (Gillham, Reivich, Jaycox, & Seligman, 1995).

Optimism

One focus in positive psychology is that of cultivating a sense of optimism in order to prevent psychological disorders. Optimism is basically a way of viewing one's reality where there is the anticipation of a pleasant or advantageous future outcome (Peterson, 2000). Positive psychology theorists promote the idea that optimism can be taught and that it has been shown to prevent depression and anxiety in children, cutting the frequency of these issues by approximately 50% for the next two years (Seligman, 2002).

Optimism and its opposite, pessimism, is tied to a person's explanatory style, which is the story that a person tells him/herself about what happens. If a person sees a negative life situation as permanent and generalized (e.g. "I will never pass a Math test because I'm stupid") they have a negative explanatory style and are pessimistic, whereas a person who sees the same situation as short-lived and specific to that one situation (e.g.

"I failed that test because I didn't study enough") has a positive explanatory style and tends to be optimistic (Seligman, 2006). Optimism has also been positively correlated to self-efficacy and negatively correlated to helplessness and hopelessness (Gillham, & Reivich, 2004).

Seligman (2006) began studying optimism in the mid 1960s when he discovered the concept of learned helplessness during a series of psychological experiments with dogs. In the experiments, three groups of dogs were exposed to very brief, low-voltage shocks that were unpleasant but not harmful to the dogs. In the first group the dogs could discontinue the shocks by pushing a panel their nose. The second group of dogs had no ability to stop the shocks, so therefore had no control over if or when they would stop. The third group of dogs received no shocks at all. Then each of these dogs were put into a shuttlebox where there they could easily escape any shocks by jumping over a barrier into another section of the box. In every instance, the dogs who had earlier had control of stopping the shocks, along with the dogs who had received no shocks in the earlier sessions, all quickly figured out how to jump the barrier and escape the shocks in the shuttlebox. Conversely, a vast majority of the dogs who had earlier had no control over stopping the shocks quickly gave up and never found the easy escape route (Seligman, 2006). In other words, these dogs had learned that they were helpless.

Various studies have concluded that optimism gives a person a much greater advantage in life, in places like school and job success, less issues of depression and anxiety, higher life and relationship satisfaction, better physical health and more longevity (Gillham, & Reivich, 2004; Pederson, 2000).

The current thinking is that optimism can and should be cultivated, especially in young people. However, even strong proponents of optimism warn against its potential pitfalls as well. Seligman (2006) promotes the idea of "flexible optimism" or putting it in perspective, noting that optimism can, "sometimes keep us from seeing reality with the necessary clarity" and that it might encourage some people, "to evade responsibility for their failures" (Seligman, 2006, p. 291). So occasionally, changing from optimism to pessimism can be helpful, because it can facilitate preparedness for possible negative outcomes, both by lowering expectations (and therefore disappointment) and by focusing one on true assessment of a situation so they can best respond to it (Sweeny, Carroll, & Shepperd, 2006).

A technique that has been studied empirically for improving a person's optimistic outlook and preventing depression is called the "count your blessings" or the "what went well" exercise (Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005). In this exercise a person is asked to write down three things at the end of each day that went well in their lives and to then answer the question, "Why did this thing go well?" (Park & Peterson, 2008). One study showed that people who practice this techniques showed positive benefits for up to six months (Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005). Since gratitude has been determined to be strongly correlated to well-being in children it is believed that interventions such as the "what went well" exercise are recommended for counselors working with children who have a low sense of gratitude and optimism (Park & Peterson, 2008).

A movement within both the psychology and medical fields is beginning to investigate whether positive thoughts, or optimistic thoughts might not only help people

to better adapt to stressful events, but also may positively affect a person's physical health. Although, at this point there is not enough evidence to verify cause and effect, many in the psychology and medical field believe there is enough correlational evidence to warrant further investigation and research (Taylor, Kemeny, Reed, Bower, & Gruenewald, 2000).

Positive Emotions and the Broaden and Build Theory

Another focus in positive psychology is that of positive emotions and their usefulness in the prevention and treatment of problems such as depression, anxiety and even health issues related to stress (Fredrickson, 2000). Fredrickson (2000) has theorized that positive emotions are adaptive and that they expand how a person thinks about and views the world, which in turn lays the foundation for creating tools that will help them to overcome possible future challenges in their life. Fredrickson's broaden-and-build theory states that positive emotions (e.g. joy, interest, contentment) actually broaden people's thought processes and build their abilities to adapt physically, socially and intellectually (Fredrickson, 2000). And what's more these new abilities, "can be drawn on later, in other contexts and in other emotional states (Fredrickson, 2000, p. 6).

In an experiment conducted by Fredrickson, she concluded that when subjects were experiencing positive emotions they were more able to see the bigger picture and to think broadly and those experiencing negative emotions tended to focus on smaller details. She also has cited other studies that support the same conclusion that people who experience positive emotions tend to be, "more creative, integrative, flexible and open to information" (Fredrickson, 2003, p. 333).

It is also theorized that positive emotions can have an undoing effect on negative emotions. This means that positive emotions such as joy, contentment and love help to regulate negative emotions, which can have an adverse effect on one's well-being and possibly even one's physical health (Fredrickson, Mancuso, Branigan, & Tugade, 2000). For instance joy is thought to spark one's urge to play, which is a helpful tool, especially for children, as it builds physical, mental and social skills that can be called upon and utilized later, way after the feeling of joy has ended (Fredrickson, 1998).

There is also evidence that has lead theorists to posit that since negative emotions have been linked to cardiovascular reactivity, then positive emotions may, "quell any existing cardiovascular reactivity cause by negative emotions (Fredrickson, Mancuso, Branigan, & Tugade, 2000, p. 240). For example, in one study negative emotion was induced into the study subjects by telling them they would shortly be giving a public speech that would be filmed and evaluated by their peers, which resulted in physiological signs of anxiety such as increased heart rate and blood pressure. The subjects were then randomly showed either a film that promoted positive emotion, or a film that was neutral or one that was sad. After that, they measured each subject's physiological signs of anxiety and the ones who had seen the film promoting positive emotions all recovered to their baseline heart rate and blood pressure reading faster. In other words positive emotions had a "clear and consistent effect of undoing the cardiovascular repercussions of negative emotions" (Fredrickson, 2003, p. 335).

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

In cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), the goal is to examine and then make changes in a person's habitual way of processing thoughts, because underneath a feeling

is a thought that created that feeling (McKay, Davis, & Fanning, 1997). Plainly put, people can change how they feel, by simply changing how and what they think. These habitual thought patterns are also known as schemas and are believed to have a significant impact on the onset and continuance of psychological disorders, such as depression anxiety and "chronic relationship difficulties" (Padesky, 1994, p. 267).

The first step in the CBT process is to bring a person's thoughts (often referred to in CBT as automatic thoughts) out into the open so they can be examined, because a person cannot change what they don't first consciously acknowledge (McKay et al., 1997). After their automatic thoughts have been uncovered, or brought to consciousness, they can then be challenged by investigating them for accuracy and also by creating other possible scenarios or beliefs to substitute the person's negative thoughts.

As mentioned above, one of the methods for changing a thought is to reconstruct a new, more positive thought, which is often referred to in CBT as a positive cognition. According to Shapiro (2001) in order to create a positive cognition a person would verbalize a positive version of a negative self-belief that focuses on the desired change the patient wants to achieve. This statement would reflect how the patient would like to think or feel about him/herself. This process is also often referred to as cognitive restructuring (Hollon, Stewart, & Strunk, 2006) where a patient is asked questions to check if their negative belief is really accurate. This is done to question and ultimately to restructure the patient's thinking and underlying schemas or beliefs.

Findings in studies of the effectiveness of CBT have shown that subjects who suffer from depression quickly experienced significantly reduced symptoms after just one

session using CBT, and that those patients were significantly less depressed at the end of treatment (Tang, DeRubeis, Beberman, & Pham, 2005).

In a recent study of 178 children (ranging from nine to twelve years old) who had been determined to suffer from anxiety problems, the participants were assessed for their level of anxiety and negative automatic thoughts (NATs). The participants then received twelve sessions of a CBT program (Muris, Mayer, Den Adel, Roos, & Van Wamelen, 2009). During these sessions the children were taught skills for recognizing anxious feelings, cognitive restructuring, coping self-talk and other positive cognitive tools. After the twelve sessions, the children were re-assessed for anxiety levels and NATs. The results showed that the CBT sessions had produced, "a significant decrease of children's anxiety disorder symptoms" (Muris et al, 2009, p. 147). Furthermore, the study concluded that participation resulted in a significant decrease in the levels of NATs and an increase in their perceived ability to control their anxiety. Lastly the study concluded that lowering levels of anxiety symptoms were correlated with lowering levels of NATs and increased levels of the children's ability to control their anxiety (Muris et al, 2009).

Oftentimes negative thinking has become a habit for a depressed person (McNally et al., 2010) and this belief is referred to as a negative automatic thought. Seligman (2006) argues the following:

the things we say to ourselves when trouble strikes can be just as baseless as the ravings of a drunk on the street. Our reflexive explanations are usually not based on reality. They are bad habits that emerge from the mists of the past, from ancient conflicts, from parental strictures, from an influential teacher's unquestioned criticisms, from a lover's jealousy. But because they seem to issue

from ourselves—could there be a source with higher credibility?—we treat them like royalty. We let them run our lives without even shouting back at them (Seligman, 2006. p. 262-263).

It has been demonstrated that these habitual negative thoughts can be brought to the patient's awareness and then their validity can be scrutinized and new, more adaptive thoughts can replace them (McNally et al., 2010).

Not only is negative thinking a characteristic of depressed people, but it has also been found that they tend to have less frequency of positive thoughts. In one study of subjects who had previously attempted to commit suicide, it was concluded that the study participants showed a significantly less positive view of present and future events (MacLeod, Pankhania, Lee & Mitchell, 1997). Another study concluded that a decrease in depression was related to an, "internal, stable, global attributional style for positive life events and decreases in hopelessness" (Johnson, Young-Sook, Douglas, Johannet, Russell, 1998, p. 373). This means that people who believed that good things would happen in the future tended to see their depression alleviated. Generally, findings lean towards the conclusion that depressed individuals display more negative automatic thoughts than non-depressed individuals and that non-depressed individuals report significantly more positive automatic thoughts than depressed individuals (Ingram, Atkinson, Slater, Saccuzzo & Garfin, 1990).

Positive Automatic Thoughts and Negative Automatic Thoughts

Positive automatic thoughts (PATs) are affirmative beliefs or attitudes that have been reinforced enough that they have become part of a person's schema or way of viewing things (Lightsey, 1994). PATs are indicators of present as well as future

happiness. For this reason it is a good idea for counselors to help a client to increase their PATs in order to increase their experience of happiness. Conversely, reducing negative automatic thoughts (NATs) are a helpful tool for counselors as well, since reducing NATs also help a person to lessen unhappiness (Lightsey, 1994).

In two Temple University studies done in 1989 it was hypothesized that both the lack of PATs and the presence of NATs are correlated with psychological disorders such as dysphoria and depression (Kendall, Howard, & Hays, 1989). The study required the completion by the participants of a number of questionnaires, including an updated version of the Automatic Thoughts Questionnaire (ATQ) which included the addition of positive and neutral self-statements in order to measure positive cognitions as well as negative ones. The study provided further support to the evidence that depressed people have considerably more NATs and fewer PATs than non-depressed people (Kendall, Howard, & Hays, 1989).

In another study measuring self-talk in adolescents, 859 teens were asked to fill out two questionnaires: the Burnett Self-Talk Inventory, which evaluates self-talk in children, and the Youth Self Report, that screens for behavioral and emotional problems in young people. This study found that positive and negative cognitions relate to each other (Calvete, & Cardeñoso, 2002). In other words, "positive and negative self-statements are cognitive products that reflect different, but interrelated, processes" (Calvete, & Cardeñoso, 2002, p. 482). The implications of the findings in this study are that when a young person is focusing on positive self-statements or PATs they are potentially blocking any incompatible negative statements or NATs. Conversely, the same holds true that NATs block incompatible PATs. This would mean that by the mere

fact that someone focuses more on PATs the less often they will potentially experience NATs (Calvete, & Cardeñoso, 2002).

It has been argued, though, that positive thinking can only create a positive effect in mood if it is actually accompanied with true events in the person's life that were connected to a positive memory for the person (MacLeod & Moore, 2000). If this is the case then merely changing a thought would not be enough, if the subject could not tie that thought to an experience they have already had in the past.

Another argument is that there has been an overemphasis in the past few decades on the merits of optimism and that optimism can have a potential cost, specifically relating to unrealistic optimism (Norem & Chang, 2002). In one study reviewed by Norem and Chang (2002) which searched for possible links of optimism to predicting coronary heart disease, it was observed that subjects who scored high on optimism and unrealistic optimism, over time, tended to exercise less than those who scored high on optimism but low on unrealistic optimism. The study's conclusion was that, "all optimism is not equally beneficial" (Norem & Chang, 2002, p. 995). Norem and Chang argue that positive thinking can have negative affects if it results in the ignoring of warning signs that we should pay attention to, and if it results in a resistance to look at negative feedback that might be useful or instructive.

One study conducted by Norem and Chang concluded that people who were optimistic had a tendency to recall that the comments they had received in regards to a task they had performed were considerably more positive than the comments had actually been, and that those people felt it less necessary to work on improving their skills than

the people observing them did (Norem & Chang, 2002). In other words, they seemed to have a more inflated view of themselves than objective observers did.

Schwartz (1997) has developed the States-of-Mind (SOM) model which suggests that there should actually be a balance of both positive and negative cognitions in order for optimal mental health in a person. It is considered that there is a ratio of positive to negative, ranging somewhere in the amount of .67 to .90 positive cognitions to up to .33 negative cognitions (Schwartz, 1997). Even in the SOM model, though, more positive cognitions are required for optimal mental health.

In terms of developmental considerations, it is thought that CBT can be a useful tool for children who have reached what Piaget termed as the 'concrete operations' stage of development (Verduyn, 2000). That means that the child should ideally be at least 7 years old, so that there is a developmental level of self-awareness and the ability to understand abstract ideas like cause and effect and to modify behavior (Papalia, Olds, & Feldman, 1990).

Mindfulness

Mindfulness can best be described as the, "enhanced attention to and awareness of current experience or present reality" (Brown & Ryan, 2003, p. 822). The practice of mindfulness has been studied more and more in the last few years and has been determined, as one of its positive effects, to aid in breaking the habit of negative thought patterns and negative behaviors. It can also assist in self-regulation, which ultimately helps a person reach a state of well being by helping them consciously choose the thoughts, feelings and behaviors that are most likely to get them to that state (Brown & Ryan, 2003).

The opposite of mindfulness is often referred to as mindlessness and is categorized by an outlook of one's self and experiences that are, "governed by rules, routines and previously constructed categories" (Carson & Langer, 2006, p. 30). A person operating in the construct of mindlessness views a situation from an inflexible and habitual perspective that has not been examined to determine whether it will promote an optimum result, or if there are, instead, other more useful ways to look at it. While a person may perceive these habitual perspectives as giving them a feeling of consistency and certitude in their life, studies show that the act of using the technique of mindfulness to consider new, more flexible perspectives generates more well-being and less stress (Carson & Langer, 2006).

Mindfulness has been determined to work using three components: intention, attention and attitude (Shapiro et al, 2006). The idea of intention is at the crux of mindfulness because it informs a person as to why they are practicing mindfulness in the first place. Some possible intentions for a person practicing mindfulness could be stress management, self realization or personal insight. Attention is the central construct of mindfulness. The act of practicing mindfulness requires a person to become aware of and observe their current experience. Lastly, attitude is another essential aspect of because it creates the non-judgmental atmosphere that is integral to the practice of mindfulness. Not only is attention to the present moment important, but that attention needs to be infused with the attitude of patience, compassion and openness (Shapiro et al, 2006).

Coholic (2011) describes mindfulness using Jon Kabat-Zinn's description as "paying attention on purpose" to one's thoughts, beliefs and experience in the present moment with complete non-judgment. Coholic also adds that some researchers even

describe it as a new method for cognitive-behavioral therapy, due to its ability to help a person notice and recognize habitual thoughts. Some have labeled mindfulness as a new generation of cognitive-behavioral therapy (Coholic, 2011).

Mindfulness for Children

Coholic (2011) is interested in the concept of teaching mindfulness to young people using an interactive, arts-based approach. In a recent qualitative study, assessment was done on an arts-based mindfulness program aimed at children who had been involved with a child protection agency or mental health agency and were having issues with low self-esteem. In this program the concepts of mindfulness were taught through exercises that were "more active and sensory focused" (Coholic, 2011, p. 309) in order to engage and involve the children interactively. Analysis of the study concluded that the program had a noticeably positive effect in helping these kids with emotional regulation, self acceptance and better emotional awareness.

Another finding however, which came as a surprise to the research team, was the fact that one of the characteristics that made the program most effective, according to many of the children involved, was its level of "fun". This emphasized to the researchers that the element of enjoyment, creativity and fun should be taken strongly into account as it is an important quality to the well being and development of children. But it also left the researchers questioning whether the effectiveness of the program was due to its mindfulness aspect or to the "fun" aspect.

Consequently, Coholic, Eys, and Lougheed (2012) later compared the effectiveness of an arts-based mindfulness program to that of a general arts and crafts group in improving resilience in children in need. One group of children participated in a

Holistic Arts-Based Group Program which had as its goal to help kids to identify their feelings and to encourage their character strengths, using techniques of mindfulness. The control group of children participated in a general arts and crafts group where there were no specific interventions. One of the reasons for creating this comparison group was to control for the factor of "having fun" as the route of the effectiveness for the program, since the previous study did not have that comparison in its data.

The results of the comparison study were that the participants of the mindfulness arts-based group showed increased ability in emotional regulation, as well as more self reports of confidence and ability to identify and cope with feelings more comfortably. The conclusion of the study was that providing arts-based mindfulness programs to children in need can be used as an effective preventative tool to help kids, "build some foundational skills that are important for good mental health and functioning" (Coholic, Eys, & Lougheed, 2012).

Napoli, Krech, and Holley (2005) analyzed a mindfulness training program for first, second and third grade students for its ability to help them to have better focus and ability to pay attention. In this study half of the participants were trained in the methods of the Attention Academy Program (AAP) which taught skills of mindfulness to help the participants learn to be more attentive to the present moment, to practice non judgment in that moment and to view the moment as a unique and new experience. The other half of the participants were in the control group and were not trained in AAP methods, but instead participated in quiet activities such as reading.

The results of the experiment showed that the students involved in the AAP increased their ability to make a conscious choice to pay attention and lowered their test

anxiety as well having less reports from teachers of bad conduct in class.

Napoli, Krech, & Holley (2005) concluded that teaching mindfulness techniques in school can have long reaching, positive effects by lowering and managing stress in children, improving self esteem and reducing class time interruptions.

Burke (2010) recently published a meta-analysis review of 15 different research studies on the effectiveness of mindfulness, using the methods of MBSR (mindfulness-based stress reduction) and MBCT (mindfulness-based cognitive therapy). The review concluded that using mindfulness-based methods with children and adolescents was both acceptable and feasible, but added that, to date, there is incomplete empirical evidence as to the effectiveness of current methods. It was also suggested that further research develops more "robust methodologies" and that it concentrate on clearer research aims and hypotheses (Burke, 2010).

Thompson & Gauntlett-Gilbert (2008) offer some useful methods, such as utilizing metaphors, for teaching mindfulness to children. For example, in order to explain the concept of how one's mind can wander off during meditation, the concept of trying to get a puppy to sit still can be used. It can be explained that a puppy is assured to run off at the first sign of a distraction, and instead of getting mad at the puppy it's better to just bring the puppy back and sit it down again (Thompson & Gauntlett-Gilbert, 2008). Next, in order to describe the notion of being the non-judgmental observer of one's thoughts, the metaphorical image of placing thoughts or feelings in a bubble and just letting them float away can be used as a more concrete visualizing tool (Thompson & Gauntlett-Gilbert, 2008).

Self-acceptance vs. Self-esteem

It is important to note that generally, mindfulness promotes the idea of unconditional self-acceptance as a replacement to the concept of self-esteem (Ryan, & Brown, 2003; Thompson & Waltz, 2007). The thinking behind this model is that the notion of rating oneself and coming up with either a good or a disparaging estimation is based on contingent or conditional regard for oneself. Instead, self-acceptance is the non-judgmental acknowledgement of one's ever-changing, moment-to-moment experience, which is the exact model used in mindfulness (Ryan, & Brown, 2003; Thompson & Waltz, 2007).

So, whereas the search for self-esteem could have a person, "caught up in self-evaluation rather than self-acceptance" (Carson & Langer, 2006, p. 29) thus using energy to seek approval, mindfulness can help a person to calm that needy state of mind down and bring one to a place of, "acceptance of and exploration of present experience" (Carson & Langer, 2006, p. 31). When a person is in the moment and out of their habitual state of mind they are more available to alternative ways of looking at a given situation which may result in a more rewarding outcome and takes their focus off of any need to gain acceptance or approval of others in order to boost their self-esteem (Carson & Langer, 2006). Ultimately the goal here would be to let go of the idea of self-concept altogether (Ryan & Brown, 2003).

Ryan & Brown (2003) consider what one's experience might like be if the need for self-esteem were eliminated:

In such a scenario, when standards are not met, failures occur, or rejections are experienced, one can experience disappointment, feel sadness and loss, or

question and reevaluate one's actions—but the self as a whole is not made into an object, and then disparaged. Reciprocally, when one meets standards, succeeds at valued tasks, or is positively regarded by others, one can feel pleased, energized, or excited without the necessity of "inflating" the self, puffing up one's prideful ego, or other forms of ego-enhancement (Ryan & Brown (2003, p.74).

Social Learning Theory and Entertainment-Education

Along with the primary goal for education, which is teaching children the fundamentals of math, language and the sciences, there is also the goal of teaching the fundamentals for being a good and responsible citizen in the community (Seligman, Ernst, Gillham, Reivich, & Linkins, 2009).

Cohen (2006) argues that social and emotional education is integral to a healthy democracy and that there is a definite need for "laying the foundation for well-being and the pursuit of happiness" (Cohen, 2006) in our children. According to Cohen, integrating social, emotional, ethical and academic education increases children's ability to solve problems in a non-violent manner, and makes them more socially and emotionally adept. It encourages optimum development in children, and makes them, "lifelong learners and active participants in our society" (Cohen, 2006, p. 227).

The Character Education Partnership (CEP) issued a report making the case that effective character education, defined as the use of social, educational and contextual processes to create the psychological development of character traits such as social and personal responsibility and ethical behavior, should be an educational priority because it enhances the academic goals of schools and also prepares children to be good citizens (Berkowitz, & Bier, 2005).

The field of entertainment-education has been defined as, "entertainment programming designed to exert some known, pro-social effect on viewers" (Moyer-Gusé & Nabi, 2010, p. 27) and is used to affect change on people's mind-sets or actions. In their study Moyer-Gusé and Nabi, (2010) an experimental group of subjects watch a dramatic narrative program focusing on the issues of teen pregnancy, while the control group watched a non-narrative program on the subject. They theorized that the narrative program would reduce resistance to the message. The results showed that those who had watched the narrative program had less resistance due to their perceived involvement with the characters as well as less of a feeling blatant persuasion.

In another study measuring the effects of theater performances on an individual's mind-set towards a subject, 171 members of an audience for a live musical theater performance in Wisconsin, called *Guys & Does*, were evaluated for their opinions and attitudes about hunting both pre and post performance (Heide, Porter, & Saito, 2012). The show's main theme was the modeling of principled hunting practices and safety as well as respect for the long tradition of hunting which, "has ancient and noble roots" (Heide, Porter, & Saito, 2012, p. 225). The results of the study indicated that musical theater can have an impact on people's thoughts and beliefs about a particular subject. Scores on the test measuring the audience member's opinions about hunting raised considerably from the pre-show test to the post-show test and imply that musical theater, "is worthy of further exploration as a method of entertainment-education" (Heide, Porter, & Saito, 2012, p. 227).

CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

Introduction

There is increasing evidence that merely focusing on psychological problems and their possible cures often misses the mark (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

Research shows that the recurrence of psychological disorders such as depression after successful treatment is high (Mueller, Leon, Keller, Solomon, Endicott, et al., 1999).

This is because a person will find it difficult to change their current situation if they don't have any idea what to change it to. So just making life "less bad" or painful isn't going to create a sense of well being. A person needs tools for making life better and for creating a sense of well being to truly reach their potential. According to literature and research, if people are able to experience more of a sense of well being it could improve their emotional lives (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

Research also shows that if these tools can be taught at an early age they can possibly even prevent psychological disorders. By giving children tools at an early age to steer them away from negative thought patterns and behaviors they can utilize them early on before bad habits are even formed (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

This project has as its goal to provide an entertaining introduction to elementary school kids of the concepts such as optimism, positive self talk and mindfulness that are necessary tools for creating a sense of well being.

Development of Project

In development of this project, it is first necessary to identify possible skills for improving well being. To that end research of various theories that offer potential

acquisition of positive life skills and tools were carefully examined. Next, the most effective, child-friendly tools will be chosen that will work in a theater setting.

Intended Audience

The techniques and ideas that have been created for this project are intended for elementary school children, grades K through 5 and is meant as an introduction for children to the ideas and skills necessary to cultivate a sense of well being.

This project is not intended as a therapeutic intervention, but rather meant to expose kids to the concepts of optimism, positive self talk, mindfulness and well being.

Personal Qualifications

This project was created for use in elementary schools as a part of the school's assembly program. Since it is a theater performance it is designed to be presented by a professional actor who understands performance style and crowd control for children and who also has certain, specific performance skills such as the ability to juggle.

Environment and Equipment

This project will need an assembly hall as well as audio visual equipment. There are also necessary visual aides, as well as costumes and props. The show will also need a puppet designed in the shape of a zero. The puppet design should be appropriate for older children up to age twelve, so it should not be too childish as older kids won't relate to it.

Project Outline

The script for the show will follow this outline but will be taught in a creative, interactive and entertaining way.

- I. Introduction and setting assembly behavior guidelines

- II. Everyone wants to feel happiness and a sense of well-being and there are tools that can help you achieve this
- III. Practicing optimism can make you happier, healthier and more successful
- IV. Thoughts can be changed (CBT)
 - a. Notice thoughts
 - b. Challenge thoughts
 - c. Create new ones
- V. Mindfulness
- VI. Self-acceptance and awareness of present moment
- VII. Game show review and pledge

CHAPTER FOUR

EVALUATION

Summary of Project

The purpose of this graduate project was to create an interactive children's assembly presentation to be performed at elementary schools to educate children on the benefits of positive emotions such as optimism, the benefits of positive self-talk and of mindfulness meditation. Many children grapple with issues of low self esteem, stress, lack of well being which can lead to conditions such as depression. This project will offer elementary school aged kids some tools for fostering more optimism and well being in their lives, challenging and changing their thoughts to create a more positive explanatory style, and achieving a sense of self-compassion and self-acceptance, with the ultimate goal being an increase their sense of well-being.

Summary of Evaluation Results

This project was evaluated by three people; one of them an MS Ed. in Early Childhood Education and a PsyD in Clinical Psychology, one of them a licensed MFT and one of them an LAUSD elementary school teacher and current MFT student at California State University, Northridge. In addition to reading the school assembly script they were asked to fill out an evaluation form (Appendix B) with Likert-type scale questions. The evaluators responded to statements such as "Rank how effective you think the show would be in involving children and keeping their attention" and, "Rank how well you think the children would respond to the program" on a scale of 1 to 5 where "1" is Unsatisfactory, "2" is "Need Improvement, "3" is "Satisfactory/Average", "4" is

"Above Average" and "5" is "Excellent". The evaluation form also included additional questions that required comments.

The evaluators responded to the Likert-type scale questions with mostly "Excellent" and some "Above Average" indicating that the assembly script would be an effective psychoeducational tool for elementary school children. The evaluators offered that some of the most effective aspects of the program were the high level of student involvement and interaction and the simple-to-follow steps presented in a fun way. One evaluator did offer that adding a follow-up program, possibly in the form of a teacher's packet that is left behind would help with behavior reinforcement and follow through. Another recommended enhancement was to provide alternative positive strategies for the pessimist in the Optimist/Pessimist section of the script.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

Summary

The purpose of this graduate project was to create an interactive children's assembly presentation to be performed at elementary schools to educate children on the benefits of positive emotions such as optimism, the benefits of positive self-talk and of mindfulness meditation. Many children grapple with issues of low self esteem, stress, lack of well being which can lead to conditions such as depression. This project will offer elementary school aged kids some tools for fostering more optimism and well being in their lives, challenging and changing their thoughts to create a more positive explanatory style, and achieving a sense of self-compassion and self-acceptance, with the ultimate goal being an increase their sense of well-being.

Research shows that many young people experience issues of low self esteem, stress, lack of well being, and these issues have an impact on more serious emotional conditions (McManus, Waite & Shafran, 2009). Findings from the 2003 National Survey of Children's Health showed that children under the age of 17 were diagnosed with behavioral and conduct problems 5-7% of the time, with anxiety or depressive disorder 2-4% and for alcohol or drug abuse they were diagnosed 19-22% of the time (Blanchard, Gurka, & Blackman, 2006). One study reports 7.2% of its young subjects to have suffered an episode of Major Depressive Disorder (MDD) by the age 14 and another study reports the rate of MDD in adolescents at 18.48% (Lewisohn et al, 1993).

Children who experience a sense of well being have improved emotional lives (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), positive psychology

(Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) and the practice of Mindfulness all have as one of their goals, to help people to discover and change patterns that contribute to a lack of well-being and to assist them in creating a more positive frame of mind.

Positive psychology suggests that one of the most effective tools of therapy is the fostering and building of strengths in order to prevent and treat psychological disorders (Seligman, 2002). It also theorizes that the key to preventing mental illness lies in the promotion of positive subjective experience such as well-being, constructive cognitions about the future like hope and optimism, positive personal traits like courage, love, and wisdom and, lastly, civic virtues like responsibility, tolerance and civility (Seligman, 2002).

One focus in positive psychology, the cultivation of optimism, is basically a way of viewing one's reality where there is the anticipation of a pleasant or advantageous future outcome (Peterson, 2000). Positive psychology theorists promote the idea that optimism can be taught and that it has been shown to prevent depression and anxiety in children, cutting the frequency of these issues by approximately 50% for the next two years (Seligman, 2002).

Fredrickson (2000) theorizes that positive emotions are adaptive and expand how a person thinks about and views their world, which in turn lays the foundation for creating tools that will help them to overcome possible future challenges. Fredrickson's broaden-and-build theory states that positive emotions actually broaden people's thought processes and build their abilities to adapt physically, socially and intellectually (Fredrickson, 2000).

The goal of cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) is to examine and change a person's habitual way of thinking, because underneath a feeling is a thought that created that feeling (McKay, Davis, & Fanning, 1997). People can change how they feel by changing how and what they think. These habitual thought patterns, also known as schemas, are believed to have a significant impact on the onset and continuance of psychological disorders, such as depression anxiety and "chronic relationship difficulties" (Padesky, 1994, p. 267).

The first step in the CBT process is to bring a person's automatic thoughts into consciousness in order to examine them (McKay et al., 1997). After these automatic thoughts have been uncovered, they can then be challenged by investigating them for accuracy and creating other possible scenarios or beliefs to substitute the person's negative thoughts.

Mindfulness is the, "enhanced attention to and awareness of current experience or present reality" (Brown & Ryan, 2003, p. 822). The practice of mindfulness has been determined, as one of its positive effects, to aid in breaking the habit of negative thought patterns and negative behaviors. It can also assist in self-regulation, which ultimately helps a person reach a state of well being by helping them consciously choose the thoughts, feelings and behaviors that are most likely to get them to that state (Brown & Ryan, 2003).

Mindfulness promotes the idea of unconditional self-acceptance as a replacement of self-esteem (Ryan, & Brown, 2003; Thompson & Waltz, 2007). Needing to essentially rate oneself and either come up with a good or a disparaging estimation is based on contingent or conditional regard for oneself. Instead, self-acceptance is the non-

judgmental acknowledgement of one's ever-changing, moment-to-moment experience, which is the exact model used in mindfulness (Ryan, & Brown, 2003; Thompson & Waltz, 2007).

So, whereas the search for self-esteem may focus on evaluating self-evaluation, instead of self-acceptance (Carson & Langer, 2006) mindfulness can help to calm the mind down and help one to accept their present situation (Carson & Langer, 2006). When a person is attuned to the present moment, rather than stuck in a habitual state of mind, that person is more available to alternative ways of looking at a given situation. This has the potential to result in a more rewarding outcome and provides an alternative to the need to gain acceptance or approval of others in order to boost self-esteem (Carson & Langer, 2006). Ultimately, the goal is to let go of the idea of self-concept altogether (Ryan & Brown, 2003).

Recommendations for Implementation

This project can be marketed to elementary schools as a part of their yearly assembly schedule. This would require promotional tools such as flyers, postcards and a website, which would provide information about the assembly such as the key topics discussed in the show, a short biography and qualifications of the creator and of the assembly presenter and contact information for booking the assembly. The flyers and postcards can be sent to local elementary schools via mail, fax and even via email to announce the availability of the program and then follow up phone calls to the correct contact person at the schools can be made to book the assembly. The presenter of the assembly should be a professional actor with children's theater experience who understands performance style and crowd control. This presenter also needs certain,

specific performance skills such as the ability to juggle. There will also need to be a stage manager who can run the lights and sound and can also operate the puppet. This person should have technical theater skills as well as performance skills since he or she will be providing the voice of the puppet.

Recommendations for Future Research

This project could potentially serve as part of a psychoeducational curriculum used in elementary schools to facilitate children in developing more tools for cultivating well being in their lives. Future research should be dedicated to creating teacher packets with follow up materials and activities that can be used post-performance in the classroom to reinforce the methods put forth in the assembly. Some of these materials could include the "What Went Well" activity as well as an activity requiring students to review the CBT process of noticing thoughts, challenging them and then changing them.

Other research could be conducted that would include pre and post assembly statistics to measure the student's awareness of their self talk, as well as their levels of optimism and well being. This research could be used to make any necessary changes to the assembly show script. It could also be used to help design ongoing workshops for children on mindfulness meditation, aspects of positive psychology such as exploring and cultivating strengths and of CBT such as practicing positive self talk.

Conclusion

Having written and performed for elementary school children for over fifteen years, I have seen the educational benefits of assemblies presented to children in a lively, playful and interactive way. After much research on the benefits of positive emotions such as optimism, as well as of positive self-talk and of mindfulness meditation, I have

become increasingly convinced that these tools, if taught to children, have the potential to set them on a course towards experiencing greater well being in their lives.

Seligman (2000) aptly states that, "Psychology is not just the study of disease, weakness, and damage; it also is the study of strength and virtue. Treatment is not just fixing what is wrong; it also is building what is right" (Seligman, 2002, p. 4). If children are introduced, at an early age, to the idea that they can have power over their thinking and can choose thought patterns that offer them the potential of more happiness and well being, they can be set on a path toward their own empowerment.

My goal with this project is to offer these concepts to young people so that they are aware of the options that are available to them and have a sense that they can make active choices for the betterment of their lives. I wish I had been taught as a youngster that my thoughts were not necessarily the truth, but were often just habits that could be changed, and that they could affect my well being either positively or negatively. Knowledge is power and my goal with this project is to offer to children the power to create their best possible life.

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APPENDIX A

PRESENTER GREETES AUDIENCE, ESTABLISHES RULES AND GETS KIDS ON HIS/HER SIDE. PRESENTER SHOULD BE PLAYFUL, ANIMATED AND ENTHUSIASTIC.

PRESENTER

Good morning!... OK that was pretty good, but let's try that again. Show me your awake now. I want to hear EVERYBODY say, GOOD MORNING!

Kids all shout "Good morning"

Wow! You guys are definitely awake! OK now I want to hear something else. Now I want to hear how quiet you can be. Just for a few seconds. Let's see how quiet everybody can be all together. Ok go...

Silence for 2 or 3 seconds.

PRESENTER

Very good. Give yourselves a round of applause.

Applause

PRESENTER

My name is _____. But before we start today, I want to ask you all a question. Remember how quiet you just were? Well I'm going to ask that you guys keep practicing that during the show. The reason is, we're going to talk about some really important stuff today and I don't want you to miss anything. And I'm also going to need volunteers to come up and help me with some stuff...

Kids raise their hands. Presenter playfully jokes...

PRESENTER

Hold on I don't need volunteers yet! I do like to see that you're eager though. But the way we choose our volunteers is by the way they sit down really nice and quiet during the show. That means you're sitting down with your hands to yourself, mouths closed, eyes faced up here, and if you need to say something what do you do?

Mime raising hand to prompt kids to say "raise your hand".

PRESENTER

Exactly! So can you guys all help me out with that? (*kids agree*) OK great, then let's get started. First of all I'm going to take a quick survey. Who here likes to feel happy? Raise your hand if you like to feel happy and excited and good about life?

Mime raising hand to prompt kids to raise their hands.

PRESENTER

OK great, hands down. Then if you like feeling happy, I want to hear you say “Life is good”!

Presenter makes a hand gesture to go with the phrase. Kids say “Life is good” & gesture like presenter.

PRESENTER

Awesome, I like to hear that! Now, for my next question... Does anybody here like to feel sad and depressed and lonely? (*Presenter physically expresses that energy*) Everybody say “No way”.

Kids say, “No way”.

PRESENTER

Yeah that doesn’t sound like a lot of fun, does it? Let’s all pretend we have that feeling right now. Everybody pretend you’re feeling sad and depressed and let your shoulders droop and hang your heads like this. (*Presenter mimes these gestures.*) And everybody say, “what a bummer”.

Kids say, “What a bummer” and gesture like the presenter.

PRESENTER

Oh that feels terrible. You can feel all the energy leaving the room. OK everybody shake that off. (*Presenter & kids shake their body.*) Let’s try this again. If you like feeling hopeful and optimistic that good things are gonna happen, I want to hear you say, “Oh yeah”!!!

Presenter makes a hand gesture to go with the phrase. Kids say, “Oh yeah” & gesture like presenter.

PRESENTER

Wow! What a difference! The whole room is lit up with energy again! I love it! Do you guys feel it?

Kids say “yes”.

PRESENTER

I didn’t hear you. I said, do you guys feel it”???

Kids react much louder now with “YES”.

PRESENTER

That's what I like to hear. So I think it's clear from my little survey here that pretty much everybody likes to feel happy and hopeful rather than sad and depressed, right? So what if I told you that there were tools that could help you to be happier and to feel better about life? Wouldn't you want to know what those were? Say "Heck, yeah"!

Kids say "Heck, yeah".

PRESENTER

Well I'm here today to tell you that there ARE! There are tools that can help people be happier. That means there are things that you can do to make you happier.

The first thing you can do to make your life happier is practice positive emotions like optimism. Raise your hand if you can tell me what optimism is.

Pick one kid whose hand is raised.

PRESENTER

Very good answer. Optimism is the belief that good things are going to happen. Someone who is optimistic believes that, even if things don't look so good right now, everything is going to turn out for the best. An optimistic person looks on the bright side.

Here's the deal... People who practice optimism not only feel happier, but they actually are healthier and more successful at things like school and sports and other stuff they do.

To show you what I mean, I'm going to need two volunteers from the audience. My first volunteer is going to play the optimist. So I'm going to need someone who's smiling really big and has their head held up like this (*mime the physicality*) and of course is sitting nicely in their chair with their hand up.

Pick one kid whose hand is raised & bring them up on stage.

PRESENTER

What's your name? (*Kid 1 answers*) Everybody say "Hi _____" (*kids call out, "Hi _____"*) Now _____ you're going to be our optimistic kid for this skit. And remember, an optimistic person is someone who believes that things are going to turn out for the best. So I'm going have you wear this smiley face (*put smiley face lanyard that says "Awesome" on it around Kid 1's neck*) and this smiley hat.

Anytime I say "How are you doing _____?" you're going to say "awesome" and give us the thumbs up. So can you do that for me now? Let's try. "How are you doing _____?" (*Kid 1 says "awesome"*) Perfect! You're hired!

Now I need someone who is going to play the pessimist in the skit, the negative person. That person needs to look all sad and depressed, so I need to see who can give me a really sad face, and raise your hand so I know you want me to pick you.

Pick one kid whose hand is raised & bring them up on stage.

PRESENTER

What's your name? (*Kid 2 answers*) Everybody say "Hi _____" (*kids call out, "Hi _____"*) Now _____ you're going to be our pessimistic kid for this skit. Do you know what pessimism means?

If Kid 2 doesn't know answer ask the audience.

PRESENTER

Very good. Pessimism means believing that bad things are going to happen. A pessimistic person looks on the negative side of things and sees what's wrong instead of what's right.

So you're going to wear this dark cloud (*put dark cloud lanyard that says "terrible" on it around Kid 2's neck*) and this Super Sad Face hat.

Now anytime I say "How are you doing _____?" you're going to say "terrible" and give kind of slump your shoulder and your head like this. So can you do that for me now? Let's try. "How are you doing _____?" (*Kid 2 says "terrible"*) Everybody say "Aww".

Kids all say "Aww".

PRESENTER

So we have our optimist here. (*Indicates to Kid 1*) "How are you doing _____?" (*Kid 1 says "awesome"*) And we have our pessimist over here. (*Indicates to Kid 2*) "How are you doing _____?" (*Kid 2 says "terrible"*)

Now we're going to demonstrate the difference between being an optimist and being a pessimist and how it can affect your everyday life.

OK let's say these guys are both on their way to school and they're running a few minutes late. They can see the bus stop wayyy at the end of the street and the bus is there and the kids are getting on right now.

Now _____ is our optimist. Remember, his/her attitude is that good things are happening and everything will turn out for the best. So raise your hand if you can tell me what you think he/she is thinking right now, when he/she sees that bus wayyy at the end of the street?

Get answers from a few kids. Prompt them if necessary.

PRESENTER

Exactly, _____ believes that it's possible that if he/she runs for it that he/she can make it. So he/she gives it a try and runs for it, and he/she makes it just in time and gets on the

PRESENTER (cont'd)

bus! "How are you doing _____?" (*Kid 1 says "awesome"*) Everybody say "Woohoo!"

Kids say "woohoo".

Now _____ is our pessimist. Remember, his/her attitude is that bad things are going to happen and he/she sees what's wrong instead of what's right. So what do you think he/she is thinking right now, when he/she sees that bus wayyy at the end of the street? Raise your hands if you know.

Get answers from a few kids. Prompt them if necessary.

PRESENTER

Exactly, _____ believes there's no way he/she can make it. So he/she gives up and misses the bus. "How are you doing _____?" (*Kid 2 says "terrible"*) Everybody say "Uh-oh"

Kids say "Uh-oh".

PRESENTER

So _____ I want you to open your first box (*indicates to box*) to see what's inside and hold it up so everybody can see.

Kid 1 opens box & holds up a card: "Perfect Attendance A+"

PRESENTER

He/she gets an A+ for perfect attendance! Now _____ I want you to open your first box (*indicates to box*) and see what's inside. Now hold it up so everybody can see it.

Kid 2 opens the box & holds up a card: "Tardy Detention"

PRESENTER

Oh no, he/she gets a detention for being late to school! Everybody say "Oh, man".

Audience repeats, "Oh, man".

OK now let's say you're both at school, in class, and thinking about how your day has been so far. _____ caught the bus and made it to school on time. How are you doing _____? (*Kid 1 says "awesome"*) Now _____ missed the bus and got detention for being late. How are you doing _____? (*Kid 2 says "terrible"*)

So there you are in class, and the teacher says "OK class, now we're going to have a surprise Spelling quiz". Everybody say "Aye aye aye".

Audience repeats, "Aye aye aye".

PRESENTER

So what do you think our optimist is thinking right now, when the teacher tells him/her that there's a Spelling quiz? Raise your hands.

Get answers from a few kids. Prompt them if necessary.

PRESENTER

Good answers! _____ takes a deep breath and tells him/herself that he/she will just do his/her best. He/She decides to stay calm and trust that he/she's been paying attention in class and should do just fine.

Now what about _____, our pessimist. What do you think he/she is thinking right now, when the teacher tells him/her that there's a Spelling quiz?

Get answers from a few kids. Prompt them if necessary.

PRESENTER

Exactly, _____ freaks out and starts telling him/herself how awful this is and that he/she will never pass.

So _____ I want you to open your second box (*indicates to box*) and see what's inside. Now hold it up so everybody can see it.

Kid 1 opens box and holds up a card: "Great job! You pass!"

PRESENTER

He/she passed! Gimme a high five!

Presenter high fives Kid 1.

PRESENTER

Now _____ I want you to open your second box (*indicates to box*) and see what's inside. Now hold it up so everybody can see it.

Kid 2 opens box and holds card: "Must take Summer School!"

PRESENTER

Oh no, he/she has to take summer school? That stinks!

OK, now how are you doing _____? (*Kid 1 says "awesome"*) Great! And how are you doing _____? (*Kid 2 says "terrible"*) Aww, sorry you're not having a good day, buddy.

OK one more. School is out for the day and this afternoon you have a soccer game against the best team in the whole soccer league. These guys are really good and your team has never beat them. So what do you think our optimist is thinking right now, about this game? Raise your hand if you can tell me.

Get answers from a few kids. Prompt them if necessary.

PRESENTER

Good! _____ decides that his/her team might win if they try. So he/she gives the game his/her absolute best. And he/she even scores a big goal in the game! Everybody say "Goal"!

Audience repeats "Goal!!!"

Now to our pessimist. Raise your hand if you can tell me what he/she is thinking about today's game against the best team in the soccer league?

Get answers from a few kids. Prompt them if necessary.

PRESENTER

Right, _____ doesn't think they have a chance to win and doesn't give it his/her all. He/she doesn't score any goals and even falls down and scrapes his/her knee because he/she wasn't really paying attention while he/she was playing.

So _____ open your third box (*indicates to box*) and see what's inside. Now hold it up so everybody can see it.

Kid 1 opens box & holds up card: "Most Valuable Player"

PRESENTER

Most valuable player! Very cool!

Now _____ open your third box (*indicates to box*) and see what's inside. Now hold it up so everybody can see it.

Kid 2 opens box & holds up card: "Demoted to Water Carrier"

PRESENTER

Demoted to waterboy/girl! Ouch! Sorry buddy!

So as you can see our optimist here started out his/her day believing that things would turn out well and because of that he/she went for it each time. And each time he/she was successful he/she built on that good, positive feeling. On the other hand, our pessimist kept believing that things wouldn't work out and he/she had a negative energy that affected everything he/she did.

So being optimistic can have affect on how your day turns out, and even, little by little, can gradually affect how your life turns out.

Thank you _____ for being an awesome optimist. Everyone give _____ a big round of applause.

Audience applauds. Give Kid 1 prize & they sit back down.

PRESENTER

And I really want to thank _____ for being such a good sport and letting me mess with him/her today. I know you're not really a pessimist are you _____? (*Kid 2 says no, if not prompt him/her to say no*) No but you did such a great job. I want to hear a great big round of applause for _____.

Audience applauds. Give Kid 2 prize & they sit back down.

PRESENTER

Now that we know that being optimistic can make our life better, some of you may be wondering how to be more optimistic.

First of all did you guys know that most of our thoughts are just habits? We've gotten used to thinking the way we do. Sometimes people form a habit of worrying or focusing on what's wrong or feeling bad about themselves. They aren't bad people, they've just trained their brain to think that way.

The good news is, if our brain has been trained to think negatively we can re-train it to think more optimistically. To do that, there are just three easy steps.

Step one is you first have to notice your thoughts. (*Hold up poster: "Step 1: Notice Your Thoughts"*) Step two is you have to challenge your thoughts. (*Hold up poster: "Step 2: Challenge Your Thoughts"*) And step three is you create a whole new, more positive thought. (*Hold up poster: "Step 3: Change Your Thoughts"*) To show you what I mean I'm gonna need the help of a teacher volunteer.

Pick a teacher & bring him/her up on stage.

PRESENTER

Give him/her a round of applause for coming up. And you are Mr./Ms. ____? (*Teacher answers*) OK Mr./Ms. _____, we're going to pretend that you're a 5th grader. So first we have to make you look like a 5th grader. So put on this backpack and take this notebook (*give backpack & notebook to teacher*) and let's see, what else... Oh, I know. This will finish it off just perfectly. (*Give teacher silly animal hat that's all the rage with kids nowadays.*) Now you look just like a 5th grader! OK let's start.

Today is the day you get your grade back on that big Math test you took last week. (*Presenter gives teacher a prop Math test.*) Hold the test up so everyone can see.

Teacher holds up prop test that has an "F" grade.

PRESENTER

Uh oh, it doesn't look like you did so well. How do you think you did?

Teacher answers something like “I flunked”.

PRESENTER

Yup, that’s an “F” alright. So if you were going to say really negative things to yourself, what are some things you might say right now after flunking the Math test?

Get answers from the teacher, prompting if necessary.

PRESENTER

So maybe you’re saying something like, “I’m so stupid. I’ll never pass Math.” Did you guys all hear that thought? I mean, did you really stop and listen to it? He/she said, “I’m so stupid. I’ll never pass Math.”

(Have teacher hold poster: “Step 1: Notice Your Thoughts”) That’s the first step. Notice your thoughts. So many times we say things to ourselves and we don’t really notice what we’re saying. And we can’t change a negative thought if we don’t first notice it.

(Have teacher hold poster: “Step 2: Challenge Your Thoughts”) Remember step two was “challenge your thoughts”. Just because we have a thought doesn’t mean that it’s true. So let’s challenge this thought our 5th grader has about flunking the Math test. It’s not really true that he/she’s stupid and can never pass math. What are some other possible ways of looking at this?

Get answers from a few kids. Prompt them if necessary.

PRESENTER

Great ideas! So he/she could challenge the thought by saying, “I’m not stupid. I aced my History test the other day. And the truth is that I didn’t really study enough for this Math test.”

(Have teacher hold poster: “Step 3: Change Your Thoughts”) Step three was “change your thoughts”. Now that you know that your first thought was not true, you can create a whole new thought that is more realistic and more positive. Raise your hand if you can think of a new thought he/she could have that would be more optimistic.

Get answers from a few kids. Prompt them if necessary.

PRESENTER

So he/she could change the thought by saying, “I’m good at lots of things. And if I study more I know I can do better on the next Math test.”

So you see first we notice the thought. Everybody say, “notice”. *(Kids repeat, “notice”.)* Then we challenge the thought. Everybody say, “challenge”. *(Kids repeat, “challenge”.)* And then we change the thought. Everybody say, “change”. *(Kids repeat, “change”.)*

Thank you Mr./Ms._____. Everybody give him/her a big round of applause for coming

PRESENTER (cont'd)

up here and being such a good sport.

Get costume/prop items from teacher and they take a seat.

PRESENTER

Now I want to take a minute to show you guys a quick technique for noticing your thoughts. Because when our minds are going a mile a minute it can be hard to notice our thoughts.

Presenter juggles polka dotted beanbags while talking.

Like right now, while I'm juggling these beanbags, they're moving so fast you can't really see them, right? Well our mind is the same way. If our thoughts are going so fast and we don't slow them down we might not really notice them. But if I slow down (*presenter slows down & then stops juggling & holds up one of the beanbags*) I can actually see that this beanbag has polka dots. Just like if I slow down my thoughts, I can notice what I'm thinking and saying to myself.

So I'm going to show you one way to slow down your thoughts. When I say go, I want everybody to take a slow breath in for three, while I count it. Then you're going to hold the breath for my three count and then you're going to let the breath go for three counts. Ok, ready? Go. Breathe in for 1-2-3. Now hold the breath for 1-2-3. Now let it out for 1-2-3. Let's do that one more time. Breathe in for 1-2-3. Now hold the breath for 1-2-3. Now let it out for 1-2-3.

Good job! Now the next thing we're going to do is we're all going to be really, really quiet, just like we did at the beginning of the show. So quiet that you could hear a pin drop. We'll just do it for 10 seconds and during that 10 seconds I want you to pick a spot in front of you to stare at. And while it's really quiet I want you to see how many different sounds you notice in the room. So let's just do that for 10 seconds. Everybody stare at one spot in front of you and be really quiet starting... now.

Silence as presenter keeps the time. If it seems to be going well, hold time for up to 20 seconds.

PRESENTER

Good, now everybody breathe in for a count of three. 1-2-3. Now hold the breath for 1-2-3. Now let it out for 1-2-3.

Wow guys! Great job! Now what sounds did you guys notice during the time when the room was silent? Raise your hands if you can tell me one sound you heard.

Get answers from a few kids and repeat what each kid says.

PRESENTER

Good! Well if you guys practice quieting your mind down every day, even for just a few seconds, it will help you to notice things you might otherwise miss, and it can also help you to notice your own thoughts.

Another thing you can do that will help you to think more positively and feel better is called the "What Went Well" exercise.

Presenter holds up a poster board that says What Went Well and has three numbered lines on it.

PRESENTER

At the end of each day all you have to do is write down three things that went well for you that day. They don't have to be huge things. They can be really simple, like I made it on time to school, or my teacher gave me a nice compliment in class. Then after you write down the three things that went well, write down why you think they went well for you. And if you do this every night for even just a few weeks you will notice that you feel more optimistic and you will start noticing more of the good things that happen to you each day.

PUPPET

But what if you're a nothing and you have nothing to write?

Presenter looks around to see where the voice came from.

PRESENTER

Who said that? (*Presenter walks toward audience and asks a kid.*) Did you say that?

A puppet shaped like the number Zero (not too childish/appeals to older kids) appears upstage of Presenter so he/she can't see it.

PUPPET

No, I did.

Presenter looks up at the ceiling and points upward, looking to kids/audience for help.

PRESENTER

Did you guys hear that?

Kids all say yes and point to puppet behind Presenter. Presenter looks behind him/her and sees the puppet.

Oh, there you are!

PUPPET

Yup, I'm here... for what it's worth.

PRESENTER

What do you mean, "for what it's worth"?

PUPPET

I mean I'm here, but I'm nothing but a big, fat zero.

PRESENTER

What????!!

PUPPET

Look at me! I'm just a zero! I have no value and I'll never amount to anything. I mean, seriously what good am I?

PRESENTER

A zero is good for lots of things.

PUPPET

Oh yeah? Name one! See??? Even there, you at least need one! You can't name zero things a zero is good for. So a zero is good for nothing!

PRESENTER

Wait a minute, now I'm confused.

PUPPET

Let me sum it up for you. I'm nothin'! I'm a zero and I have no value... Literally! I have NO VALUE! You might as well just throw me away. Seriously, just throw me away!

PRESENTER

That doesn't sound right to me. Kids, do you think we should just throw him away? Everybody say, "Nooooo".

Kids all say, "Nooooo".

PRESENTER

You have worth and you matter, no matter what. Sometimes people make us think we're only worthwhile if we're good at something or if we look a certain way. That is not what gives us worth.

PUPPET

Well what gives us worth then? What makes us matter?

PRESENTER

You are worthwhile and you matter just because you're here! I want to hear everybody say that. Everybody say, "I am worthwhile!" (*Kids repeat, "I am worthwhile"*) Now say, "I matter, just because I'm here!" (*Kids repeat, "I matter, just because I'm here"*.) And that goes for you and you and you and you (*presenter points all around the audience then points to the Zero puppet*) and it even goes for you!

PUPPET

So you're telling me I, a zero, am worthwhile right now.

PRESENTER

Yes!

PUPPET

Even though I don't amount to anything.

PRESENTER

Even still.

PUPPET

Even though a "one" or a "two" or a "hundred" is worth more than me.

PRESENTER

Someone else might be smarter than us or better looking or funnier than we are. But once we realize that we're worthwhile right now, we can accept ourselves and love ourselves exactly as we are.

PUPPET

Wow! Ya know, I never thought of it that way. I can accept myself and love myself right now.

PRESENTER

Exactly! So now I want to hear you say, "I am worthwhile and I matter, just because I'm here."

PUPPET

I'm worthwhile and I matter just because I'm here. I like how I feel inside when I do that.

PRESENTER

That's awesome! And you should keep saying it to yourself everyday!

PUPPET

I'm going to... I'm worthwhile and I matter just because I'm here. I like that!

PRESENTER

And once you realize that, you'll be ready to explore what your strengths really are.

PUPPET

You mean I have strengths?

PRESENTER

Yeah, everybody has strengths. They just have to figure out what they are. For instance, I just thought of something that you're good for.

PUPPET

You did? What is it?

PRESENTER

Think about this... Without any zeros, do you know what a million dollars would be?

PUPPET

I guess... it would only be a dollar.

PRESENTER

I think you're putting two and two together.

PUPPET

Hey that's true! Without me a million dollars is just a dollar.

PRESENTER

It's all starting to add up, isn't it?

PUPPET

So I am good for something. I actually do have value!

PRESENTER

Totally!!! Get it?... "Totally"?

Presenter starts to laugh at his/her own joke as Zero puppet starts to leave.

PUPPET

This is so cool!

PRESENTER

Hey where are you going?

PUPPET

I've gotta go tell my buddies Zip, Zero and Zilch the great news! This is awesome!

PRESENTER

OK see you later!

PUPPET

Bye!

PRESENTER

So kids, today we learned that practicing optimism can help us to be happier, healthier and more successful. And we learned that we can change our thinking by first noticing our thoughts, then challenging them and then changing them. And we learned how to quiet our brains down and calm our thoughts. And lastly we learned that we can choose to love and accept ourselves exactly as we are. So you know what that means, don't you...

It means that now it's time for... a GAME SHOW!

Game show music plays. Stage hand sets up spinning wheel center stage.

PRESENTER

It's time for "Wheel of Optimism"!!! That means I'm going to need three volunteers to come up here as contestants. And if I pick you then I also need your teacher to come up here with you.

Pick three students and line the teachers on one side and the students on the other side.

PRESENTER

So, as you can see, we have the teachers on one side and we have the students on the other side. That means we're the playing teachers against the students! Now we have three rules to the game. The first rule is pay attention. The second rule is there's no booing for anyone. Everybody say "No booing" (*kids say "no booing"*) And the third rule is, we're going to cheer for everyone! Now let's meet our contestants.

Introduce each contestant, getting the audience to say, "Hey___", "What's up _____" and "Hello_____" to each contestant. Then each contestant spins the wheel and it lands on a number. Presenter then reads the question as if it were the question for that number (it's the same question no matter what number they land on).

PRESENTER

OK, let's have our first student contestant spin the wheel. The question is...

Q: You can be happier, healthier and more successful if you are more... A) optimistic B) bored C) crabby (*Student answers correctly.*)

Now let's have our first teacher spin the wheel. Now I have to let you know that as a teacher you only get FIVE SECONDS to answer your question. The question is...

PRESENTER (cont'd)

Q: You can re-train your brain to think more positively by first noticing your thoughts, then challenging your thoughts and then... *(Teacher answers correctly.)*

So the score is one to one. Now let's have our second student spin the wheel. The question is...

Q: Remember during the show when we were all really really quiet for 10 seconds? Name one thing that you heard during that time. *(Student answers correctly.)*

Now let's have our second teacher spin the wheel. Now I have to remind you that as a teacher you only get FIVE SECONDS to answer your question. The question is...

Q: If you practice the What Went Well exercise every night you will start to notice more of the good things that happen to you. Tell me what you have to write down each night for the What Went Well exercise. *(Teacher answers correctly.)*

OK, let's have our third student contestant spin the wheel. This question is a True or False question...

Q: True or False: Sometimes people think they have to be good at something to be worthwhile, but actually we are worthwhile just because we are here. *(Student answers correctly.)*

Now let's have our third teacher spin the wheel. Now I have to remind you that as a teacher you only get FIVE SECONDS to answer your question. The question is...

Presenter looks at question then does a slow pan to the audience.

Ewwwwww... this is a really tough question. Yikes! I think you're gonna need some help. So kids we're gonna help him/her out here. I want everybody to hold up one hand. After I ask the question you guys are going to count down from five to one, so he/she knows how much time he/she has. *(Jokingly to teacher)* That's gonna help you out, right? OK in five seconds or less...

Q: Define and spell "Self-Determination Theory and the Facilitation of Intrinsic Motivation".

Ready? GO! *(Presenter prompts kids to start countdown.)* Five, four, three, two, one. Awwww you ran out of time, that means that the students win!

Kids cheer as Presenter passes out prizes to the students.

PRESENTER

And I want you to give the teachers a round of applause too. They were really good sports. That was a really tough question.

The contestants all take a seat.

PRESENTER

We learned a lot of tools today that can help you to be happier, healthier and more successful in your life. But just remember that changing your thinking takes practice. It might feel awkward or uncomfortable at first. Just like exercising your body... at first it is harder to do and your muscles might ache but eventually you become physically fit. Same with your thinking. At first you might not exactly believe the new, more positive thought, but then your brain gets used to that way of thinking and you think that way automatically.

So I want to end today with a pledge. So everybody raise your right hand and repeat after me. I pledge... to practice optimism... to notice my thoughts... and to challenge and change any negative ones... and to love and accept myself exactly as I am. Give yourselves a round of applause. (*There is applause.*)

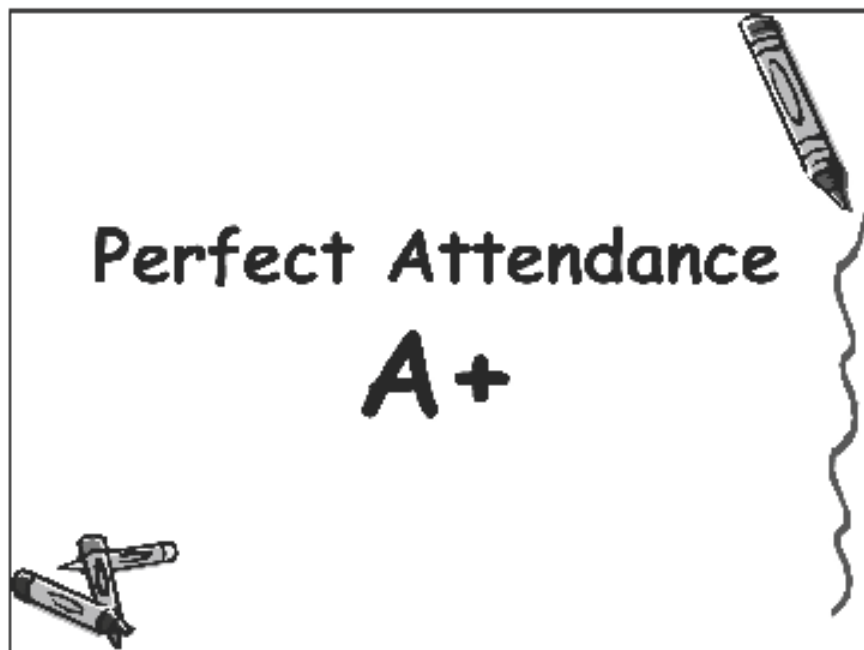
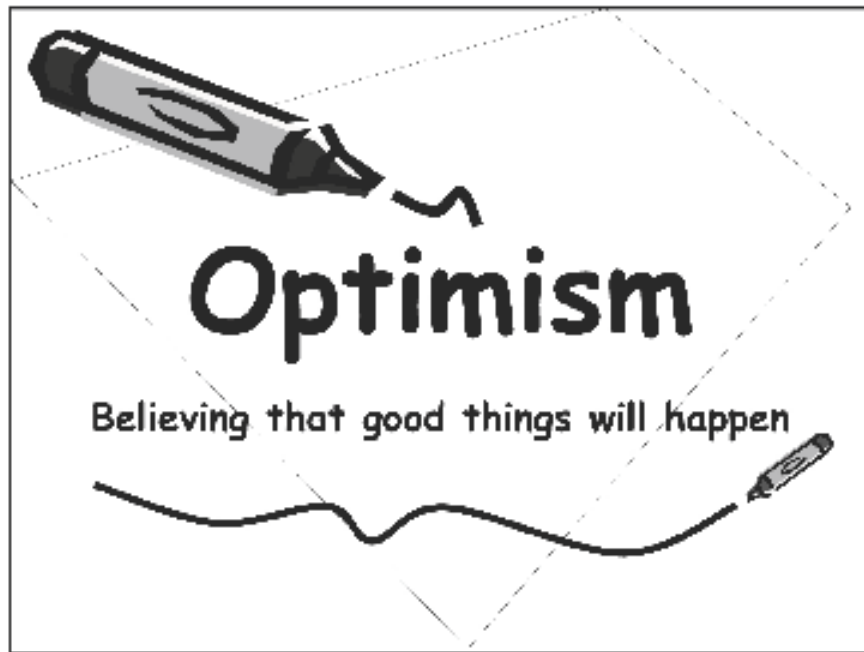
Oh, wait I forgot one thing. Raise your right hand again and repeat after me. And ask my teacher... for lots more homework.

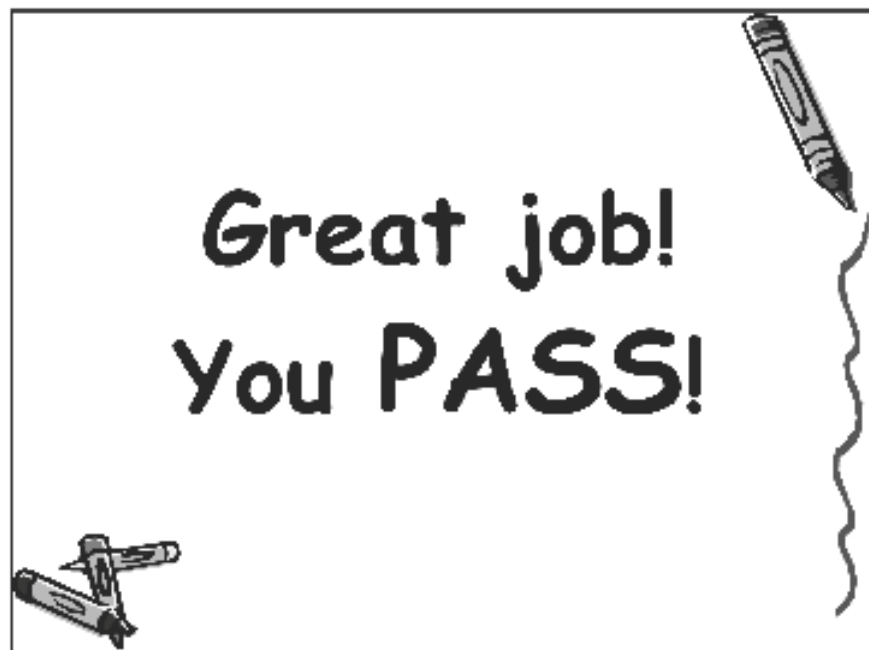
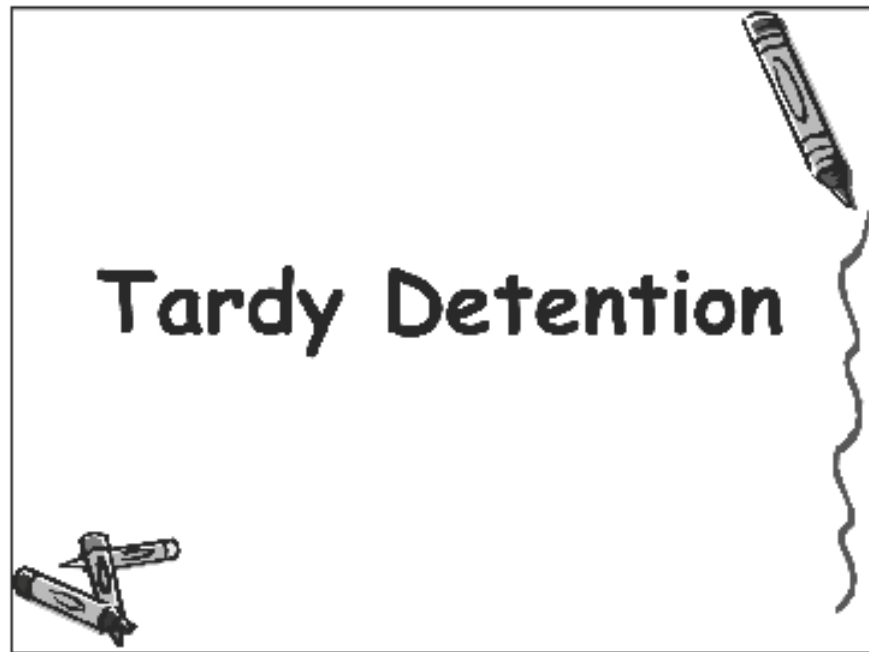
Kids all freak out.

PRESENTER

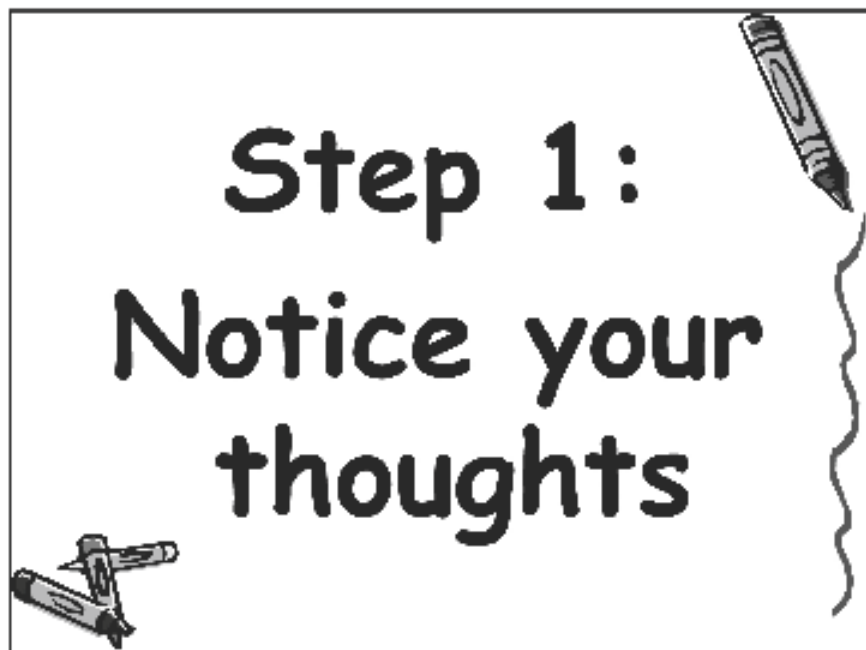
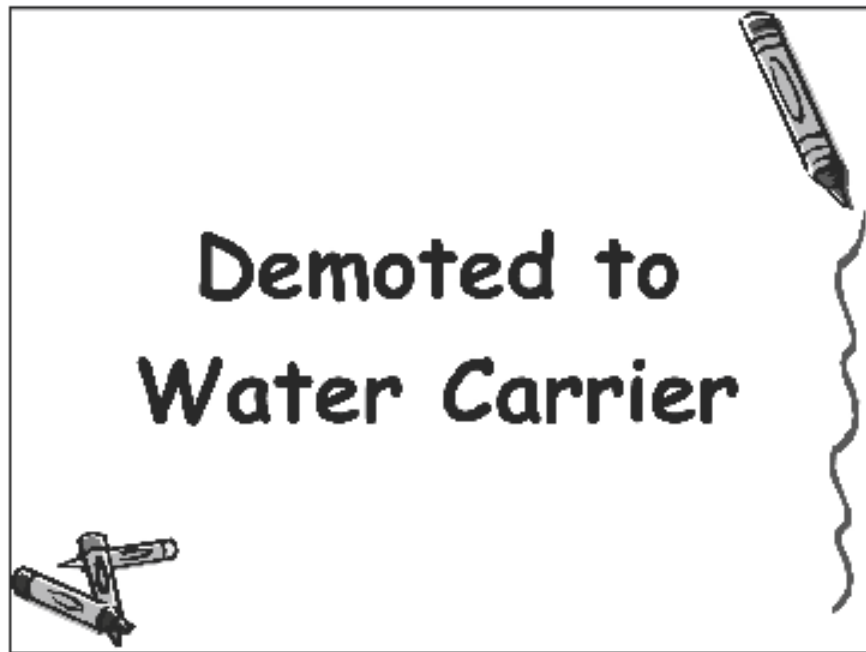
OK OK, I was just kidding about the homework part. Anyhow I want to thank you guys for being such a great audience. Give yourselves a round of applause, and thank your teachers and your principal for having me.

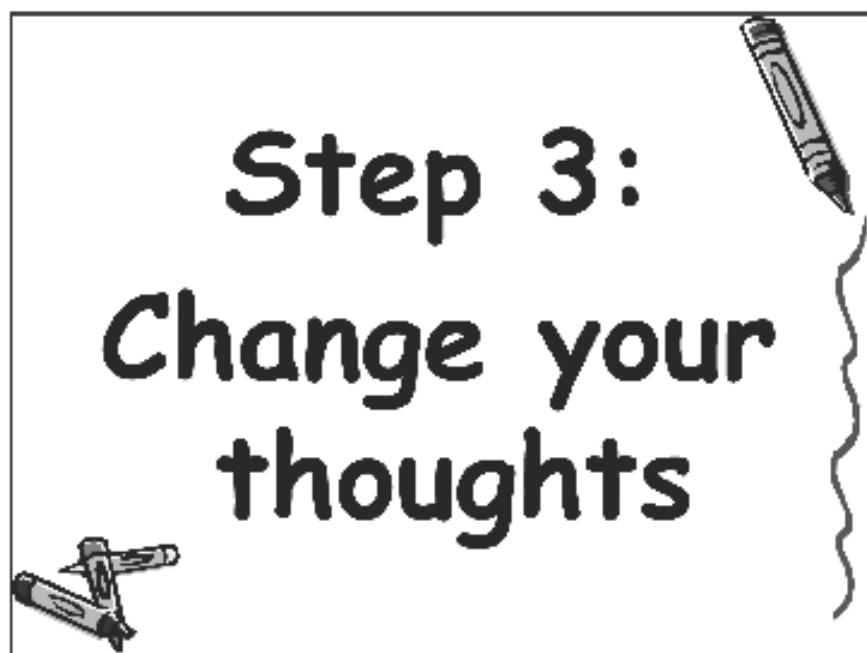
END











Math Test - F

$20 \times 2 = 22$

$30 \times 3 = 33$

$40 \times 4 = 44$

$50 \times 2 = 52$

$60 \times 3 = 63$

$70 \times 5 = 75$

$80 \times 8 = 88$

$90 \times 9 = 99$

$100 \times 4 = 104$

$65 \times 1 = 66$

$35 \times 1 = 36$

$44 \times 1 = 45$

$20 \times 2 = 22$

$30 \times 3 = 33$

$40 \times 4 = 44$

$50 \times 2 = 52$

$60 \times 3 = 63$

$70 \times 5 = 75$



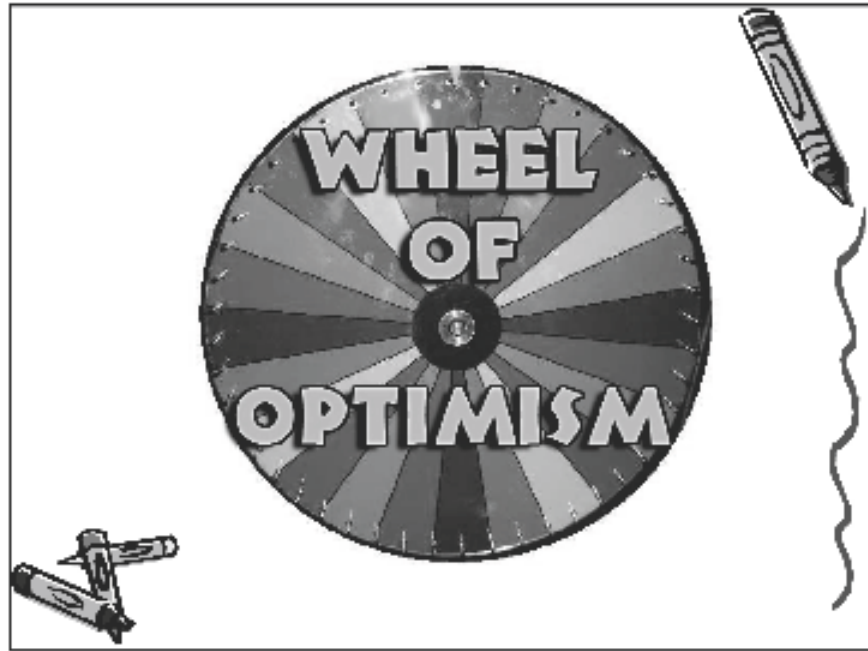
What Went Well

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____





APPENDIX B

Optimism, Positive Self-talk, Mindfulness and Well Being Assembly

Name: _____ Date: _____

Provide your e-mail for possible future follow up: _____

1. Overall, how would you rank the program? (circle one) 1 2 3 4 5

1 = Unsatisfactory	3 = Satisfactory/Average	5 = Excellent
2 = Needs Improvement	4 = Above Average	

2. Rank how effective you think the show would be in involving children and keeping their attention.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Rank how well you think children would respond to the program?	1	2	3	4	5
4. Which part of the program did you feel was most effective?					
5. Which part of the program did you feel was least effective?					
6. What would you recommend to improve or enhance the effectiveness/applicability of the information?					
7. Were there any topics not discussed that you would like to be added?	___ Yes	___ No	If yes, please state: _____		
8. Were there any topics discussed that you think should not have been included?	___ Yes	___ No	If yes, please state: _____		
9. Would you recommend the use of this program to schools?	___ Yes	___ No	If no, why? _____		