



Week 13

Noticing the Good Things

- OBJECTIVES:** To learn about our brain's tendency to focus on negative things more than positive.
Practice kindness
- PREPARE:** A bell or chime
Your Kindness Pals list and Talking Object
Write this quote on the board: "Every day may not be good but there is something good in every day."
- Alice Morse Earle



Mindfulness Practice

Invite today's Mindfulness Helper (MH) to come to the front of the class and sit next to you on a chair.

Prompt the MH to choose another student to turn off the classroom lights.

Prompt the MH to say: "Let's get into our mindful bodies. Let's close our eyes. Let's take 3 deep breaths."

Say: *Today I'd like you to try to remember a time when you were really happy. It could be something that just happened recently or something that you remember from a long time ago. Try to choose one time and when you're ready, try to travel back to that moment in your mind.*

Imagine that you are watching a movie of that happy moment and try to remember all of the details. Who were you with? Where were you? What happened? What made you so happy? What did it feel like to be happy? Where did you feel that happy feeling in your body?

Let's spend the next few moments (about 15 seconds) trying to stay in that happy moment. (Wait) Now let's travel back to this happy moment and listen for the sound of the bell.

Ask the MH to ring the bell.

Ask the MH to choose a classmate to turn the lights on.

Ask the MH to return to his or her seat.

Give students a chance to share some of their happy moments.



1. Introduce the Negativity Bias

Say: *Do you remember what the role of the amygdala is? Let students answer.*

The role of the amygdala is to keep us safe. It is always looking out for threats to our safety. If we touch a cactus and get hurt, our brain will file that memory in order to prevent us from doing it again. That's helpful. Scientists call this the Negativity Bias.

This means that our brains tend to focus on and remember negative things more than positive things. Of course, we remember the big good things like our birthday, or a great trip, or a special event. But we often forget all about small good things.

For example, you might have invited five friends to your birthday party. At the last minute, one of your friends got sick and wasn't able to come. Instead of being happy that you have four friends to celebrate with, you might spend the whole day feeling sad that your one friend isn't there.

Have you ever been on vacation and after a day or two you start counting the days and start thinking, "Oh no, only four more days..." You might ruin your vacation because you are focused on the fact that it is going to end.

2. Overriding the Negativity Bias

Dr. Seuss said, "Don't cry because it's over. Smile because it happened."

This is a great way of thinking about how we can override our brain's Negativity Bias.

Scientists have found that a great way to balance out our brain's tendency to focus on negative things is to take a moment to soak in positive things. Taking time to notice and really focus on something good that happens allows our brains to send those memories to long-term storage. This is what we were doing during our mindfulness practice today.



Focusing on the positive doesn't mean that we are trying to avoid negative things. Not at all. Our brains will take care of that for us. By helping our brains recognize and soak in positive things we are helping our brains to see our lives more realistically. Maybe you slipped in mud during recess and your pants are all dirty. Sure, that's true and it's bad. But it's also true that your friends came running over and helped to clean you up and gave you a cookie after lunch to make you feel better. Your brain may only want to remember the mud, but by taking a mindful moment to remember and soak in the good feeling of having friends who care, you are helping to rewire your brain to recognize good things too. Let's give it a try.

3. Practice focusing on the positive

Let's close our eyes and take a deep breath. When you are ready I'd like you to try to make a list of good things that have happened in the past few days. These can be really small things like... your Dad remembered not to put mayonnaise on your sandwich, your favorite pants were clean, you got picked to turn on the lights, your nose isn't stuffy... just try to make a list.

Give them a minute or two to make a list.

Okay. Let's take one more deep breath in and out and open your eyes.

Give them a chance to share some of the good things on their list.

This is something that you can do every day. Maybe before you go to sleep every night you can make a list of the good things that happened that day. We can thank our amygdalas for watching out for us, but help our brains to see the good things that we might otherwise be missing.



Kindness Pals

Do the Kindness Pal activity as before.

Closing words: Okay our time is up for today. Thank you for a great class, everyone.

Let's have a nice quiet moment for the bell. If you want to, you can close your eyes, picture your new Kindness Pal, and imagine yourself doing something kind for them this week.

Ring the bell.