

Skill Area(s):
Feelings/Emotions
Conversation

Happy Bags (this idea came the Navigating the Social World conference by Jeanette McAfee- she credited Tony Attwood with this activity)

Level: beginner, intermediate, advanced

Topic: to help change a negative mood/attitude into a positive one

Goal: recognizing and coping with your own emotions

Materials needed: lunch bags or small boxes or photo album, parent note

Activity:

This is a good activity to use at one of your first group sessions. It is one way for students to get to know more about each other. Our students have an easier time understanding and differentiating emotions such as happy, angry and sad. This activity can be used to introduce HAPPY.

- Session 1: Go around the group and have each student tell one thing that they like to do that makes them feel happy. Give examples from your own life. Get ideas from students. This could be a vacation picture, a toy, a picture of a friend/relative, chocolate, origami.....
- Some questions to use- How does it make you feel inside when you hold/look/play....? What does your face look like when you.....?
- Explain that you want each student to bring in items to keep at school. Talk about what to do if the item is too big or they don't want it to get lost. (they can bring a picture of it -photo or drawn) Decide if you are using a bag/box or photo album for the items.
- How will they use the bags? Talk about taking a break with their happy bag/ book when they are feeling sad or angry at school. Decide where to keep the bag/book- could be in their locker, group meeting room, or classroom so they know where to get it.
- Session 1 or 2: Creating the bags- we had each student decorate their bag. They showed it to the group and explained what they had made.
- Session 2: Students put their items into their bags. If students did not bring items we had them use small flashcards and write or draw the items they wanted included in their bags.
- You can do this as a whole group or break up into pairs and rotate: Student A takes out each item and describes it – Student B can only ask questions.
- Place bags in location determined for students to use through out the school day when necessary.

Follow up suggestions:

- See Alexander's Horrible No Good Very Bad Day activity.
- Use mirrors to look at your face when it is happy. Look at each part of your face- eyebrows, lips, eyes – are they up, down, wrinkled, etc.
- Place pictures in/on students' desks/lockers/planners that they enjoy or shows them in an activity that they like to do. You could also do this with small tokens such as a piece of candy, sticker, etc. Do this as a surprise and change them often.



To Parents:

Our social skills group will be making "Happy Bags" in our group next week. What is a happy bag you ask? It is a bag that contains things that make you smile or remember happy times. It could be an object, picture, words, etc. They must fit into a lunch size bag (we are providing these). Please bring more than one item to put in the bag.

In our group we will be using them to practice asking questions and giving clear answers to each other.

The students will keep the bags at school. They can request to use their bags if it they are having a difficult, stressful, no good, very bad day. The items will help them to change a negative mood into a positive mood!

It is something you can also make at home using any type of container.

Please bring your items by _____.

Thanks!

Mandy Shearer, SLP; Liz Stock, OT; Cindy Meester, SLP

Note we sent to classroom teachers and paras:

Our social skills group now called the Dolphins (as decided by the kids) made Happy Bags today. They put items in the bag that make them feel good. We have left them in room 27. One purpose for these is to help turn a negative attitude into a positive one. If one of the students in this group needs a break or is having a "horrible no good very bad day" you can tell them to take a break with their happy bag. Hopefully this will improve their day and yours.

If you have any questions ask one of us!
Cindy, Liz, Mandy

PS You are welcome to make your own "Happy Bags" but sorry we can't cover your classroom if you need a break! You'll just have to go to you happy place on your own time.