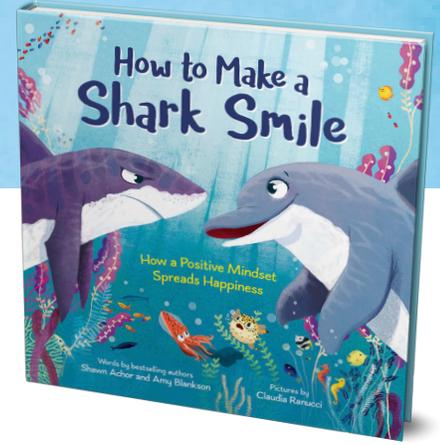


An Educator Guide for How to Make a Shark Smile

Written by Shawn Achor and Amy Blankson, Illustrated by Claudia Ranucci



A Common Core State Standards Aligned Activity Guide for Grades Kindergarten, 1, 2, and 3

Note: The activities in this guide align with Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts for grades kindergarten, 1, 2, and 3 but standards for other grades may also apply.

OVERVIEW

In *How to Make a Shark Smile*, authors Shawn Achor and Amy Blankson present a heartwarming tale of a young dolphin who finds herself in a new and uncertain living space. Through a series of thoughtful decisions and unwavering kindness, Ripple the dolphin brings peace and positivity to an initially hostile environment. The text concludes with a call to action for children to spread goodwill and a positive outlook in their community: “Can you make a shark smile today?”

How to Make a Shark Smile promotes a valuable message of peace that is applicable for children and adults alike. The book offers opportunities for teachers to cultivate children’s understanding of the positive effect they can have on individuals and the community, including a focus on:

- Openness to others regardless of differences
- Standing up for yourself and your beliefs
- Choosing to maintain a positive attitude despite challenging circumstances
- Refusing to give in to intimidation or fear tactics employed by others
- Helping break down senseless barriers that divide rather than unite
- Consciously making good choices and effectively solving problems

Classroom activities in this instructional unit encourage children to consider elements of their happiness, perspective, and identity, and to reflect on how these elements both influence and are influenced by the world around us. These activities draw on students’ experiences as individuals, as well as their experiences as members of a family, a classroom, a school, and a community. The instructional activities also enable teachers to cultivate children’s character development through the pillars of communication, community, and courage.

This unit includes three lesson plans as well as supplemental online resources to augment the more straightforward projects. The design of each plan allows teachers to build and embellish the activities to a level that best suits the needs of their classroom. Each lesson can be taught in class as described, though options for extension and an integrated community project are included.

At each grade level, the lessons align with the Common Core State Standards Initiative for Speaking and Listening (<http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/SL/introduction/>). The Common Core was recently adopted by the majority of states and is especially pertinent for educators in the United States.



PROJECT 1: THE EFFECT OF HAPPINESS

Background

What determines your happiness? YOU! Happiness is a choice that you make every single day. Sometimes happiness takes hard work. Everyone has had a bad day where it feels like absolutely nothing goes your way. But here's the good news: changing a bad day into a good one is completely within your power. You can make a conscious decision to be happy, regardless of how many things aren't going quite right. Happiness is contagious. When you make the conscious decision to be happy, people around you are more likely to "catch" your happiness and pass it on to others. By prioritizing happiness over negative emotions, you create a wealth of positive influences—on your health, on your attitude, on your family and friends, and on the community. By choosing to focus on positive experiences, attitudes, and emotions, you simultaneously choose to make the world a better place for everyone.

Objectives

- Students will engage in a series of activities designed to promote their understanding and pursuit of happiness
- Students will understand that although each of us is born into a certain place, time, and circumstance, how we determine our happiness is up to us
- Students will develop an understanding of how their happiness influences their day-to-day lives as well as the lives of those around them

Focal Activities

Guiding Questions:

- What does it mean to be happy?
- What makes you happy?
- When are you happiest?
- What does happiness look like? Feel like? Sound like?
- How can you help others be happy?
- Who determines your happiness?

An Educator Guide for **How to Make a Shark Smile**

Written by Shawn Achor and Amy Blankson, Illustrated by Claudia Ranucci



Classroom Activity:

Help children understand the infectious power of happiness. Encourage students to provide a positive greeting to everyone they encounter (e.g. smile, hello, compliment) for an entire day. For younger students, you might choose to provide a tangible reminder (i.e. happy face stickers) to distribute in conjunction with their greeting. The following day, invite students to discuss how spreading happiness made them feel and how they think it made those they encountered feel. Did you notice a change in your attitude? Did you observe anything about the morale of those in your environment? Talk to students about the exponential effect of sharing happiness. Imagine how many happy people there would be if each person you smiled at turned around and did the same thing to every person they encountered! Something as simple as a smile or a hello can make a world of difference in another person's day.

Extension Activity:

Help each child create a happiness book. Books can include written entries, illustrations, cutouts from magazines, artifacts, and more. Encourage students to work on their happiness books every time they experience a feeling of joy. Suggest that students revisit their happiness books whenever they feel blue and invite them to note how the book helps elevate their mood.

Comprehensive Community Project:

Who is the happiest person you know? Ask each child to choose a happiness mentor — perhaps a friend, a teacher, a coach, or a family member. Invite each child to conduct an interview with their happiness mentor to uncover what things make that person happy. Resources permitting, students might video tape their interviews and share them with the class. As an extension, invite the happiness mentors to visit the class to share their secrets for happiness.

Character-Building Connections

The key character value to cultivate in this project is community. Children can be encouraged to reflect upon:

- how their mood, particularly their happiness, impacts those around them
- how they can help spread happiness to others they encounter every day
- how they can develop increased happiness by listening to and observing others who display and share happiness

Additional Online Resources

Happiness

<http://bit.ly/RsITSs>
<http://bit.ly/P94lh8>

Positive Attitude

<http://bit.ly/SnhMcU>
<http://bit.ly/U2sO4E>

Decision Making

<http://bit.ly/R7194o>



PROJECT 2: THE EFFECT OF PERSPECTIVE

Background

What does it mean to have perspective? Perspective concerns how we perceive things—people, events, ideas—in our world. Our perspective is influenced by the cumulative experiences we have had in our lives, experiences that frequently contribute to a positive perspective on what happens in the world around us. Yet there are times when challenging experiences lead to a negative perspective on the world and the people we encounter. A negative perspective can manifest in attitudes, such as toxic stereotypes or prejudice toward people and cultures, or in behaviors, such as bullying and fear tactics designed to intimidate others. At the heart of these negative attitudes and behaviors is a façade of strength that actually hides a wealth of insecurities resulting from anger or frustration. By maintaining a positive perspective and refusing to give in to negative stereotypes and behaviors, we promote peace, tolerance, and appreciation of the diversity that makes each one of us unique. When you share your positive perspective with others, you contribute to making the world a kinder place.

Objectives

- Students will engage in a series of activities designed to promote their understanding and pursuit of positive perspective
- Students will understand that although each of us is born into a certain place, time, and circumstance, how we determine our perspective is up to us
- Students will develop an understanding of how their perspective influences their day-to-day lives as well as the lives of those around them

Focal Activities

Guiding Questions:

- What does peace mean to you?
- What can you do to help promote peace in your community?
- What is a comfort zone? What is your comfort zone?
- How do you react when you are out of your comfort zone?
- What does it mean to be tolerant?
- How can you be tolerant of others who may have a different perspective than you?

An Educator Guide for **How to Make a Shark Smile**

Written by Shawn Achor and Amy Blankson, Illustrated by Claudia Ranucci



Classroom Activity:

As a class, brainstorm the thoughts and actions of a “peacemaker” versus those of a “peacebreaker.” This is a great activity to implement early in the year as you might use the peacemaker tenets to create a set of class agreements, class pledge, etc. You might also provide peacemaker awards to distribute every time you observe students engaging in healthy conflict resolution strategies that promote peacemaking.

Extension Activity:

Engage students in a series of peacemaking and conflict resolution role-plays. You can vary the type of problem-solving strategies that students develop by having them enact these scenarios in pairs, small groups, and as a class. You might extend this activity by videotaping the conflict resolution role-plays and sharing them as a resource with other classes at your school.

Comprehensive Community Project:

Talk to local community resource representatives about a wall or building in the community that could benefit from beautification (this could also be a place on your school campus). Plan a collective involvement mural for this beautification location. An easy way to involve numerous members of the school and local community is with a handprint mural. Children and adults of diverse ages, cultures, professions, and socioeconomic status can contribute their handprint to the mural. You might also incorporate every person’s name on their handprint. The mural could be an array of brightly colored handprints or handprints that are used as the artistic medium of a bigger picture with a positive message (e.g. rainbow, sunshine, earth). The key message (which you might choose to incorporate into the mural) is that diverse perspectives and experiences are a source of strength and unity, and every individual contributes a valuable piece of the community puzzle.

An Educator Guide for **How to Make a Shark Smile**

Written by Shawn Achor and Amy Blankson, Illustrated by Claudia Ranucci



Character Building Connections

The key character value to cultivate in this project is communication. Children can be encouraged to:

- listen openly and actively to the ideas and needs of others
- consider the diverse experiences of others rather than judging based solely on their own experiences
- cultivate peace in their environment by maintaining an open mind and open heart

Additional Online Resources

Conflict Resolution

<http://bit.ly/P95zsG>

<http://bit.ly/QKxjly>

Tolerance

<http://bit.ly/UNu6G6>

<http://bit.ly/VNws4A>

<http://bit.ly/Tr8QEn>

<http://bit.ly/RkHgYs>





PROJECT 3: THE EFFECT OF IDENTITY

Background

Who are you? Each one of us can describe ourselves in unique and infinite ways. This self-description forms the basis of our identity. Establishing your identity involves developing an understanding of yourself—where you came from, how you live each day, what you aspire to do with your life. An important component of your identity is what you believe and what you know to be right for you. You should never compromise these core elements for anyone else. Developing your identity as both an individual and as a member of a broader community helps cultivate a healthy self-esteem and sense of self.

Objectives

- Students will engage in a series of activities designed to promote their understanding and pursuit of personal identity
- Students will understand that although each of us is born into a certain place, time, and circumstance, how we determine our identity is up to us
- Students will develop an understanding of how their identity influences their day-to-day lives as well as the lives of those around them

Focal Activities

Guiding Questions:

- What is an identity?
- What is your identity?
- How do you identify as a member of a family? A school? A community? A culture?
- What is self-esteem?
- What makes you feel best about yourself?
- What are the things that make you special and unique?

Classroom Activity:

Bring several mirrors into the classroom. Encourage students to observe themselves in the mirror. What do you see reflected on your face? What do you notice about your emotions and expressions? Based

An Educator Guide for **How to Make a Shark Smile**

Written by Shawn Achor and Amy Blankson, Illustrated by Claudia Ranucci



on their observations of mirror reflections, invite each student to create a self-portrait using multiple artistic mediums (e.g. crayon/marker, pencil, construction paper, yarn, glitter, googly eyes, etc.).

Display the self-portraits in the classroom all year. Inclusion of students' portraits as a permanent classroom fixture helps foster their identity as individuals, as well as members of the class.

Extension Activity:

Provide each student with resources to create an "All About Me" poster. The poster can include spaces for students to share their interests, favorite things, family traditions, cultural heritage, etc. You may choose to have an identity celebration where all students share their posters collectively. As an alternative, you might choose to feature one student as a "Star of the Week" each week and provide a platform for the child to share the unique elements of his/her identity with the class.

Comprehensive Community Project:

Talk to students about their ancestors. Each one of us is the product of multiple family generations. Engage students and their families in a personal genealogy activity. Provide students with a family tree template to take home and complete with the assistance of family members. See how far back you can go! If students do not have access to their ancestry, encourage them to use their imagination to describe what they think their ancestral culture may have been like. (If it seems like this activity might inadvertently single out certain students who don't have access to their ancestry, you might modify the activity and have all students develop an imagined ancestry.) Encourage students to share their family trees with the class, and display the trees in the classroom.

Character Building Connections

The key character value to cultivate in this project is courage. Children can be encouraged to:

- be proud of who they are as an individual, as well as a member of a family, community, and culture
- stay true to themselves and all of the special things that make them unique
- stand up for what they believe in and know to be right

Additional Online Resources

Identity

<http://bit.ly/P96uJN>

All About Me

<http://bit.ly/TkRhpi>

Cultural Heritage and Genealogy

<http://bit.ly/QKxXQf>

An Educator Guide for **How to Make a Shark Smile**

Written by Shawn Achor and Amy Blankson, Illustrated by Claudia Ranucci



ADDITIONAL ONLINE RESOURCES

Project 1 Happiness

<http://bit.ly/P94lh8>

Positive Attitude

<http://bit.ly/SnhMcU>

<http://bit.ly/U2sO4E>

Decision Making

<http://bit.ly/R7l94o>

Project 2 Conflict Resolution

<http://bit.ly/P95zsG>

<http://bit.ly/QKxjly>

Tolerance

<http://bit.ly/UNu6G6>

<http://bit.ly/VNws4A>

<http://bit.ly/Tr8QEn>

Project 3 Identity

<http://bit.ly/P96uJN>

All About Me

<http://bit.ly/TkRhpi>

Cultural Heritage and Genealogy

<http://bit.ly/QKxXQf>

